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◆ FUNERAL DIRECTOR ◆

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# The Integration Conversation: Why Funeral Technology Programs Need to Speak the Same Language

By Craig Meehan, ASD

At the start of 2020, I sent out a survey to more than 30,000 funeral professionals asking them to provide details on their use of technology. More than 1,600 responded. At the time, we were all still blissfully ignorant of what the year ahead was going to look like. The term ‘COVID’ was not a part of our vernacular yet. In looking back at the results of the survey, it is fascinating to see how many of the responses were focused on the need for integration across multiple platforms.

Today, the hunger funeral professionals have for synced technology solutions has only gotten stronger as a direct result of the pandemic.

On one side of the coin, there is the time factor. Now more than ever, funeral professionals are pulled in so many different directions and need technology solutions to streamline their daily task load. On the flip side, there is the customer service element. Technology can never replace the human interactions funeral professionals share with families, but it can make it easier to communicate in our increasingly remote world.

These double-sided goals of saving time and enhancing customer service can both be served through the use of integrated technology solutions. The use of synced software systems can reduce the funeral home’s data entry work while making it easier for families to arrange their loved one’s services from a distance. Many funeral home professionals recognize this; however, the roadblock they run into is many funeral home software programs do not speak the same language.

There is a myth within our profession that funeral professionals are resistant to new technology and do not want to change their current methods of operating. Our survey revealed this is a misperception. Most funeral professionals surveyed answered that the biggest barriers preventing them from investing in new technology is their uncertainty over which solutions were best suited for their firm (42%) or the amount of time it takes to learn or switch to a new system (27%).



Our survey also showed one of the biggest reasons the funeral profession is further behind other industries in the adoption of new technology is a lack of simplicity and comprehensive solutions. Many funeral home technology companies only offer piecemeal options, requiring funeral directors to learn multiple systems and enter data numerous times. When asked how important it is for their funeral home’s technology to be integrated across multiple platforms, majority of those who responded answered that it is ‘very important’ (41%) or ‘fairly important’ (26%).

Below are just a few of the many write-in responses that specifically addressed a lack of synced technology solutions:

*“Options cross over on some aspects, but not others. End up using three systems to accomplish something.”*

*“Integrating would be helpful. Currently, if we have edits to do, we have to backtrack in multiple areas.”*

*“Mainly it is the time to do the training to make it all function. We are desperately in need of a set of standard operating procedures in all departments.”*

*“Programs that we currently use and like are not compatible with new/other options.”*

These statements reveal a single irrefutable fact: when funeral technology companies work together, the entire funeral service profession wins. ASD – Answering Service for Directors recognized this crucial need early on. Our in-house technology team understood funeral directors needed solutions that could save them valuable time. ASD first began seeking out

ways to integrate our answering service system with other funeral home technology companies more than 12 years ago with the release of our FuneralSync™ program in 2008. The first version of the tool was a somewhat manual process that allowed for transfer of some very basic information. Over time, this feature has evolved to become the most flexible integration tool available to directors.

#### Data Management System Integration

When funeral homes forward their phones to ASD, they are trusting our company to handle the lifeblood of their funeral home: the first call. ASD's Call Specialists receive extensive training on providing compassion and empathy to at-need families who call in to report a death. We then take this human element and combine it with our technically advanced systems which are linked directly with the funeral home's data management software. This ensures all first call information, such as the decedent's name, date of birth and time of death, is transcribed by our staff and then automatically copied over to the funeral home's management system.

ASD's integration with the leading funeral home software companies makes this possible. These companies include: MiMS, the Easy Arranger Program by FuneralTech, HMIS by Batesville, SRS Computing, The Smart Director by Continental Computer Corp, FrontRunner Professional, Halcyon, CRäKN, LLC, Passare, Osiris Software, Ionic Services, Mortware and TerraPro.

The key to ASD's extensive integration partnerships is our company's willingness to make our FuneralSync™ API available to any software company interested in integrating with us. Funeral professionals can activate this service simply by contacting their funeral home management software company with their ASD account number and requesting the integration be turned on. This simple step can save funeral professionals from hours of unnecessary work while minimizing the risk of errors caused by duplicate data entry.

#### Obituary Information

One of the most common calls ASD handles for funeral homes are inquiries related to current services. Rather than having to provide these details to ASD, funeral directors can automatically ensure our staff has all of their current service details each time a new obituary is entered on their website. This is achieved



through ASD's integration with the leading funeral home website companies. These companies include: CFS Consolidated Funeral Services, funeralOne, FrontRunner Professional, Batesville Technology Solutions, Frazer Consultants, FuneralNet, Tributes.com search engine, MKJ Marketing, FuneralTech and SRS Computing.

With ASD's FuneralSync™ feature, funeral professionals can enter service details into one program instead of two, saving time and reducing errors. This not only streamlines the process but also gives directors peace of mind knowing that ASD will always have the most up-to-date service details to provide to funeral home callers.

#### Web Chat

Most people are familiar with how web chat works and the benefits, as well as the drawbacks of having one on your company website. While it is obviously a positive thing to give people more options to communicate with you, it can be daunting to worry about who is going to monitor it 24/7. ASD's Web Chat solution resolves this dilemma by connecting the funeral home's Web Chat to ASD's answering service system. This helpful communication tool can be added to any funeral home's existing website with just a quick, simple update to the website code.

What makes ASD's Web Chat so unique is it allows both an ASD Agent and on-call director to be involved with web chat sessions via 3-way chat. When a chat is initiated, an ASD Agent immediately responds using information that has been customized by the funeral home. If the question is urgent, a notification is automatically sent to relay that a chat session in progress. This allows you to quickly respond to any

urgent incoming chats via your cell phone or computer.

### Web Form WatchDog™

Most funeral home websites have a 'Contact Us' form instructing visitors to leave their information and reason for contacting. ASD's Web Form WatchDog™ can help you become more responsive to submitted web forms by allowing ASD to monitor your funeral home's web inquiries and immediately alert you when an urgent need is communicated. Like ASD's Web Chat, Web Form WatchDog™ can quickly be added to any funeral home's existing website in seconds.

### Obit Texting Integration

One of the most common reasons a person contacts a funeral home is to obtain current funeral service information. ASD's Obit Texting helps make obituary information more accessible while enhancing your funeral home's brand. With Obit Texting, when someone calls the funeral home looking for service information, ASD can send them a text message from the funeral home's phone number with a link directly to the obit on the funeral home's website. This helps the caller find the information they are looking for while also driving more traffic to the funeral home website, creating opportunities for visitors explore other pages which can help increase pre-need leads or flower sales.

The technology employed by this service utilizes ASD's proprietary software in combination with our company's integrations with the leading funeral home website providers. There is no effort required on behalf of the funeral home to utilize Obit Texting. Funeral homes need only to post their obituary information on their website and ASD can automatically pull this information directly from the site and text it to the caller.

### Custom Integrations

In addition to the integration options ASD offers

every funeral home client, we can also work closely with funeral homes that have specific requests. Our flexible technology programs make it simple to sync our answering service systems with other software programs. For instance, several of our clients currently have their ASD account linked to their Sales Force program. Others have requested information gathered by ASD be pushed directly into their funeral home's pre-need tracking software. With an in-house technology team capable of building custom solutions, funeral professionals who use ASD never have to feel limited by a lack of integration options.

### Learn More

If you are interested in learning more about ASD and all of the advanced communication solutions we offer, please contact me at 800-868-9950 or email [Craig@myASD.com](mailto:Craig@myASD.com).

*National Sales Manager, Craig Meehan, has been an integral part of the ASD team since 2016. Craig works with funeral professionals to determine how ASD can meet their funeral home's needs. He regularly attends funeral home conferences throughout the year and enjoys speaking to directors about possible solutions to their business challenges. Craig has 15 years of experience consulting business owners on technology solutions. He was the Marketing and Customer Service Manager for Petfooddirect.com (Now Chewy.com) and was a Technical Consultant for American Reprographic Company and Verizon. Craig is passionate about helping funeral professionals develop a communication and technology strategy that meets the needs of the today's families while helping the funeral home increase productivity.*



Happy Holidays \* Season's Greetings

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