

# INTERNATIONAL Cemetery & Funeral MANAGEMENT

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**I think food is the number one service my funeral home provides our families. We provide a full-service, catered meal, complete with a choice of hot or cold food, coffee, soft drinks, dessert, someone to set up the food and someone to clean it up. We do charge for this service. In 2005, 65 percent of our families chose us to cater for them.**

## SERVICE TO FAMILIES/MANAGEMENT

### The 7 'f-words' of funeral service

**F**-word Number 2 is "flexibility." How many of you think it's important to be flexible in dealing with grieving families? How many of you *are* flexible when you're dealing with grieving families?

When you let your families rearrange and restructure and recustomize, you're showing them that you're being flexible.

Also, you may already do this, but if you don't, you should start using what I like to call "flexibility phrases."

Some of the most flexible phrases in funeral and cemetery service are:

- "I'll try my best to do that."
- "I'll look into that for you."
- "I think that's a great idea."

Use flexibility phrases, because when we use these, we underpromise and we overdeliver. That's always better than overpromising and underdelivering. I use flexibility with my families and set them up to not be disappointed, and set me up to exceed their expectations.

A few months ago, I was making funeral arrangements for a middle-aged British widow. She told me she wanted both the limousine and the hearse to pick up her and the immediate fami-

ly at their house before the funeral service. It's not part of our normal procedure to have the hearse go to the house, so I used a flexibility phrase and said, "I'll try my best to do that."

She says, "Splendid," then adds, "Now, Justin, of course we're going to need a walker."

I'm thinking she means one of those rolling aluminum walkers for her elderly parents, but she says no, that's not it.

She explains that it's English custom to have someone literally walk in front of the hearse and lead the deceased and mourners out of the driveway of the residence toward the church for the funeral service. Remember when Princess Diana passed away? The boys, Prince Henry and Prince William, walked in front of the hearse.

Again, that's not part of our normal procedure. So I used a flexibility phrase and said, "I'll try my best to do that."

When the day came, there I was, literally walking in front of the hearse, showing the entire neighborhood how flexible I can be.

So I guess the moral of this f-word, flexibility, is that if you truly are going to be flexible, you must not only talk the talk, you've also got to walk the walk. □