



funeral service **insider**

independent news & guidance for funeral home owners and operators

Funeralocity Seeks to Help Firms Win the Online Value Competition

If you visit the homepage for Funeralocity.com, you'll see a man and woman in jeans and boots leaning against a vehicle in the middle of a field with huge hay rolls in the background.

If you're thinking this is not your typical website pertaining to funeral service, then you're right.

Ed Michael Reggie, managing director of Future Factory, which creates and manages startups, is the founder and CEO of Funeralocity, which launched the site in May in the Metro-Atlanta region. Like Travelocity.com, the website allows visitors to compare prices – but instead of perusing fares for airline tickets and hotel rooms – it reveals prices to hold funeral and memorial services.

The site, which has no affiliation with Travelocity.com, shows visitors photos, ratings and reviews for funeral homes by address or zip code.

Most funeral professionals are already familiar with the concept.



Ed Michael Reggie, founder and CEO of Funeralocity, has assembled some high-profile advisers from the funeral profession who are trying to convince funeral directors that his site can help them win more business.

Parting.com, Everest Funeral Planning and Concierge Service, I'm Sorry to Hear LLC (which has been rebranded to Funerals360) and eFuneral all at one point sought to build businesses that revolved – at least in part – around comparing funeral home pricing.

But Funeralocity is different from all of those sites, Reggie says.

Park Lawn Agrees to Buy Saber Management

Park Lawn Corp., based in Toronto, has agreed to buy Saber Management LLC, which owns and operates 19 cemeteries and four funeral homes in Kentucky, Illinois and Texas for \$48.75 million, subject to customary working capital adjustments, plus additional consideration of up to \$9.75 million in PLC common shares, the company announced in a news release. The additional consideration will be held in escrow and be released over a period of three years if certain financial hurdles are met.

“The acquisition of Saber presents an exciting opportunity for Park Lawn,” says Andrew Clark, chairman and CEO of Park Lawn Corp. “The acquisition is in line with our communicated growth strategy and significantly increases our footprint and presence in the U.S. market.”

“Saber Management is very proud to become part of the Park Lawn family. The leadership of our company views this as an opportunity to match our sales and marketing skills with the disciplined growth of Park Lawn,” says David Sullivan, CEO of Saber.

The deal is expected to be completed on or about Sept. 30. The day-to-day operations, sales and marketing efforts at Saber's locations will continue to be managed by Saber's existing team.



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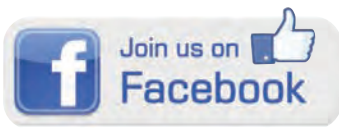
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The homepage of Funeralocity vows to offer consumers a “simple new way” to find and compare funeral homes. (Screen shot from www.funeralocity.com)

“On our site, funeral homes can control their pricing, photographs and how they appear on the website. The site is dynamic and ever changing. ... I’m not aware of anyone who has created a marketplace like that,” Reggie says.

Dan Isard, founder and president of The Foresight Companies in Phoenix, is one of the company’s high-profile advisers – and he’s throwing his full support behind Reggie’s venture.

“During my tenure in funeral service, I’ve seen the growth of the internet, and there have been a number of companies that have come out and have basically tried selling funeral directors to be a member of their site and charging fees to be a member,” Isard says. “They were limited technology companies, and they didn’t get funeral service ... they didn’t ally themselves with funeral homes.”

Isard isn’t the only well-known

funeral professional who wants to see the site succeed. Other advisers include:

- Doug Gober, founder of Gober Strategic Capital in Kenner, Louisiana.
- Ernie Heffner, president of Best Life Tributes Funeral & Cremation Care in York, Pennsylvania.
- Mark Krause, president of Krause Funeral Home in Milwaukee.
- Michael S. Schoedinger, president of Schoedinger Funeral & Cremation Services in Columbus, Ohio.
- Douglas Wagemann, president of Cochrane and Wagemann in Roseville, California.
- Jeffrey S. Wages, president of Wages & Sons Funeral Homes and Crematories in Lawrenceville, Georgia.

Funeralocity has a limited number of senior consultant advisers who serve on its advisory council that are allowed to participate in a stock

program in exchange for their advice and counsel.

Advisory council members are well-respected experts from throughout the country who make themselves available for consultation as needed, according to Funeralocity.

Robust Features

One of the site's features that Isard is bullish about is its display of reviews.

“Funeralocity is such a different animal because it has a consumer link, it has a B2B link and I think it will truly enhance many of the Excellence members through their association,” he says.

Those Excellence members are prominently featured on the site through videos, photos, eye-catching graphics and other features.

In the Metro-Atlanta region, Funeralocity lists the prices for every one of the area's more than 200 funeral homes, Reggie says. Forty funeral homes are members of its Excellence program, and the company is reviewing other funeral homes for inclusion in the program.

Vera Carley, a public relations consultant for Funeralocity, notes that Funeralocity has reached out to funeral homes in Atlanta and other metro areas that were recommended by members of its advisory council to inform them about the new platform, and funeral directors from those businesses applied to the Excellence Program. “There have been a few instances where a funeral home was not allowed to participate in the program because of their compliance record,” she says.

No funeral home – including the Excellence members – pay to be on the site. The Excellence members, however, must meet

Funeralocity's Excellence Program

To be accepted as a member of Funeralocity's Excellence Program, network participants:

1. Must have a current and valid business and occupational license required by all governmental or regulatory entities. Any changes in license status must be reported to Funeralocity at funeralhomes@funeralocity.com within 10 days of said change.
2. Must remain in good standing with those state(s) and organizations which provide you license(s) to do business.
3. Must inform Funeralocity within 30 days of any action taken against your funeral home(s) or funeral home director(s) by any governmental or regulatory agencies.
4. Must identify the funeral director in full and continuous charge.
5. Have an ethical obligation to maintain strict compliance with the letter and spirit of all laws and regulations that impact the funeral consumer, the funeral profession and public health.
6. Have an ethical obligation to maintain strict compliance with the letter and spirit of all laws and regulations that impact the funeral consumer, the funeral profession, and public health.
7. Shall not engage in any unprofessional conduct of a character likely to deceive, defraud or harm the public, or the families being served in the course of providing professional services.
8. Shall not engage in false or misleading advertising.
9. Shall carry out all aspects of the family's funeral service in a competent and respectful manner.
10. Shall protect confidential information pertaining to the deceased or the family of the deceased from disclosure in compliance with all laws and regulations.
11. Must provide Funeralocity families a complete and clear itemized list of charges for services, facilities, equipment, merchandise and cash advanced items, and agree not to make any additional charges without their approval.
12. Must charge families based upon the GPL prices you have listed on Funeralocity.com.

certain criteria as shown in the sidebar.

Consumers can post reviews on any funeral home listed on the website, and requests to be contacted will be passed on to all funeral homes, according to the company.

“We will contact nonparticipating funeral homes that are referred leads to discuss the benefits of participating in the Funeralocity Excellence Program and offer them the chance to apply for the program to showcase their funeral home in a more robust way,” Carley says.

Funeralocity Excellence Program participants pay a fee when a funeral is sold and after the funeral home is paid. “Ten percent is paid to Funeralocity and 5 percent is given to the family as an on-the spot rebate in the form of a discount the funeral director provides to Funeralocity families,” Carley says. “The discount is on the total cost of goods and services, minus cash advance items.”

To earn money, Funeralocity will need to send lots of leads to funeral homes – and those leads must convert. To that end, the company has a broadside advertisement on more than 50 buses in the Atlanta area. The company also has been featured on television, radio and in newspapers.

“I have to say the reception in Atlanta has blown me away,” Reggie says.

The company will not expand beyond the Metro-Atlanta region until it’s ready, but in the meantime it’s been making inroads in other markets by collecting prices and introducing its concept to funeral homes.

“I want to be patient,” Reggie says. “One of the great things about being a private company is that we get to do things deliber-

Survey Reveals Key Findings

Harris Poll conducted a survey in the United States on behalf of Funeralocity from May 5-9, 2016, among 2,033 adults ages 18 and older.

The survey revealed key findings that Funeralocity thinks bodes well for its business model, including:

- 79 percent strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement: “I would like to be able to shop for and compare funeral home services and pricing online if I had to plan a funeral for someone else.”
- 50 percent of people strongly or somewhat agreed with the following statement: “I know which funeral home I would use if the need arose for me to plan a funeral for someone else today.”

About Ed Michael Reggie

He goes by “Ed Michael” and his last name is “Reggie,” but there’s much more to the man with three first names.

The founder and CEO of Funeralocity began his career in commercial banking before founding American LIFECARE, a multistate managed-care organization in 1983, where he served as chairman of the board for 20 years.

As the managing director of FutureFactory, he oversees the strategic direction of the company, which creates and manages startups, which includes Funeralocity.

He earned his MBA from Tulane University and a Bachelor of Science in finance from the University of New Orleans.

A native of Louisiana, he is the son of the late Edmund M. Reggie, a prominent Louisiana judge who campaigned for John. F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy and Edward Kennedy and became an extended member of the Kennedy family in 1992 when his daughter, Victoria, married Edward Kennedy.

ately. We want to make sure we do it correctly.”

Gathering pricing information for so many funeral homes was no easy task, Reggie says. “It took some time, but it was very important that we develop that information, and we reached out to the funeral homes and got the information,” he says. “We did not pretend to be someone else nor did we identify ourselves as Funeralocity as we were an unknown entity. We just called up and asked for their prices.”

Reggie declined to reveal his advertising budget, but he said 60 percent will be spent on traditional media and 40 percent on digital media.

Funeralocity has not identified which metropolitan area it will enter next, but it has been mulling that over internally, Reggie says. He notes that Atlanta is the sixth-largest metropolitan statistical area in the United States and that about half its residents were born out of state, which makes it a great place to test out the site’s concept.

Asked how the company would be affected if the Federal Trade Commission revises its Funeral Rule to mandate all funeral homes post prices on their websites – something that consumer groups such as the Funeral Consumers Alliance have been pushing for – Reggie says he doesn't view it as a factor. Consumers would still want a third-party site to compare prices of numerous providers at once, he says. “It may make it easier for us to get prices to list on our website, so it may be a good thing,” he says.

Despite Funeralocity’s tagline, which is featured prominently under the logo on its site – “See for yourself. Compare. Save.” – Reggie says he wouldn’t have started his venture if it was all about pricing. “It’s not,” he says. “People are looking for value and for reviews and weightings to make the decision that is in their budget and where they believe the perceived value is.”

The funeral homes that are listed on Funeralocity are not engaging in a price competition, Reggie says. “It is a value competition,” he says – and Funeralocity helps funeral homes promote value better than ever before by leveraging the Internet.

Burial		ONLINE-ONLY Rebate
–	Traditional Burial with Viewing & Funeral Service	\$5,080 \$4,826*
	Basic Services	\$1,695
	Embalming	\$995
	Dressing & Casketing	\$385
	Viewing & Visitation	\$495
	Funeral Service	\$495
	Transfer to Funeral Home	\$395
	Hearse to Cemetery	\$495
	Service/Utility Vehicle	\$125
+	Burial with Graveside Service	\$4,360 \$4,142*
Cremation		ONLINE-ONLY Rebate
+	Cremation with Viewing & Funeral Service	\$4,460 \$4,237*
+	Direct Cremation	\$750 \$713*
Additions		
+	Merchandise	

Above is an example of how pricing appears on the Funeralocity.com site. If you click on the plus sign for each category, a more detailed listing will open such as the “traditional burial with viewing & funeral service” in the example above. (Screen shot from www.Funeralocity.com)

“If this was solely about price, I would have never been involved,” Isard says. “The majority of consumers are not price focused – they are almost exclusively value focused.” He adds that Funeralocity will be an ally to consumers while helping funeral directors serve the flood of consumers shopping on the internet.

That online shopping is here to stay, Reggie says. “Online marketplaces have revolutionized how we shop for everything – people find their spouses online now,” he says.

Do you have thoughts you'd like to share on the Funeralocity.com concept? Send your comments to tparmalee@katesboylston.com.

Passare Announces Integration with Consolidated Funeral Services

Passare Inc. has announced its integration with Consolidated Funeral Services, a provider of custom websites for funeral homes.

“Passare is now able to send information such as the obituary, service dates and times, types of services, and much more directly to CFS websites with just one click,” Passare Vice President and Chief Product Officer Chris Baber says in a news release. “This very simple process helps funeral homes save time, reduce errors, and streamline their process for each family served.”

Passare launched its collaboration platform in 2014 to help funeral homes and families connect and collaborate in an interactive, online environment designed to simplify the funeral planning process. The collaborative platform is also a fully functioning funeral administration system built on a web-based platform, which is accessible anytime, anywhere, from any internet-connected device.

With Passare’s integration with CFS, funeral directors can send the data gathered on a case, such as the obituary, vital statistics, and funeral options, straight to the funeral home’s CFS website. The integration will allow for a single point of data entry, eliminating the need to re-enter data that is already available on Passare.

“We are very impressed with Passare’s innovative collaboration and case management system and are pleased to support comprehensive integration between Passare and CFS,” says Felix Tsatskis, co-founder of CFS. “This new feature provides our mutual customers with two great solutions that operate as though one company produced them.”

Outpace Competitors and Help More Families by Coming to Nashville

Funeral professionals from throughout the country are looking forward to turbocharging business operations by attending two events in Nashville. Visit the event websites to learn more.

- Cremation Strategies Conference, Dec. 6: Visit www.CremationStrategies.com
- Funeral Service Business Plan Conference, Dec. 7-8: Visit www.KBbizplan.com