

## **Best Practices for Funeral Directors to use Facebook**

When I was young and visiting my Grandparents at the family funeral home—[EganFuneralHome.com](http://EganFuneralHome.com) in Bolton, Ontario—I would spend a lot of time with my grandfather walking into town, going to the post office and running other errands. I was always amazed about how many people knew him and that he knew them. His success—just like other past generation funeral directors—could be attributed to being a helpful member of community, whether professionally or in other activities. They knew him, they liked him, and when they needed his services, they could trust him.

Since life is different nowadays and there are a lot less people in the “social hubs” than there were 50 years ago, it doesn’t mean that you have to go to the same places where Gramps hung out—he was where the people were. You should apply the same philosophy—Go To Where The People in Your Community Are!

Now, I’m not saying quit all of the groups that you are currently involved with—but you should take some quick inventory on your time invested vs. the exposure and reach that you get.

If you think that I am just pushing this Facebook stuff on you because I am a bit of a techie—you’re wrong. I’m trying to tell you that it is probably one of the biggest networks in your town and you need to be in there!

Do you know how many people in your market are on Facebook? Would you be surprised that I could tell you exactly how many down to the individual, gender, age? It’s easy to find out—and also you can advertise so directly it would blow you away!

But before we get into my Funeral-Facebook Formula, you have to make sure that you have the basic foundation of Facebook Profiles and Pages. So we are going to build off of the Seven Mistakes Funeral Directors make with Facebook article. I want to outline what the Best Practices are for funeral directors using Facebook.

The purpose of this “Best Practices” is to cut through all of the noise and give you the straight goods and short-cut the learning process for you as I teach you to nurture your online relationships to build your community, increase your credibility and visibility because people want to do business with people that they know, like and trust—Facebook can help you achieve that!

I don’t want Facebook to be a new time-waster although I must warn you: if you are new to Facebook, it is easy to get sucked in, connecting with old friends, checking photos, playing games, taking quizzes, etc. Anyway, after the initial rush wears off, it will be back to business—relationship-building business, that is!

This Best Practices is really going to get you up and running, but when you want to kick it into high-gear, you should check out my Funeral-Facebook Formula seminar coming in July to a computer near you.

Before we get into the Nuts & Bolts, we need to know the difference between Profiles and Pages.

### **Facebook Profile Pros**

- \* You can have one-on-one interaction
- \* You create a feeling of a more personal connection
- \* You gain “perceived” credibility with more Friends
- \* Your Friends can message you (pro from their perspective)
- \* You can be tagged in photos and videos and appear automatically (sometimes good)

### **Facebook Profile Cons**

- \* You need to have mutual agreement for friending
- \* People must be Facebook members and logged in to view
- \* You can’t message all friends at once or you could get banned
- \* You are limited to 5,000 friends

- \* You could get inundated with messages in your inbox
- \* You can be tagged in photos and videos and appear automatically (sometimes bad)

### **Facebook Fan Page Pros**

- \* You can have an unlimited number of fans
- \* You have the ability to message an entire group
- \* Your page can be accessed by the public (no Facebook login required + it can be indexed by Google—see naming below)
- \* Your page appears in homepage stream which is a great way to remind your Friends about updates and new content
- \* People have opted in to hear updates about your business, unlike your profile

### **Facebook Fan Page Cons**

- \* It is sometimes hard to get people to become Fans
- \* The term "Fan" is a little weird, especially when applied to a funeral home
- \* Doesn't feel like a personal connection
- \* You don't have the same personal relationship as you only post as the Business, not as yourself

OK, now that we know some of the differences, let's build both a Profile and a Page—leveraging the Pros to our advantage.

### **Profile Set Up—Phase 1 (1 hour)**

1. Select an appropriate photo: one that best connects you to your audience
2. Upload Contacts from Email Accounts / Outlook (I skip the "Invite Others to Facebook")
3. Complete the Profile information: make it as complete as possible but keep it within your comfort level
4. Complete Education and Work Profile information: this makes it easier for your old contacts to find you
5. List all of your websites under contact information
6. Upload contacts from Email Accounts / Outlook

### **Profile Set Up—Phase 2 (1 to 2 hours + ongoing):**

1. Search Friends' Friends lists
2. Search Groups and Fan Pages for possible contacts: You don't even have to join the group—just see who the members are. But join if you think it would be valuable
3. Search your competitors' Friends: click on the View Friends link and add any friends that you think would be appropriate to friend

Notes: When entering a website address (URL) make sure that you use the "http://" before the www...as that will make the link clickable.

### **Fan Page Set Up—Phase 1**

1. Choose the Category > Local > Event Planning Service OR Professional Service
2. Choosing the Right Name—Place important keywords together with your company's name such as "Your Town" Funeral Homes (unless that is a competitor's name) | Your Funeral Chapel (see McCall's example)
3. Upload your logo or an appropriate photo—make sure that it is recognizable and if possible have some personality
4. Complete the Edit Information
5. Upload photos and tag yourself or staff members if appropriate
6. Upload videos—How-To and FAQ videos would be preferred over commercials—again, you are trying to build a relationship, not to sell anything (don't exclude commercials, just limit them)
7. Add Links to helpful information from your website
8. Suggest to Friends—Be selective whom you invite at the beginning until you really have your page "super-charged"

Please remember, Facebook Pages and how funeral homes can use Facebook are a work in progress. These are some general best practices (for now). Here are some examples of Facebook pages that you can use as a guide to creating your Page:

- <http://facebook.com/mccallbros>
- <http://facebook.com/royaloakburialpark>
- <http://facebook.com/toddvanbeck>
- <http://facebook.com/amosfamily>
- <http://facebook.com/funeralfuturist>

Note: Once you have 25 friends on your profile or 25 fans on your page, you can create a Vanity URL like the ones above. Just go to <http://facebook.com/username> to set your Vanity URL.

If you are interested in learning how to USE Facebook for your funeral business, I know you will get a lot out of my Funeral Home-Facebook seminar that is going to be held as a CEU opportunity in July. Check [www.FuneralDirectorCEUs.com](http://www.FuneralDirectorCEUs.com) for more information.

*Robin Heppell, CFSP, is a fourth-generation funeral director and a funeral home marketing consultant. He combines his expertise in technology and pre-need, his formal business knowledge and his deep-rooted legacy in the funeral profession so that he can help funeral homes and cemeteries to be more competitive, more profitable, and provide the best possible service for the families they serve. To download a free Resource Guide, visit <http://www.FuneralFuturistTips.com>.*