by Gail Rubin



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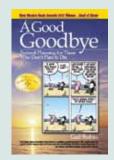
➤ Gail Rubin, The Doyenne of Death, is author of the award-winning book "A Good Goodbye:

Funeral Planning for Those Who Don't Plan to Die," and The Family Plot Blog."

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http://TheFamilyPlot. wordpress.com

A certified celebrant, Rubin also is a popular speaker who uses humor and films to get the funeral planning conversation started.



➤ She is a member of the Association for

Death Education and Counseling and the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association. She also serves on the cemetery committee for Congregation Albert, Albuquerque, New Mexico, and volunteers with the Chevra Kaddisha, which ritually prepares bodies for Jewish burial.

➤ Read Rubin's "30 Funerals in 30 Days Challenge" blog posts at http:// thefamilyplot.wordpress.com/ category/30-day-challenge/



➤ Her "The Newly-Dead Game" is available as an electronic download from http://

agoodgoodbye.com/to-die-for-shopping/the-newly-dead-game/.

TECHNOLOGY



Whether you work at a funeral home or cemetery, there are ways you can use QR codes to provide better service to families and open up new revenue streams for your company.

Understanding QR codes and how they add value to funerals, memorials

hen I spoke at the Ohio Cemetery Association's annual meeting last year, we discussed a number of trends in the trade. One recent development that can benefit both cemeterians and funeral directors is the rise of the QR code.

Over the past year, USA Today, FOX News, the British Broadcasting Corporation, The Minneapolis Star-Tribune and other mainstream media have run stories about QR codes on headstones. These codes are also appearing on funeral programs and prayer cards.

What are QR codes?

What are QR codes, what do they do and how can ICCFA members benefit?

QR codes are the little checkered boxes you see more and more often on packages, newspaper and magazine ads, posters and flyers. Each QR code is a two-dimensional matrix barcode that has opened up a whole new world of instant communications.

QR, or Quick Response, codes were first created in Japan in 1994 by Denso-Wave, a subsidiary of Toyota. They initially were developed for tracking parts in the auto industry. Because QR codes are designed to have their contents decoded at high speeds, it makes them the perfect link between print publications and smartphones.

As companies began to recognize more commercial uses for QR codes, their use grew rapidly in the first decade of the 21st century. QR codes provide a quick way to connect smartphone users to information online.

Making memorial information digital

gives the growing legions of smartphone users a compelling reason to buy funeral goods and services. And there are plenty of smartphone users out there: 234 million Americans over age 13 had a mobile phone in January 2012. More than 101 million had smartphones—and this was months before the iPhone 5 came out.

How they work on a smartphone

If you don't have a QR code reader application on your smartphone, the app is easily available as a free download for the iPhone, Android phones and other models. Tapping the icon on the phone's screen launches the app. The built-in camera captures the QR code image. The app scans the code, which then opens up the Internet browser and goes to the site specified in the code.

The site might contain additional information about a product, contact information, an audio or video recording or an online obituary or memorial page. New uses are developing almost daily.

How do you get a code? A variety of websites allow you to generate one at no charge. You can find them by doing a search for "free QR generator." You simply provide the URL (Web address) that needs to be embedded in the code. It's instantly translated into the QR code format. Simply copy and save the image that's created and you can then use it for printed materials—including memorial folders and plaques affixed to cemetery monuments.

QR codes on memorial markers

By scanning in a QR code that's been affixed to a headstone, smartphone users

More funeral and cemetery suppliers offering QR codes

Many companies offer web hosting and direct customer support for the QR code programs they provide. The following companies are among those that have entered the QR code business (listed in alphabetical order):

- Digital Legacies: Offers the choice of purchasing a memorial website or a memorial website with a QR tag. Affiliates can earn a referral fee for every QR memorial sale sent their way.

 www.DigitalLegacys.com
- Katzman Monument Co. LLC: This Minneapolis-based monument company, first founded in 1935, started offering QR codes and websites in 2011. They offer referral fees for monuments designed through Katzman's online design center and for other products, including urns. www.KatzmanMonument.com
- Making Everlasting Memories (MeM): Started in 1995 making printed memorial keepsake products, Cincinnatibased MeM registered a patent in 2001 to use QR codes for web-based stories. MeM hosts the sites, fields consumer phone calls, provides PR support and branding and pays a referral fee to enrolled partners. www.MeM.com
- My Legacy Memorials: A 2012 newcomer to the field, this company offers to make memorial websites with QR code access.

www.MyLegacyMemorial.com

- Quiring Monuments: Seattle-based Quiring (right near Microsoft headquarters) has experimented with different story-telling technologies for its headstones over many years. They started Living Headstones in 2010, offering websites tied to QR codes.

 www.Monuments.com
- Trigard: At the 2011 ICCFA
 Convention & Exposition, Trigard
 Memorials introduced memorials and urns
 that incorporate QR technology to increase
 gravesite value for families.

 www.Trigard.com

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can immediately learn more about the deceased than simply his or her earthly time span. A website can include videos as well as photos, a full obituary, a scrapbook, stories and remembrances written by loved ones and friends, a family tree. Memorial donation preferences and grave location can be immortalized.

QR codes can help you fill in that little dash between the date of birth and date of death. A website can include more information than the most personalized memorial—or memorial folder.

This is storytelling from beyond the grave. Just about anything you can put on a website can be incorporated into a site associated with a unique QR code. The family is in charge of placing content onto these sites. One person is made the administrator and given a password to make additions and changes. Others can contribute content, which the administrator can

edit and approve before it becomes visible.

The QR code for a memorial website can be affixed to existing headstones with an adhesive backing. These inconspicuous metal or ceramic rectangles are removable. Codes also can be laser etched into new monuments. Manufacturers tout these as long-lasting and weatherproof.

Since the codes can be retrofitted onto existing monuments, they offer cemeteries a potential source of new revenue.

In Loving Memory of: Amanda Dillon Born: June 25, 1976 Died: August 25, 2012 God saw you were getting tired, and a cure was not to be, so He put His arms around you and whispered, "Come with me." With tearful eyes we watched you fade away. Although we loved you dearly; we could not make you stay. A golden heart stopped beating, hard working hands to rest; God broke our hearts to prove to us .. That He only takes the best. It's lonesome here without you; we miss you more each day. Life doesn't seem the same, since you went away. When days are sad and lonely, and everything goes wrong, we seem to hear you whisper, "Cheer up and carry on." Each time we see your picture, you seem to smile and say, "Don't cry, I'm in God's hands, we'll meet again someday!

2400 Washington St. NIS. Albuquerque NM 87110

Memorial folders by Reflections and French mortuaries include QR codes.



Cemeteries can contact families that have plots and add a sale of a QR code to an existing monument or one purchased preneed. It's a low-cost, high-interest addition to headstones.

QR codes on prayer cards, programs

Headstones are not the only place QR codes are being used in the business. OR codes are showing up on memorial programs and prayer cards, with interesting applications. I saw this trend during my "30 Funerals in 30 Days Challenge," which took place from mid-August to mid-September. This was the third vear I attended and wrote about memorial services I selected from the obituaries in my local newspaper.

At the memorial service for Brian Frieder, there was a QR code on the back of the program. Next to the box, it read "Share a Memory—Please join us in remembering Brian

Frieder by visiting our Memorial at www. FrenchFunerals.com. Through this site, we invite you to share your thoughts and fond memories with our family." The site, operated by MeM (Making Everlasting Memories), included tabs for obituary, guest book, images, flowers, service information and disposition.

Another funeral home, Reflections, uses the QR code on a prayer card or memorial program to provide access to the video

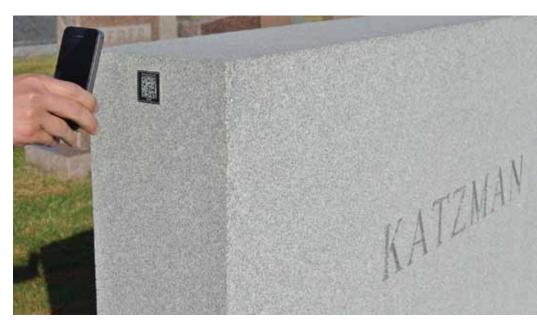
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photomontage they create for each family. They use a private link on YouTube that keeps the family's photos restricted from the general public by making the video unsearchable. Only those who have the QR code or direct YouTube link can see the video.

QR codes are even making their way into some newspaper obituaries. Consumers can minimize the cost of running an obit by saving the lengthy details for online space that does not have a cost-per-line fee.

Technology will continue to evolve. Who knows what our smartphones and computers will be able to do five or 10 years from now? Manufacturers offer assurances that this combination of QR code and programmable websites will endure into the future.



The QR code affixed to a monument, either at the time it is created or at a later date, can link to a memorial website visitors can access simply by scanning the code with an app on their smartphones.

Families want their loved ones' stories to live on. Are QR codes the way to go? Only time will tell, but think about this: Younger generations, and a

growing number of baby boomers, have smartphones glued to their hands. If you want to attract them to your business, focus on their phones.