

# **Special Industry Report: The Funeral Home Manager's Guide to Websites: Myths, Misconceptions and Secrets**

**Funeral Home Managers! Your Funeral Home May Be Losing  
Reputation, Loyalty and Future Profits with Your Website...**

*Read this Special Industry Report about Funeral Home Websites and Discover...*

- **How to Avoid 9 Funeral Website Rip-Offs**
- **7 Costly Misconceptions about Funeral Home Website Design**
- **The 5 Deadly Secrets that Web Developers Don't Want You to Know.**
- **7 Mistakes to Avoid When Choosing a Funeral Home Web Site Designer**
- **10 Key Elements that Every Funeral Home Website Should Have To Be Seen as the Funeral Authority in Your Market**
- **15-Point Toolkit to Creating a Successful Funeral Home Website**
- **Funeral Home Website Report Card: How Does Your Website Rate?**

Provided as an Educational Service by:  
**Robin Heppell, FuneralFuturist.com**  
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# FuneralFuturist.com

Dear Funeral Home Owner or Manager:

Did you know that your website may represent a bigger drain on your funeral home's profits than anything else in your organization?

How can this be possible? Look at these startling facts...



- *Web design companies routinely add secret links to your site which benefit them...and hamper your site's effectiveness.*
- *Designers and developers often charge hundreds of dollars for a particular service...which can be obtained absolutely free.*
- *You may be taking a certain action with your past obituaries that drains the power of your website.*

As a lifelong industry professional and Internet/website strategy consultant, I have seen numerous mismanaged funeral home websites, and the manner in which they can degrade your attempts to build and maintain loyalty.

As a result, I have prepared this Special Industry Report on the myths, misconceptions, and secrets regarding funeral home websites, along with solid, actionable solutions. I hope you will find this report helpful, and I urge you to contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Robin Heppell'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Robin Heppell, President

FuneralFuturist.com | 800-810-3595

Robin Heppell is the founder of

Center of Excellence for Funeral Service Professionals, Inc.

## The Industry Raves About Robin Heppell

*“...we knew that **Rob Heppell** was **the one** to [take our marketing virtual]. Now we **don’t** have to worry...”*

Jake Johnson, President  
[www.JohnsonConsulting.com](http://www.JohnsonConsulting.com)

*“...[an] understanding of websites, Internet marketing – together with funeral home operations... We will probably **save 200 hours of website administration** this coming year.”*

Mark Smith, Manager  
[www.AmosFamily.com](http://www.AmosFamily.com)

*“...**knowledge, efficiency, and professionalism**...”*

Ernie Hagel, President and Owner  
McInnis & Holloway Funeral Homes  
Calgary, Alberta

*“[I] **recommend Robin Heppell** for web site creation and maintenance... It was great to speak to someone on this topic, and **not be overwhelmed** with computer lingo.”*

Brad Scott, General Manager  
R.S. Kane Funeral Home  
Toronto, Canada

# Learn the Top Fears and Misconceptions Funeral Home Managers Have When Hiring a Website Design Company



## Fears...?

You are not alone if you express fears about hiring a website design company for your funeral home. Managers on a regular basis report that they are reluctant to hire website designers because of some of the following reasons:

- “I just know that I am going to get ripped off.”
- “The design company will push a sophisticated technology that we don’t need.....Yet I won’t know enough about that technology to say no...”
- “The funeral industry emphasizes clear communication and loyalty building...yet changes to the site will be costly.”
- “I will spend more of my time dealing with computer issues than with helping my clientele.”
- “The site will not be worthy of the stature my funeral home is presenting to the community.”
- “Even making the smallest changes will require a call to the design company...and they may not attend to my request right away.”
- “I have heard that extra features like site analytics will be charged to me on a monthly basis—month after month.”
- “Ranking higher in the search engines is a specialized ‘SEO’ (search engine optimization) activity that requires ultra-expensive experts.”
- “Uploading obituaries will be cumbersome and add yet another layer of work to my day.”

## **Misconceptions...?**

Rumors and myths are as dangerous to the funeral industry as with any other industry. Funeral home website design is no exception. Don't be alarmed if any of these misconceptions are familiar to you...countless funeral home managers share the same misguided ideas:

- That you are limited to the number of pages for your site.
- That you are limited to the number of email addresses that you can have.
- That you have to pay extra to have detailed website statistics and reports.
- That fancy graphics and animation are better than text.
- That website designers and graphical artists are marketers.
- That you have to have your entire site rebuilt if you want to change the look of the site.

## **Benefits...!**

When you contact Robin Heppell about website design for your funeral home, you will enjoy these benefits:

- Higher rankings in Google, which mean that you are seen as the expert in your market.
- Community can find funeral service information faster, giving you more authority and provide additional value to your community.
- Save time with easy to upload obits and condolence approval with one easy click.
- Save additional development costs as pages and images can be easily added or changed.
- Easily add video and audio without any development costs.
- Our approach is from a marketing perspective; as a result, your website will get more views than any other advertising medium...especially "traditional" media such as Yellow Pages and newspaper ads.

## "How to Avoid 9 Funeral Home Website Design Rip-Offs!"

### Rip-Off

Pretty splash / landing pages.

Fancy Flash animation and graphics.

You are charged for web development...on a per-page basis.

SEO (search engine optimization) is another added expense.

Charged extra to have the ability to have a blog about your funeral home.

Obituaries cannot be hosted on your own site.

Unbelievably low price.

### Bad Results

Makes visitors to your site jump through unnecessary hoops. Usability degrades. Visitors become frustrated, and they leave your site. Also, Google and the other search engines hate these types of pages.

Web developers gravitate to the latest technology even if it could be counter-productive for your website. Flash animation and navigation are nearly impossible for search engines to read.

Search engines like Google grant favor to websites that have more pages. Charging for extra pages would be counter-intuitive and would degrade your attempts to build online reputation and loyalty.

Websites should be built with search engines in mind, not with SEO as an afterthought.

Blogs can be seamlessly integrated into your website – giving you the power and benefit of a blog without it being a separate site...and with little additional effort on your part.

Obituaries not only can be easily hosted on your site—but *should be* on your site.

The actual, inflated price comes at the end, in the form of unexplained add-ons on the final bill or you might sacrifice flexibility and the ability to customize your site.

## "7 Costly Misconceptions About Funeral Home Website Design"

### Misconception

### Bad Result

"The number of pages on my site is limited, right?"

Did you know that some web design companies charge \$85 or more per page? Google and other search engines eagerly feed on new content. By limiting the production of new content, your site slowly falls out of favor with these powerful allies.

"I can only have a few e-mail addresses...and any more would cost extra."

Fewer e-mail addresses means that communication floods a handful of in-boxes.

"I've heard that I'll be required to pay extra for detailed website analytics and traffic reports."

Paying additional fees for analytics makes little sense. The most powerful analytics program in the world is available at no extra cost.

"Fancy graphics and animation are more effective than plain text."

Elaborate graphics and animation not only confuse the search engines, but impede visitors who have slower Internet connections.

"If I want to change the look of my site, I'll basically have to rebuild it all over again."

Entirely rebuilding a site means expensive charges for unnecessary work. Developers "reskin" a site, an unbelievably simple process that nonetheless produces such dramatic graphical changes that developers often feel they can charge higher fees.

"One website designer told me that she could take care of the marketing part, too. The two naturally go hand in hand."

Web designers and developers who claim that the "marketing will fall into place" are dooming your site to failure.

"The public still favors newspapers and other traditional media when it comes to funeral notices."

Print media is no longer the only way the public receives funeral-related news. Plus, online obits are still the number one driver of traffic to your website.

# "The 5 Deadly Secrets About Funeral Home Website Design that Developers Don't Want You to Know"

## Secret/Danger

Typical funeral home web design companies include a link to their website on the bottom of every page in your site.

Website design and development companies which charge extra for regular site analysis (metrics) of your traffic.

Design companies often charge a "premium" rate for the "additional work" of SEO experts taking actions to push your obits to search engine upper ranks.

Web developers often hoard the "keys to the store," keeping files and passwords to themselves because they say that revisions are "too complex" for clients to do themselves.

"Sure, we can add another five e-mail addresses, but that will cost extra in hosting costs."

## Bad Result

You lose valuable "Google juice" (a value which determines rankings) by this practice.

You are paying for a service that is free. Google Analytics is one of the most powerful statistical packages available and should be included in every website; it is free.

Managers, this decimates your bottom line. Top search engine rankings should be a right, not a privilege.

By handing over control of your website to someone else, it is guaranteed that you will have to pay every time you need something changed.

This verges on outright theft. An almost infinite number of e-mail addresses can be added to your domain, at no extra hosting costs.

## "7 Mistakes to Avoid When Choosing a Funeral Home Web Designer"

### Mistake

"I am a local business. So, I feel obligated to support my local economy...at any cost."

"The designer recommended that we host condolences on a separate site or domain... She said, 'Well, that's just the way the system is set up. It's conventional practice.'"

"I think that websites automatically end up on Google, right?"

"I feel more comfortable if the design company does all of the changes. I don't need that complexity in my life."

"I liked the web designer's portfolio. Very attractive stuff! Quite the artist!"

"We felt that our funeral home website was a nice 'accessory.' The main form of communication is still the local paper."

"Our obits were showing up on page 2 of Google. But the web company said that was okay."

### Bad Result

The cost is usually your profits. Local businesses are not a charity. Choose the funeral website company that leads your industry in internet-related practices, tactics, and topics. No other company out there covers the subject like we do, with a vast offering of webinars, seminars, tutorials, eBooks, eCourses, and much more.

Moving condolences off of your site means that you are wasting a golden opportunity – the opportunity to get free content for your site. Search engines love to gobble up as much content as you can serve them.

Not true. In order to build your site effectively and attain high rankings, you need intelligent design and strategic planning.

Ceding control has a high price. What happens if you need to make changes during Christmas week...when the design company is on vacation?

Want the unvarnished truth? Some web designers are frustrated Picassos who love to create their "art" on the client's dime. Good art does not necessarily make an effective website.

The local rag is becoming increasingly just that. Every month, another giant newspaper syndicate crashes and burns. Where does that leave the local paper?

Not okay. When obituaries do not show up high on page 1, they are not found. When obits are not found, you are not adequately serving the family or your community.

## Why You Want Heppell to Manage Your Funeral Home's Website Design

<b>Our Process</b>	<b>Why Our Clients Care</b>
<i>Hands-On, Personal Attention.</i>	Our clients know all about giving personal attention. They expect the same in return. And who better than a 4 <sup>th</sup> generation funeral director to provide you with the same care you provide to your client families?
<i>Experience Specific to Funeral Industry Website Design.</i>	Why hire a website designer who knows nothing of the business? We have years of experience with the exact thing you need: funeral home website design and marketing.
<i>Functionality And Design Have Equal Footing.</i>	Pretty designs should not dominate your website at the expense of functionality. We know how to balance the two needs, so that your website is a marketing powerhouse that is attractive as well.
<i>Attuned to Your Needs as an Active Funeral Home Manager.</i>	Our clients manage a host of issues, the website being simply one of those many issues. We keep that in perspective, and make sure that your website design and management will not overwhelm you. Also we are there to assist you at any time at no additional charge.
<i>Our Personal 100% No-Risk Guarantee</i>	By contacting us for your funeral home website development, you have all to gain, nothing to lose.

## **"10 Key Elements Every Funeral Home Website Should Have To Be Seen as the Funeral Authority in Your Market"**

<b>Key Element</b>	<b>Why You Need This</b>
Top search engine rankings.	Stature is measured by Google, Yahoo!, and other search engine rankings.
Online condolences, hosted on your site.	When funeral home websites direct visitors to a different site for condolences, this is viewed as “cheap” and it does nothing to build your site.
Analytics updated daily.	It is crucial to know all of the details of your site traffic. Finally now there is a way to accurately measure the success of your marketing
The power to make revisions on your own—easily, quickly, and without the need for special computer knowledge.	You do not want to be dependent on a website design company for changes to your site. You need to have easy-to-use, intuitive tools that let you take control of your website, but still feel comforted that expert help is only a phone call away.
No Flash, splash, or overly decorative web pages.	Research shows that highly ornate websites, while attractive, are directly correlated with loss of functionality and fall out of favor with the search engines.
A steadily growing number of web pages.	Every time you add pages to your website, Google takes notice.
Fair, reasonable, and up-front pricing.	“Lowball” pricing results in harmful cost-saving measures which hamper your site’s effectiveness. Establishing a fair and reasonable price is the best method of ensuring a quality product. Plus our support fees include the latest in website and marketing strategies. No other company offers this.
Legacy retention of obituaries and condolences.	Automatic archiving of obits and condolences solidifies your standing in the community as the ultimate chronicler of local people and events.
Regular blogging.	Blogging attracts clicks and attention, pushing your site higher in search engine rankings and burnishing your reputation as an industry leader. Not only is this feature included but you will be coached on what to write and when to write it.

## Case Study: Why the Matthewman Funeral Home Website was Losing Money, Visitors, and Loyalty...and What They Did About It



In this case study, we envision how a website is draining big bucks from the Matthewman Funeral Home. If Matthewman's manager, Phillip Sheed, contacted us to analyze why the website was performing so poorly and losing money, we might identify the following...

**Problem:** The Matthewman Funeral home is plagued with phone calls about service times because they could not find this information online...

**Reason:** Website is not showing up on the search engines. Websites are fast becoming the dominant method within the funeral industry of conveying information.

**Problem:** Matthewman was charged \$1,000 to add 2 more pages to the site...

**Solution:** The manager before Sheed had chosen a website design company that builds and maintains the site on a per-page cost basis. Sheed left this design company at the end of the existing contract and moved to a website design company that did not charge on a per-page basis.

**Problem:** Sheed once requested minor changes to the site...and it took the present site design company 6 business days—plus additional design fees—to accomplish this.

**Solution:** This is unacceptable in an industry that depends on the timely dissemination of information. We would advise Sheed to retain control of his own site so that he could make these changes in-house. In the event of elaborate changes, we would be able to turn them around in 48 hours.

**Problem:** The funeral home was paying \$20 per month—every month—for subscription to a website analytics program. This represented a further drain on Matthewman's resources.

**Solution:** One of the world's best analytics programs is easy to originate, a snap to maintain, and is completely free. We would advise Matthewman to save several hundred dollars per year by switching to this free analytics program. Also Matthewman would receive a quarterly review of the analytics, at no extra cost.

## Your 15-Point Toolkit to Creating a Successful Funeral Home Website

Find out how to easily create a high-performing funeral home website or how to fix your website problems. Make certain that:

1. Online Obituaries Appear at the Top of the Search Engines.
2. Online Obits Appear on Search Engines—Fast.
3. Community Can Easily Find Service Information Merely with General Searches on Google or Other Search Engines.
4. Obits and Condolences are Automatically Easily Accessible and Easily Searched and Archived.
5. You are Able to Update Your Website Yourself...and Easily.
6. You Can Discover Who is Coming to Your Site, How Long They Stay, and What They View: Site Analytics at No Extra Cost.
7. You Establish Your Website as the “Absolute Source” for Funerals, Cremation, and Grief in Your Area, Above Print Newspapers and Even Online News Sites.
8. You Have an Easy Tool to Update Website In-House...as Easily as Sending an E-Mail with an Attachment.
9. You Position Your Funeral Home on Search Engines So That You are Viewed as “The Authority for Funeral Service.”
10. Lightning-Fast Uploading of Obituary Notices is Possible.
11. You Can Approve Condolences with One Click of a Mouse.
12. You or Your Staff Can Add Video and Audio Easily.
13. You Can Create Multiple E-Mail Addresses for Different Funeral Home Functions—at No Extra Cost.
14. You Deal with a Company that Knows the Funeral Industry...Inside and Out.
15. Learn From a Person Who Has Been a Trailblazer Not Only in Funeral Home Websites But in Funeral Home Internet Marketing (Maybe You Found Rob Through One of His Successful Online Marketing Efforts?)

## Funeral Home Website Report Card: How Does Your Website Rate?

Take the time to fill out this Website Report Card and find out if your site is working for you. Also, refer to the free video at: [www.FuneralFuturistWebsites.com/report-card-video](http://www.FuneralFuturistWebsites.com/report-card-video).

<b>Website Item</b>	<b>Yes / No</b>
<p><b>Does your website have online obituary notices and condolences?</b> Online obituaries and condolences are the number one way to drive traffic to your website.</p>	
<p><b>If you have online obits, are they hosted on your site?</b> Google does not give you "credit" for condolences hosted on another site. Not only that, but you are taking visitors away from your own site.</p>	
<p><b>Does your home page have enough text on it for the search engines to read?</b> Search engines are unable to read images, animations, or Flash on your site. They bypass these elements, instead searching for other, more descriptive sites.</p>	
<p><b>Does your funeral home website have a blog or the ability to easily update timely information?</b> Both Google and your community want to see that you have current, relevant information. Most funeral home websites make it cost prohibitive to add new content so that it can be "indexed" (or found) by the search engines (Google, Yahoo, MSN, etc.) By making it hard to add fresh content to your site is counter-intuitive to what Google is looking for!</p>	
<p><b>Does your homepage get visitors where they want to go in the least amount of clicks?</b> In short, this is called usability. Sites that require many clicks are considered low-usability sites. Low-usability sites eventually frustrate visitors, causing them to click away.</p>	
<p><b>Do your URLs have keywords in them and not a series of special, meaningless characters?</b> Search engines can read the words in your URLs, but URLs without the keywords do not provide any advantage with the search engines.</p>	
<p><b>Is your site free of web site developer links?</b> If your web developer has inserted their name and a link back to their website at the bottom of your homepage (or worse, on every page), it actually benefits them and hurts you.</p>	
<p><b>Does your website have unique page titles for each page of your website?</b> As you look at the various pages in your website, does the title in the very top of your web browser bar change to the appropriate page you are on? It should. But many sloppily built websites just have the company name on every page of the site...or worse, nothing at all.</p>	
<p><b>Do you have properly worded descriptions for your most important pages?</b> In the old days (5 years ago), the search engines used this information to rank you higher in the search engines. Now it is deemed as arbitrary information so it doesn't help your rankings, but if worded properly, it can help your "click-throughs."</p>	
<p><b>Do you have an XML sitemap for your website?</b> Google, Yahoo, and MSN have concurred that sitemaps are the best way to submit your site to the search engines and to alert them of subsequent changes to your site. Does your site have a page like sitemap.xml or <a href="http://www.YourFuneralChapel.com/sitemap.xml">http://www.YourFuneralChapel.com/sitemap.xml</a>?</p>	

## Robin Heppell's Personal 100% No Risk Guarantee

*Find Out How The Funeral Futurist Guarantees a Successful, High-Performing Website*

Funeral Futurist is the “go-to” solutions provider for everything related to creating a website and your greater online presence.

We Will Implement the Entire 15-Point Toolkit.

- Guarantee that Obituary Notices Appear on Search Engine Page 1 within 24 Hours.
- Make Your Services Information Easily Found on the Search Engines.
- Implement Site Architecture for Preserving and Archiving Your Obituaries.
- Give You the Tools to Update Website Yourself—as Easily as Working in an E-mail Program.
- Provide Website Analytics—Zero Extra Cost to You.
- Make You “The Authority” for All Local Funeral Information Related to Your Home.



## Thank You!

... for reviewing our Special Report, *The Funeral Home Manager's Guide to Websites - Myths, Misconceptions, and Secrets*. I hope this information has been helpful!

If you have any questions or comments...or if you would like to ask us for a funeral home website audit, please call 800-810-3595 or 250-744-3595 or you can email us at [robin@funeralfuturist.com](mailto:robin@funeralfuturist.com).

You can also go to [www.FuneralFuturistWebsites.com](http://www.FuneralFuturistWebsites.com) and register for your FREE copy of Funeral Home Website Repair Kit – 10 Steps to Fix Your Site (and how to get your web developer to fix them)

We've dedicated our business to consumer education and service. We'll be pleased to help you in every way. We look forward to your call or email.

Thanks!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robin Heppell', written in a cursive style.

Robin Heppell, President  
FuneralFuturist.com

## Testimonials

“When we decided that we should take our marketing platform "virtual", we knew that Rob Heppell was the one to do that. Now we don't have to worry about keeping up with the latest Internet marketing - Rob knows what is available and how it applies to funeral service.”

- Jake Johnson, President, Johnson Consulting Group

“There is no one in funeral service that we can find that has the understanding of websites, Internet marketing - together with funeral home operations. Heppell is not just selling us the latest technology, he comes at it from a marketing perspective. The outcome is that he has seamlessly integrated our web presence with our bigger strategy of further building loyalty with our community. Also since online obits and condolences have been our number one driver of visitors to our website, Heppell's website infrastructure makes it so easy to upload obituaries and approve condolences, we will probably save 200 hours of website administration this coming year.”

- Mark Smith, Manager, Amos Family Funeral Home, Shawnee, Kansas

“We appreciate Robin’s knowledge, efficiency and professionalism; he guided us through the process of developing our new website in a timely manner. Robin consistently follows through with any changes we may have and we appreciated how easy he has made it for us to update our site.”

- Ernie Hagel, President & Owner, McInnis & Holloway Funeral Homes, Calgary, Alberta

“It is my pleasure to recommend Robin Heppell for web site creation and maintenance. I met Robin last year at the FSAC convention and was immediately impressed with his knowledge of the profession and how best to put that across on a web site. I had spoken with several web site firms, but always found myself trying to ‘get them up to speed’ on the business. With Robin, that wasn’t a hurdle and in fact he was able to advise us on several methods to professionally present our message. Working with him was also very easy and he was always very prompt at responding to queries or helping with challenges we were facing. It was also great to speak with someone on this topic, and not be overwhelmed with computer lingo. Robin was able to converse on a level that was comfortable. I have since recommended Robin to several firms and have used, and am using his expertise on two other sites on which I’m working.”

- Brad Scott, General Manager, R. S. Kane Funeral Home, Toronto, Ontario