

**353 More Great Ideas to Exceed
The Service Expectations
Of Your Families**

**By
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Ideas to Improve Funeral Service Quality

1. AWARDS/PLAQUES

Compile all company awards and individual plaques, etc., and arrange them on a prominent wall in the funeral home for better exposure and effect.

2. DONATION BOX

Have a donation box for people to drop off clothing and/or canned food. Goods that the funeral home will periodically deliver to the appropriate shelter of charities.

3. MEALS ON WHEELS

Sponsor Meals on Wheels once a month or sponsor meals at a food kitchen periodically.

4. PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Set up a program for widows, widowers, and bereaved families as part of the aftercare program where information is presented on how to live alone, or in changing circumstances. Cooking meals, banking, cleaning, launder household management, etc.

5. PHONE CARDS

Give “phone me” certificates with the funeral home logo on them to families so they can contact relatives out of town to inform them of death and/or funeral arrangements.

6. CHILDREN’S PLAY AREA

Install a playground set on funeral home property for children’s use during visitation times.

7. JUMP START ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Enclose postage for the first twenty pieces of acknowledgement stationery.

8. BOOKMARKS

Provide good quality leather or cloth bookmarks with funeral home logo with the register book and paper products.

9. HURRAH FOR HOLLYWOOD!

Sponsor a movie night once a month at a shelter, residence hall senior citizen center, etc. Sodas, popcorn included.

10. FEED THE SCOUTS

Find out the dates of Scout meetings in your town and every quarter send pizza's over to feed the kids.

11. CLEAN CAR PROGRAM

Buy car wash tickets in books of three to five and give to family at time of arrangement. They can have their cars washed so they are clean for the procession. Have the car wash validate used tickets so they can't be reused.

12. PALLBEARERS CREATIVITY

Offer eight shoulder-carrying pallbearers. Families can choose this option to give more class to the funeral. This is dignity not seen much today.

13. VETERAN'S NAME BOARD

Set up a name board under the funeral home flag when a veteran dies. List all military service information. Take a picture of it for the family.

14. CRAYONS

Keep a supply of crayons and inexpensive coloring books for children at calling hours. Also have storybook available.

15. ETHIC CONSIDERATIONS

Have refreshments and food available for special groups of people. Ex. For Italian families have Italian pastries and espresso coffee; for German families have sliced sausages and different breads, etc.

16. MINTS/CANDY

Have a dish of mints or candy in each room.

17. SENIOR TRANSPORTATION

Pick up seniors at nursing centers for visitation.

18. FAMILY TRANSPORTATION

Pick up family for visitation time.

19. FOOD AT HOME

Send a fruit basket or basket of coffees, teas and biscuits to each family who has just completed arrangements expressing concern and thanking them for placing their trust in the funeral home.

20. PAPER

Have different cards and folders available for different ethnic groups.

21. FEED AT THE FUNERAL HOME

Cater in dinner for the family if they are going to stay over the supper hour.

22. MOURNING BADGES

Provide black ribbons and/or arm bands for families to use on lapels or dresses. Easy identification to visitors.

23. HOTEL, CHURCH, CEMETERY DIRECTIONS

List of all hotels, church, and cemetery directions for families.

24. DIRECTOR CHECK-UP

Require each funeral director to personally check up with each family several times during the visitation.

25. F. D. REPLY

Have funeral director's reply to all "thank you" letters.

26. FRESHEN UP ROOM/NAP ROOM

Have a room in the funeral home where family members can change clothes, freshen up or even take a nap.

27. PARTNER DIRECTORS

Partner directors so that after arrangements are made, the second person will not be a stranger. Especially important with changing shifts.

28. BASEBALL CAPS AND T-SHIRTS

Given to all funeral home employees. Great morale builders.

29. MEMORIAL PARK

A memorial book, (mahogany) put out on a nice table in the foyer of the funeral home. All deceased people have their names engraved and beside the book is a candle that is always shining (eternal flame).

30. TELL YOUR STORY

Promote the funeral home at MALL SHOWS. Great way to give out information and offer water to mall walkers.

31. FALL COLOR TOUR

Meet at the funeral home; rent a bus to take them to see the fall tree colors. Furnish a light lunch.

32. CLERGY LIAISON

At each funeral, someone sits with the clergy and shows them great attention. Then ask if they would like to fill out a questionnaire (periodically).

33. OUT OF TOWN VISITOR PACK

Have available to families expecting visitors from out of town a package, which has current maps, transportation/schedules, hotels, restaurants, etc.

34. HOTEL/RESTAURANT DISCOUNTS

Make arrangements for your families to get a discount for food and lodging.

35. GUIDE TO SPECIALTY SERVICES

Have a readily available guide for specially requested services such as clean up and disaffection, appraisal services for house contents and furnishings, referrals for real estate agents, lawyers, videographer, home watch service, storage facilities, etc.

36. THE TOWN SCRAP BOOK

Use old pictures of the funeral home and local sights, some of construction of funeral home additions as well as newer pictures of the staff. Use this as an icebreaker and on tours and visits.

37. TRUST THE DRIVER

On the final evening of visitation introduce the family with a business card to the driver who will be picking them up the next day. Have the driver ask any questions about directions, traffic, etc.

38. COMMUNITY EVENTS BOARD

Provide a board outside the funeral home for the community's use.

39. COUNTRY FLAG

On a small stand insert a small flag of the country of the deceased's birthplace beside the register stand. Give to the family after the funeral.

40. GRAVEDIGGERS

At Christmas send fruit baskets to all cemetery gravediggers. Shows appreciation.

Clergy Relations Ideas

1. Constant fellowship with clergy.
2. Immediate contact for service confirmation before proceeding.
3. Insuring that our staff is doing everything possible to assist them.
4. We make them feel special.
5. We have a monthly staff cook out with and always include different clergy.
6. Give a turkey at Christmas.
7. Monthly Clergy Meetings to discuss ways to improve our services.
8. Begin contacting new clergy sooner.
9. Attend Special Church Functions – Festivals, Anniversaries.
10. Personal social visits to all clergy once every three months.
11. All of our staff is actively involved in their own churches.
12. Invite all new clergy to lunch and tour of our funeral home.
13. Mail Grief Counseling Newsletter to all clergy.
14. Invite several local clergy to Grief Seminar.
15. Sponsor Clergy Open House at our funeral home for tour.
16. Before every funeral, I review procedures with clergy. After every funeral, I ask them if everything was done right and what improvements could be made.
17. We send flowers to Church Celebrations, events.
18. On every service, we express our appreciation at working together with them.
19. Host clergy appreciation Breakfasts/Lunches/Dinners.
20. Attend as many church dinners, lunches, activities as possible by posting events on office calendar and assigning staff to attend.
21. Solicit clergy recommendations on how to improve our service.
22. Complete a Clergy Preference Form for all clergy.
23. Donate tents and setup for church events.
24. Personal monthly visits to clergy.
25. Informational tours of funeral home for clergy and church groups.
26. Laminate articles on clergy and churches.
27. Clergy Directory with photo of staff.

28. Raise amount of clergy Honorarium.
29. Donate staff services for church carnivals.
30. Offer to clergy to take care of families with financial need.
31. Personally deliver checks to clergy, church.

Clergy Relations Ideas (Cont'd)

32. Conduct nondenominational Bible study.
33. Personally invite largest congregations to FH Health Fair.
34. Develop close relationship with County Sheriff's Chaplain.
35. Donate cold drinks to youth group at cemetery clean up day.
36. New in community – personally visit each clergy and send pastries two days later.
37. Active role in Civic Club; Clergy Appreciation night.
38. Donations to Church Building Projects.
39. Provide clergy with tickets to local sports and community events.
40. Involve Clergy in Tree of Remembrance and Hospice Programs.
41. Have all clergy on our mailing list to invite to all funeral home special events.
42. Provide clergy transportation on all funerals.
43. Take clergy golfing.
44. Take clergy to lunch.
45. Sponsor Grief Seminars at churches.
46. Staff member is designated as "Clergy Ambassador" on every service to insure that all clergy needs are taken care of and he or she feels comfortable in our building.
47. Occasional friendly, social calls (not funeral related).
48. Specifically meet with each Catholic Priest to make sure of their desires for funerals.
49. Thank you notes to clergy following a service they conduct.
50. Give a Holiday gift or card.
51. Give Clergy Food Baskets at Thanksgiving and Christmas.
52. Provide full obituary to clergy.
53. Provide private room for clergy prior to service.
54. Contact clergy for family following death.
55. Advertise in Church Bulletin.
56. Provide calendars.
57. Invite the clergy to the arrangement conference.

Value Added Service Ideas

1. Give flowers from staff to family of every service.
2. Service Merchandise Complete Coordinated Packages.
3. Offer every family Gene link.
4. Provide free Notary Services.
5. Expanded Personalization – Cap panels, engraving, comers, theme caskets, vaults, etc.
6. Sponsor grief seminars.
7. Grief Counselor is available to all at need families at no charge.
8. Magnetic Picture Boards.
9. Answer our own phones 24 hours a day.
10. More elaborate Memorial Folders including Photos.
11. We customize Memorial Folders and Acknowledgment Cards.
12. Provide food books, funeral signs and chairs to family residence.
13. Greatly expand selection of funeral stationery.
14. Deliver flowers for the family following the service.
15. Serve ice cold water at the graveside.
16. Provide Care Notes.
17. Assist families with all insurance if assigned or not.
18. Give family bookmarkers with photo.
19. Encourage family participation in service – speaking, closing casket.
20. Provide Memorial Candles made of flowers from funeral.
21. More expanded merchandise selection for burial and cremation.
22. Give Memorial Tributes with photo for Family.
23. Offer Family Assistance Extended Pay program.
24. Started training for all staff on job responsibilities at funeral and practice our procedures.
25. Give bud vase to every family.
26. Offer a reception room to families for after the service.
27. Now provide flowers and markers for convenience to family.
28. Provide Funeral Home Ladies Auxiliary.
29. Provide Funeral Home Aftercare Coordinator.
30. Give every family a glass bowl keepsake.

31. Created the “Caring Team”.
32. Began a Family Satisfaction Program.
33. Encourage Hobby Items to be included.
34. Offer Celestis Program.

Value Added Service Ideas (Cont'd)

35. Tape/Record Services for family.
36. Added Family Limousine.
37. Post Service Follow up visits.
38. Provide Reception Room for after funeral gatherings.
39. Give Comfort Baskets to each family.
40. Offer to Video Tape the service.
41. Send Grief Counseling Booklets to family after funeral.
42. Began an Aftercare program.
43. We deliver to the family residence all personalization memorabilia following services.
44. We give an ATIRA Photo Plaque of the deceased to each family and have it displayed at the visitation.
45. Remodeled a room into a children’s lounge.
46. Continuing Family Contact Program.
47. Complete the Register Book in script.
48. Improved our phone answering etiquette.
49. Provide food trays, ice and Food Register to family residence.
50. We use two tents at graveside rather than just one.
51. Tree of Remembrance Holiday Program.

Improving the Arrangement Conference

1. Finalize payment at time of arrangement to relieve family.
2. Encourage personalization of services and merchandise.
3. Take off coat to make family more comfortable.
4. Work to encourage questions.
5. Remove desk and replace with dining room table – more comfortable for families.
6. Greatly expanded merchandise selection and personalization options.
7. Improved convenience for families by adding flowers and markers.
8. More selection of folders, cards, and register books.
9. Allow more time for arrangements conference.
10. Offer to make arrangements at home.
11. Provide bilingual personnel.
12. Have a “can do” attitude.
13. Very carefully explain and give full disclosure to all expenses.
14. Take more time to listen to families’ needs to be able to customize our service to them.
15. Introduce the family service counselor during the arrangement conference and explain their role.
16. Create an open forum discussion rather than a question and answer session.
17. Make our funeral arrangements in the middle Selection Room.
18. Go over everything TWICE and always pause for questions.
19. Approve ability to adapt.
20. Streamline Paperwork.
21. Offer more Options to Families.
22. Use Family Assistance.
23. Complete the printed Obituary for the family to approve before end of arrangements.
24. Rearrange the furniture to provide more comfortable setting.
25. We communicate to families our desire to help them after the service as well.
26. Improved merchandise presentation ARS rooms and slat walls.
27. Stress personalization.
28. Training sessions for our arranging directors to give them better skills and more confidence.

29. Lots of conversation before arrangements begin serve coffee – get them comfortable and relaxed.

30. Use a more compassionate approach.

Improving the Arrangement Conference (Cont'd)

31. Complete all paperwork before arrangements end.

32. More interactive conversation with the family.

33. Listen – accommodate – say “yes”.

34. Created an arrangement checklist for family to sign.

35. Practice on presenting payment options and terms.

36. Involve more than one director in arrangements.

37. Sincerely thank every family for the honor they have allowed in serving them.

38. If I do not know why the family has selected our funeral home, I politely ask them. I need to know.

39. Complete all financial arrangements at arrangement conference – there’s never a more appropriate time.

40. Simple – put the pen and paper down and listens. What you hear enables you to provide a more meaningful funeral.

41. We have done two email arrangements this year.

42. Provide a folder for all necessary papers for family to take with them at end of arrangements.

43. Include photo of casket and vault selected.

Improving the Visitation

1. Serve coffee.
2. Encourage use of families' music.
3. Insure sufficient staff for large visitations.
4. Define roles and responsibilities to staff working a visitation and practice.
5. Arranging director at first viewing.
6. Counsel family about any conditions with the deceased to prepare them before first viewing.
7. Magnetic Picture Boards.
8. Display any family heirlooms or hobby items.
9. Take great care in flower display arrangement – make sure flower shop has family flowers to funeral home in time.
10. Provided family longer private time for first viewing.
11. More flexibility in visitation hours for convenience of families not funeral home.
12. Candle from Funeral Home lit at visitation.
13. Provide coffee, donuts, and cookies.
14. Handing out Memorial Folders and spending more time visiting.
15. Use greeter at register book.
16. Insure family is completely satisfied.
17. Manager meets with every family at some point during visitation.
18. Improved the quality of our visitation staff.
19. Keep staff working not sitting in office?
20. Encourage pre need to attend visitations.
21. Greet visitors at the door, offer to take coats, and lead to register, give them memorial folder and take to visitation room.
22. Increased the number of times we personally check on family.
23. See to it that one of our principal funeral directors is hosting the visitation during the most visible time – more exposure to the public for our key personnel.
24. Display Memory Book and Candle listing paying tribute to deceased that we have conducted services for in the past.
25. Placed children's books and videos in lounge.

26. Placed a tall stool chair in visitation room so person can greet people but still be sitting.
27. On large visitation we have staff direct parking lot.

Improving the Funeral Service

1. Provide ice water at graveside.
2. Tape services for family.
3. Increased personnel on service whenever possible – never less than three.
4. Improved our personal attention to the families.
5. Have clearly defined the job descriptions for every funeral, then trained and practiced. Everyone knows exactly what is expected of him/her.
6. Leave the tent at the grave for a couple days after the burial.
7. Have the family place the Memorial Tube in the casket.
8. Be sure to review the clergy's order of service with the family before the funeral.
9. The arranging director handles the family on the service.
10. Attention to details.
11. Updated our fleet, use all of our own personnel and have more experienced staff.
12. Use staff meetings on how to improve our funeral services. We are always looking for ways to improve our services and music and visitors involvement because of personalization.
13. Have more theme services and music and visitors involvement because of personalization. This provides the opportunity for more personal involvement and attention on our part.
14. Provide podium for graveside service.
15. Use two way radios for parking cars.
16. Using lead car to lead procession and escort clergy.
17. Memorize people's names and call them by their names – family and guests – it's so important and makes such an impact.
18. Personally thank the minister, organist and soloist.
19. Insure that a staff member remains at the grave until the vault is sealed.
20. Allow family to observe closing of casket.
21. Practice with staff during the training.
22. Assign specific duties.
23. Encourage family to take active role in service.
24. Use of white gloves for Pallbearers.
25. Maintain Eye contact with lead Funeral Director.
26. Orchestrate families exiting the limos.
27. Offer to pick up family at home.
28. Start on time – never late.

29. Insist on Dress Code of Staff.
30. Cell Phones and Beepers off.
31. Hand out flowers at grave.

Employee Incentive Ideas

1. That we serve our families to provide them with the best death experience that is possible- It makes them feel that they have accomplished more when a family tells you “Thank You” for the fine service you provide.
2. One of the big things to them is letting them take credit from the family for a job well done.
3. By offering trophies, plaques, or certificates for quality work – When something is given it helps the morale and productivity of the entire staff by knowing that someone is being recognized.
4. By putting the emphasis on the fact that we are the leading firm in the area and the things we do to maintain our lead. Everyone is a part of our success and it will take everyone to continue it.
5. Every month, we plan on having a lunch outside the office, to discuss other things aside from “work” issues – It is important to allow the staff the opportunity to have some down time. This will certainly increase productivity, morale, and create a pleasant work environment, but more importantly, it creates something to look forward to with the employees.
6. Listen – listen – listen – Take interest in them as people, not just a number!
7. All the employees agree their families are the most important, and when someone has something going on that is important enough that they think they need to be there, we make sure that it will happen.
8. We stress family service as the most important part of our jobs to all employees. An employee who deals with families successfully learns and understands this. Encouragement in this area becomes a non-financial issue.
9. I treat them weekly by buying breakfast or lunch in appreciation for their outstanding contributions and efforts. - This is effective, because what little staff is here, all work is performed on time and when asked to do something out of the ordinary, no questions are asked, it is just done.
10. Everything we do, we do together as a team. I pass on compliments I receive from families on their participation and also give compliments to them for jobs well done.
11. We need help in this area.
12. Picking up the tab for lunch, now and then. Also, an afternoon off when quiet.
13. Lunches, dinners, barbecue get togethers, and sporting event tickets. Occasional afternoon off for peace of mind break.

14. Eating meetings when we get together with family and cook at the funeral home – Creating an atmosphere of good people you don't mind talking to and knowing. Fellowship promotes communication.

Employee Incentive Ideas (Cont'd)

15. During the staff meeting I give a "Star Award" which is the star shaped acrylic paperweight received at last year's manager's meeting. This award is given to an employee for a star quality that I notice during the month. That employee uses the paperweight on their desk for a month. – This little ceremony provides a little excitement and is a nice way to show positive recognition.

16. Recognition from fellow employees, Bi-Monthly award, and acknowledgment when an acknowledgment is received from client families.

17. I treat them to lunch the day after a very hectic or demanding day or two. I'll send a thank you memo to those on a very big service – It seems to keep them happy.

18. All that is needed is the satisfaction we get from serving families.

19. Involving employees in the activities of the day to day operations and seek advice from them. Keeping an employee involved this way keeps them feeling a valuable part of the organization.

20. We show that we genuinely care and appreciate them by spending time talking and showing concern for them, their jobs, learning about their interests and their pets.

21. I work side by side and show them easier ways of doing a lot of things and I have an open door policy for good work and constructive criticism.

22. Showing my employees the respect they deserve. I have their respect and they have mine. I often ask their opinions on different matters; they feel a part of the team.

23. Sharing "Thank You" cards that come in from families served.

24. I try to maintain a casual atmosphere while we are not involved in a service or dealing with a family.

25. We share compliments, which they may have received with them in front of co-workers. We put all Thank You and comment cards on our employee bulletin board.

26. We do not use any incentives. I would welcome any suggestions.

27. We read and review all returns of our customer surveys.

28. Motivational staff meetings where they are allowed to voice their opinions – This helps clear the air while building a better relationship.

29. Special coffee cup for the month for the one who sells the most flowers, and a parking spot by the door for the one with a good idea to help cut expenses.

30. Set goals for rewards.

31. We give our employees produce from our garden during the summer months and cards on special occasions. We help them with personal projects when asked.

32. I will cover their shift when needed to allow the opportunity to attend functions with their family.

Employee Incentive Ideas (Cont'd)

33. I will assume any consequences when mistakes are made or procedures are not followed. I feel them to learn and mature with the business.

34. We celebrate birthdays, with lunch and cake together.

PROGRAMS:

1. Clergy Program.
2. Veterans Program
3. Teddy Bear Program
4. Continuing Care Program.
5. Widow-to-Widow Program.
6. Forget-Me-Not Flower Seed Program
7. Common Disaster Program.
8. Holiday Memorial Program and Card.
9. Program that takes chairs, coffee pot, flower spray for the door, register stand and book, food book, and most recent addition, a cooler with four – two-liter soft drinks and bag of ice.
10. Program that offers friends and family members a time to write down any special memories that they may have of the deceased.
11. Family Genealogy.
12. Service Guarantee.
13. Change Your Mind Guarantee.

PRIOR TO THE SERVICE:

1. Provide a funeral arrangement folder.
2. Drive and assist families to purchase new graves/cemetery plots and make identification at the morgue.
3. Offer coffee or juice while making arrangements.
4. Chauffeur service to and from arrangements.
5. Arrangements at residence.

DURING THE SERVICE:

1. Present a remembrance book.
2. Present laminated obituaries and memorial folders.
3. Supply blanket and chairs to be set up at the cemetery.

4. Place a trained parchment at the entrance of each visitation chapel.
5. Give a picture frame and art to the family.
6. Present a bible to the family.
7. Take photographs of each flower arrangement. When developed, they are matched with the card from the floral arrangement given to the family.

DURING THE SERVICE (Cont'd):

8. Present a guardian angel pin.
9. Supply cold water at graveside.
10. Memorial Boards.
11. Memorial Table.

AFTER THE SERVICE:

1. Hand deliver deeds after monument inscriptions are completed.
2. Deliver a fruit basket to the family's home.
3. Pick-up families after their luncheon after the service.
4. Make visits to many families' homes following the Shiva period.
5. Send personal thank you cards from the arranger to the families.
6. Place courtesy Markers on graves until their Markers have arrived.
7. Deliver a Condolence package to families.
8. Pick up payments for the elderly.
9. Assist families we serve with social security procedures, veterans' forms, and insurance filing.

AFTERCARE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES:

1. Deliver aftercare books to the family.
2. Set up a bereavement group (seminar for families served to help them cope with the holidays, books for families).
3. Send a cart note given to families ("Getting through the First Weeks, and Months after the Funeral").
4. Deliver family estate planning cards and kits.
5. Provide healing grief tape and booklet.
6. Deliver a family memorial guide.
7. Pre-arrangement foliage and arrangements.

OTHER SERVICES AND PROGRAMS:

1. Hold an annual memorial mass.
2. Set up a youth environmental service (a group devoted to helping families in time of crisis).
3. Mail cards marking one-year anniversary.
4. Set up free lending library.
5. Hold an annual candlelight memorial service.
6. Provide a van and drive for the “We Care Christmas Party”, a local organization that helps needy children and families by providing food, clothing, and toys to about 800 children a year.
7. During community activities or parades, set-up tables in parking lot and offer free coffee and donuts.
8. Commemorative tree planting.

REVENUE ENHANCING SERVICES AND MERCHANDISE:

1. Set up and use the “Video Tribute” –system.
2. Offer purchase to veteran’s families a flag case and stand.
3. Assist families with floral selections and monument selections in an effort to promote “One Stop Shopping”.
4. Offer to order Christmas wreaths and grave blankets for graves.
5. Offer complete packages of upgraded:
 - Register Books
 - Prayer Cards and Folders
 - Acknowledgement Cards
6. Offer vestments and chalices.
7. Rent silk flowers.
8. Full line of cremation options such as – Scattering Cremated Remains.
9. Arrange for Post Funeral Catering.