

"Come on and get valuable . . . valuable!"

By Melanie Loyd

So often, I am inspired with little lines that reflect what we in the funeral industry do for families. They come as a slogan, brand, a philosophy or value statement. Most recently, I thought, "Memories are more than words and pictures . . . they're our business."

A value statement communicates that you understand needs of families and can provide ways to meet those needs through service, ceremony, or tangible choices. In differentiating yourself within your market, determine what sets you apart and the corresponding family needs you meet. An important rule to keep when creating these statements: Capture the attention of families by addressing their needs first, THEN, describe how you will deliver.

Here are some examples that may inspire your thinking about what you could communicate when someone, in so many words asks, "Why should I choose you?"

"For your comfort and refreshment, our home has seating for all your guests and a spacious lounge."

"The celebration of a life is never forgotten because it's personal. We help make unforgettable."

"Death changes life. We're here at the beginning . . . throughout a lifetime."

"Your experience is never too far away; we webcast your family's memories."

Can you see a pattern? You first must get the listener to hear. That happens most effectively when you address his or her concerns. It's simple human nature. Then describe your offerings that provide solutions.

What else do you see in this method? Can you see where there is an emphasis on building relationship? Isn't the focus on life, experience, and memories? Indeed, there is which is so important when we are engaged with families who select cremation. It is essential we communicate the value we regard for their experience and the care of their loved-one's memory. The choice of cremation certainly does not change our culture of care, respect and the value of pausing with intention for some type of acknowledgement through ceremony.

So, what would a value statement sound like for a family selecting cremation? It will vary depending on the conversation you have had but perhaps these examples will be helpful.

"A ceremony at the legion is very fitting for your dad. Following the cremation, we have flexibility to work around their meetings and set up later in the day."

"With her unique collection you wanted to have on display, our glass front niches will make a perfect memorial and place to remember."

“Your mother’s life is summed up in your and others memories. Hosting a ceremony in her honor adds the punctuation to her life.”

Our communicating with families who select cremation must involve more than the “clinical” tasks we perform. We must develop value by addressing the needs, tailoring language to reflect those needs, with compassion and understanding, AND THEN provide what we do to meet the need.

So often, I hear funeral professionals say, “I don’t want to sound like a script.” My response to that, “Get familiar enough with your value statements that they don’t sound like a script!” We need to be ready with an answer AND be able to frontload with value and reasons to choose us.

Creating value statements is a great staff exercise. Have each one write down their ideas, according to the “rule” and sharpen them at a staff meeting. Post near the phones and places where they can become familiar. Play a game with them – “Stop, Drop and Roll out a Value Statement?”

What you do for families is one of their most valuable experiences. Remember, “We’re in it for life . . .”