

# DEADTalks

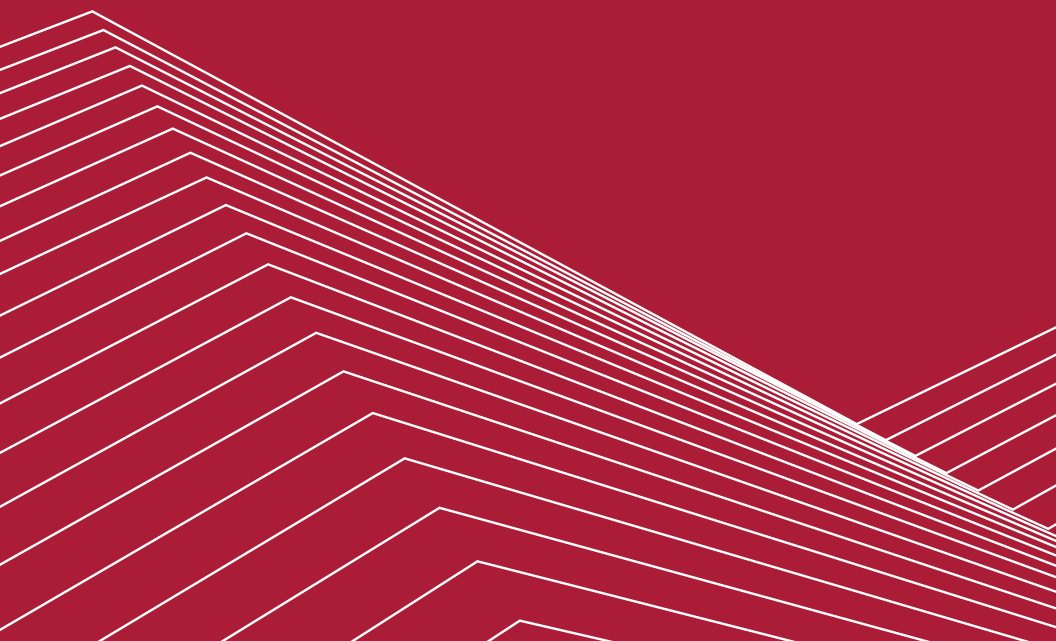


**Mindset Matters**

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February 4 - 6, 2025 | Park MGM | Las Vegas, NV

## Schedule of Events



# Schedule at a Glance

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## TUESDAY, February 4

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### 2:00 – 6:30 PM

REGISTRATION OPEN

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### 3:30 – 5:30 PM

KEYNOTE

*Invisible Persuasion: Building Trust and Profits Through Story*

Matthew Pollard

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### 5:30 – 7:00 PM

WELCOME RECEPTION

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## WEDNESDAY, February 5

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### 7:15 AM – 5:00 PM

REGISTRATION OPEN

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### 7:15 – 8:15 AM

WELCOME COFFEE &  
BREAKFAST SOCIAL

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### 8:00 – 8:30 AM

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

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### 8:30 – 9:30 AM

KEYNOTE

*Mindset of the Consumer*

Art Sarkissian

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### 9:30 – 10:30 AM

#### MARKETING

DEAD TALK #1

*The Power of Body Language*

Christie Toson, CCE, The Tribute Companies Inc.

DEAD TALK #2

*From Transaction to Trust: Building Rapport with Every Customer*

Ashlinn Goodman, Envision Strategic Partners

DEAD TALK #3

*I Hear What You're Not Saying*

Elisha Elliott, McGuinness Funeral Home

## **10:30 - 11:00 AM**

### **PRE-NEED MOTIVATORS**

#### **DEAD TALKS #4**

##### ***Pre-need Motivators***

Greg Norris, Homesteaders Life Co.

## **11:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

### **BUILDING RAPPORT**

#### **DEAD TALK #5**

##### ***Ditch Customer Service and Embrace Customer EXPERIENCE***

Nicki Wiedeman, CSE, Dead Ringers

#### **DEAD TALK #6**

##### ***Because the Ocean of Grief Doesn't Have to Be Done Alone***

Brittany Neunuebel, Baue Funeral Homes

#### **DEAD TALK #7**

##### ***From RSVP to Sale: Mastering Every Lunch & Learn***

Kelly Kohut, Precoa

## **12:00 - 12:15 PM**

EDUCATION FOUNDATION  
PRESENTATION

## **12:15 - 2:00 PM**

LUNCH

## **2:00 - 4:00 PM**

### **SELLING SKILLS**

#### **DEAD TALK #8**

##### ***The Time Management Myth***

Jennifer Lares, Mulling Mortician, LLC

#### **DEAD TALK #9**

##### ***Public Speaking to Build Your Business***

Jamie Sarche, Feldman Mortuary

#### **DEAD TALK #10**

##### ***Conquering Anticipation in the Arrangement Setting***

Hal Wilkes, Christy Vault & Columbarium

#### **DEAD TALK #11**

##### ***A Customer is Born***

Kathi Wells, Global Atlantic Financial Group

#### **DEAD TALK #12**

##### ***From The Poker Table to the Arrangement Table***

Rob Shalvey, Rest Haven Memorial Park

#### **DEAD TALK #13**

##### ***Asking for Referrals***

Jill Lazar, Ring Ring Marketing

## **4:00 - 5:00 PM**

### **PERSONAL BRANDING**

#### **DEAD TALK #14**

##### ***Build Your Brand***

Nicole Vullo, Foresight

#### **DEAD TALK #15**

##### ***People Trust People***

Tyler Anderson, Ganderson Brothers Mortuary

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# THURSDAY,

February 6

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**7:45 AM – 12:15 PM**

REGISTRATION OPEN

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**7:45 – 8:45 AM**

COFFEE & BREAKFAST SOCIAL

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**8:30 – 9:30 AM**

## USING DATA TO DRIVE BETTER PERFORMANCE

### DEAD TALK #16

*Three Surprising Discoveries  
from Consumer Insights*

George Owens, Fortitude  
Research and Marketing

### DEAD TALK #17

*Interactive Workshop: Leverage,  
Plan & Act on Current Industry  
Consumer Insights*

Dan Kientzel, Service Corporation  
International

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**9:30 – 10:30 AM**

## LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY IN YOUR SALES PROCESS

### DEAD TALK #18

*Un-Cremating Your Profits with  
Technology*

Eric Banks, Funeral 365

### DEAD TALK #19

*Interactive Workshop: Applying  
Technology to Your Sales*

Nick Timpe, CSE, webCemeteries

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**10:30 – 11:30 AM**

## AI

### DEAD TALK #20

*Artificial Intelligence 2.0*

Chuck Gallagher, American  
Funeral Financial

### DEAD TALK #21

*AI Impact on Funerals*

Aaron Avner, Tukios

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**11:30 AM – 12:00 PM**

WRAP UP / MONDAY MORNING  
MINDSET

Shane Pudenz, Carriage Services  
& Erin Creger, Security National  
Family of Companies

# Schedule of Events

## Tuesday, February 4

2:00 - 6:30 PM

**REGISTRATION OPEN**

**3:30 - 5:30 PM | Keynote**



### **INVISIBLE PERSUASION: BUILDING TRUST AND PROFITS THROUGH STORY**

**MATTHEW POLLARD**

What if you could transform sensitive conversations into powerful opportunities to build trust and inspire action? What if you could overcome client hesitation, guide families to plan ahead, and dramatically increase pre-need sales, all with one innovative technique? For professionals in the cemetery, cremation, and funeral space, this is the breakthrough you've been waiting for. Replace outdated, uncomfortable sales tactics with a fresh, emotionally resonant approach that makes even the toughest conversations feel natural and impactful – all while skyrocketing your sales success. This session is the ultimate game-changer for pre-need sales – a fresh, science-backed approach that will leave you inspired, equipped, and ready to transform the way you connect with prospects.

**5:30 – 7:00 PM**

## **WELCOME RECEPTION**

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## **Wednesday, February 5**

**7:15 AM – 5:00 PM**

## **REGISTRATION OPEN**

**7:15 – 8:15 AM**

## **WELCOME COFFEE & BREAKFAST SOCIAL**

**8:00 – 8:30 AM**

## **WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**

**8:30 – 9:30 AM | Keynote**



### **MINDSET OF THE CONSUMER**

**ART SARKISSIAN**

To connect with families during the pre-planning process, you must first understand them. Using the concept of 'Family Personas', you can help identify the specific needs of each family and make connections through their own human truths. There are three very important human truths that families need – to be understood, to have control and to feel special. During this talk Art will outline the different family personas that have been identified, and how sellers and team members can deliver the human truths to help serve families either during the pre-planning or at-need moments. This all leads to creating memories that last a lifetime, and Art will explain how these memories are curated for different family personas. This will be a very dynamic and impactful talk which intersects the principles of genuine hospitality, sales and servicing families in the cemetery, cremation and funeral services profession.



## **THE POWER OF BODY LANGUAGE**

**CHRISTINE TOSON, CCE,**

*THE TRIBUTE COMPANIES, INC.*

Non-verbal cues and actions speak louder than words. In sales, especially, your posture, image, gestures and movements can either help or hinder your ability to build trust and close a sale. This presentation is intended to show real examples of how to help make you a sales powerhouse. You will leave this session with:

- Real examples of body language lessons.
- Understanding of how face-to-face conversations can help with sales success.



## **FROM TRANSACTION TO TRUST: BUILDING RAPPORT WITH EVERY CUSTOMER**

**ASHLINN GOODMAN**

*ENVISION STRATEGIC PARTNERS*

Discover the essential techniques for building strong, authentic rapport with customers. Learn how to actively listen, mirror communication styles, and use empathy to create deeper connections. Ashlinn will explore the importance of trust and transparency in creating long-term customer relationships, and how personalizing interactions can make every customer feel valued. Whether you're in sales, customer service, or any client-facing role, these practical tips will help you transform routine interactions into meaningful connections that drive loyalty, trust, and positive outcomes. You will walk away with actionable strategies to connect on a personal level and elevate your customer relationships.



## **I HEAR WHAT YOU'RE NOT SAYING**

**ELISHA ELLIOT**

*MCGUINNESS FUNERAL HOME*

In this session, Elisha will guide you in mastering the art of anticipating clients' needs by learning to listen deeply, recognizing both spoken and unspoken cues. By understanding and proactively addressing the underlying needs of clients and their families, you can enhance the customer experience, foster meaningful connections, and ultimately build lasting relationships that encourage loyalty and referrals. You'll gain the skills to read body language, identify clients' unique desires for honoring their loved ones, and approach aftercare with genuine compassion, leaving clients feeling truly cared for and valued.

**10:30 - 11:00 AM | Preneed Motivators**



## **PRE-NEED MOTIVATORS**

**GREG NORRIS**

*HOMESTEADERS LIFE CO.*

During this presentation, you will get insights from the latest edition of Homesteaders Life Company's exclusive consumer research report, *Pre-need Motivators*. Greg will explore the demographics and behavior of people who prearrange, share how people progress through the consideration process and discuss what happens during and after their prearranging experiences. Throughout the session, you'll learn practical suggestions, based on data, for how to strengthen relationships with current client families, connect with new families and leverage tools to grow your business. You will leave this presentation understanding who your market is and how to reach them.



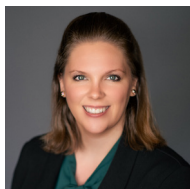


## **DITCH CUSTOMER SERVICE AND EMBRACE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**

**NICKI WIEDEMAN, CSE**

*DEAD RINGERS*

This session will shift your perspective from a transactional customer service mindset to a relational customer experience approach, which is crucial in the deathcare profession—especially in sales. You'll explore why creating meaningful customer experiences, starting from the very first phone interaction and extending through to lasting client relationships, is essential for building trust and loyalty. You will gain valuable insights into implementation strategies tailored for managers and owners to foster a culture of Customer Experience Management within the deathcare profession. Additionally, sales professionals will learn straightforward techniques to seamlessly incorporate into their sales processes, helping them craft memorable, impactful experiences that resonate deeply with clients.



## **BECAUSE THE OCEAN OF GRIEF DOESN'T HAVE TO BE DONE ALONE**

**BRITTANY NEUNUEBEL**

*BAUE FUNERAL HOMES*

Families are informed about the benefits of Continuing Care programs during the pre-arrangement process. However, feedback from community businesswomen and insights into families' needs revealed that support was needed not just immediately after the service or through physical materials. Families expressed a preference for reminders about available services and more interactive options to highlight offerings. A review of relevant statistics and engagement with the business group showed that many people favor links and video content over traditional email formats. In response, videos were created and sent to families, resulting in an overwhelmingly positive reception, including personal emails, check-ins, thank-

you messages, and inquiries from individuals interested in starting their own pre-arrangements.



## FROM RSVP TO SALE: MASTERING EVERY LUNCH & LEARN

**KELLY KOHUT**

*PRECOA*

A successful community event is one of the best ways to engage prospects and build the value of funeral service, but there are a lot of challenges and pitfalls along the way. With helpful examples from over 2,200 events held in the last year alone, attendees will discover proven strategies for sparking interest, increasing attendance, and driving more sales.

**12:00 - 12:15 PM**

## EDUCATION FOUNDATION PRESENTATION

**12:15 - 2:00 PM**

## LUNCH

## 2:00 - 4:00 PM | Selling Skills



## THE TIME MANAGEMENT MYTH

**JENNIFER LARES**

*MULLING MORTICIAN, LLC*

This session will explore the fallacy that is managing time - the reality is that we manage ourselves. Jennifer will explore this perspective and discuss strategies for harnessing your time and ways to avoid forfeiting it unwittingly to others. After this session, you will walk away with these valuable skills:

- Describe the alternative viewpoint of self-management vs. time management
- Identify ways to preserve your time and protect it from being allocated by others.



## **PUBLIC SPEAKING TO BUILD YOUR BUSINESS**

**JAMIE SARCHÉ**

*FELDMAN MORTUARY*

In this session, you'll discover how to elevate your approach to pre-need marketing by learning from Jamie Sarche, a true expert who has redefined the role of public speaking in her field. While many in pre-need rely on seminars, lunch-and-learns, and similar events, Jamie's unique strategy has positioned her as a leading voice in her community. This session will guide you in understanding your ultimate goals, identifying and connecting with the right audience, and crafting a powerful message that resonates. By honing these elements, you'll be able to leverage public speaking to build your reputation, foster trust, and become a recognized expert in your community.



## **CONQUERING ANTICIPATION IN THE ARRANGEMENT SETTING**

**HAL WILKES**

*CHRISTY VAULT & COLUMBARIUM*

Many families are unsure of what to expect when working with our profession, as it's not part of their everyday shopping experiences. This session will help arrangers, both pre-need and at-need, guide families more effectively by improving their presentation and listening skills. Topics include the importance of using clear vocabulary, maintaining ethics, adjusting vocal tone and pace, utilizing body language, and sharing stories instead of relying on data. Gain insights from Hal Wilkes, a veteran arranger, product specialist, and certified hypnotherapist, who brings a unique perspective to this session.



## **A CUSTOMER IS BORN**

**KATHI WELLS**

*GLOBAL ATLANTIC FINANCIAL GROUP*

This session will help you transform your approach to customer experience by teaching you to view every interaction through the customer's perspective. By redefining "customer" in a broader, more impactful way, you'll uncover new ways to enhance each person's experience with your firm. You'll learn powerful questions that deepen engagement and improve the quality of interactions, setting the stage for truly meaningful connections. Additionally, this session will demonstrate how all-staff meetings can become collaborative sessions, empowering every employee to contribute to an exceptional customer experience. With these insights and techniques, you'll be equipped to build lasting, positive relationships that resonate across all levels of your organization.



## **FROM THE POKER TABLE TO THE ARRANGEMENT TABLE**

**ROB SHALVEY**

*REST HAVEN MEMORIAL PARK*

Do you ever feel like your customer is not quite telling you the truth? Expert poker players use tells like non-verbal cues and body language to gain an advantage at the poker table. Accomplished arrangers can tune into non-verbal cues to better understand what their clients are really saying. This informative and entertaining session will teach you how to spot the most common customer "tells". Attendees will learn how to discern when people need more information, don't believe them or are ready to buy. In addition, this session will reveal the #1 strongest buying signal customers give during a cemetery presentation. In this session, participants will learn how to better tune into non-verbal cues, spot buying signals and use their own body language to have more successful sales presentations.



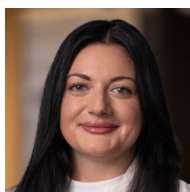
## **THE ART OF THE ASK, HOW TO MAKE REFERRALS YOUR PATH TO ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES**

**JILL LAZAR**

*RING RING MARKETING*

Join us for an engaging session designed to empower sales counselors in mastering the art of asking for referrals. In this seminar, you will learn to identify key moments to develop referral streams, build the knowledge and language needed to confidently ask for referrals and discover how consistent practice makes the process easier over time. Elevate your sales strategy with practical tips and proven techniques that will turn your network into a powerful source of new opportunities.

**4:00 - 5:00 PM | Personal Branding**



## **BUILD YOUR BRAND**

**NICOLE VULLO**

*FORESIGHT*

This session will guide you through the essentials of building a successful brand by first defining a clear vision and key brand elements. Consistency is at the heart of strong branding, fostering trust and recognition, which are critical for customer loyalty and setting your brand apart. Your brand is a powerful asset that fuels growth, profitability, and long-term value, requiring a deep understanding and thoughtful management to maintain its integrity. Staying true to your core values and purpose is vital, as authentic branding resonates more powerfully with audiences. This presentation will delve into how consistent branding can establish trust and recognition, making your brand memorable and preferred, and how a strong brand identity can drive growth, adding perceived value that leads to sustained success.



## PEOPLE TRUST PEOPLE

**TYLER ANDERSON**

*GANDERSON BROTHERS MORTUARY*

In this session, Tyler, also known as 'The Funeral Doctor,' will explain why people trust individuals more than brands. He'll show how building a personal brand can have a greater influence on families' decisions. By sharing personal stories, funeral professionals can strengthen relationships, build rapport, and become more relatable.

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## Thursday, February 6

**7:45 AM - 12:15 PM**

### REGISTRATION OPEN

**7:45 - 8:45 AM**

### COFFEE & BREAKFAST SOCIAL

**8:30 - 9:30 AM | Using Data to Drive Better Performance**



## THREE SURPRISING DISCOVERIES FROM CONSUMER INSIGHTS

**GEORGE OWENS**

*FORTITUDE RESEARCH AND MARKETING*

We harnessed the power of AI to read through and organize feedback from more than 5,000 consumers to determine which products and services they believed would be important in the future. The results were surprising - but not in the ways you might think! Join George Owens, President of Fortitude Research and Marketing, as he shares insights about consumer wants and needs, how to apply them to improve your business today and make sure your business is prepared for a new generation of consumers.



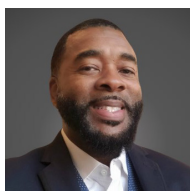
## **LEVERAGE, PLAN & ACT ON CURRENT INDUSTRY CONSUMER INSIGHTS | INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP**

**DAN KIENTZEL**

*SERVICE CORPORATION INTERNATIONAL*

Based on the cutting-edge data and analysis, presented by SoCal Approach; go to work on improving your business, either as an individual producer, team manager, business owner or executive leader. At any level, you will return from DEADTalks 2025 with actionable strategies for improving market share and growing your business. Participate in a fast-paced, interactive, and actionable brain trust with your deathcare peers and colleagues, led on behalf of the ICCFA, by Dan Kientzel, Sales Excellence and Growth Program Manager at Service Corporation International.

**9:30 - 10:30 AM | Leveraging Technology in Your  
Sales Process**

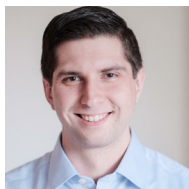


## **UN-CREMATING YOUR PROFITS WITH TECHNOLOGY**

**ERIC BANKS**

*FUNERAL 365*

This session will focus on pinpointing core challenges impacting your operation and offer strategic steps to ensure sustainable growth. You'll learn how to distinguish root causes from mere symptoms, identify techniques for identifying underlying challenges and takeaway concrete steps to shape the future and drive sustainable growth.



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## **APPLYING TECHNOLOGY TO YOUR SALES**

**NICK TIMPE, CSE**

*WEBCEMETERIES*

Execution is critical to realizing value in new ideas.

In this session, we will practice some of the ideas we have learned through a hands-on workshop so you are prepared to apply new technology into your sales process.

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**10:30 - 11:30 AM | AI**

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## **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE 2.0**

**CHUCK GALLAGHER**

*AMERICAN FUNERAL FINANCIAL*

With a year under our belt, this AI program is

designed to build on last year's presentation and

provide new insights and applications into the use of artificial intelligence in our profession.



## **AI IMPACT ON FUNERALS**

**AARON AVNER**

*TUKIOS*

Join us for an insightful session exploring the current landscape of AI and how it can be thoughtfully integrated into the funeral profession. This discussion will cover practical suggestions for the ethical use of AI, introduce specific tools that funeral directors can easily adopt and provide guidance on becoming comfortable with these emerging technologies. By the end of the session, you'll discover how AI tools can enhance your services and deepen the support you provide to families.

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**11:30 AM - 12:00 PM**

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## **WRAP UP / MONDAY MORNING MINDSET**

Shane Pudenz, Carriage Services & Erin Creger, Security National Family of Companies



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## DIAMOND

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Beyond innovation  
Innovazione senza tempo



## BRONZE

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