DEADTalks

Ready. Set. Grow.

January 13 - 15, 2026 | Park MGM | Las Vegas, NV

Schedule of Events

Schedule at a Glance

TUESDAY,
January 13

3:30 – 3:45 PM

FIRST TIMERS ORIENTATION IN BALBOA

3:45 - 4:15 PM

ICE BREAKER
Lori Bolton CSE, CXE, Park Lawn Corporation

4:15 - 5:15 PM

Wheel of Objections
Panel:
Erin Creger, Security National Financial Corporation;
Néctar Ramírez, Forest Lawn Memorial-Parks & Mortuaries;
Greg Norris, Homesteaders Life Company;
Dan Kientzel, Service Corporation International

5:15 - 6:30 PM

WELCOME RECEPTION

WEDNESDAY,
January 14

8:30 AM

WELCOME

8:40 - 9:55 AM

KEYNOTE
David Priemer

10:00 AM

OVERVIEW
Mike Harens, Matthews International

10:05 - 11:40 AM

EDUCATING THE CONSUMER

DEAD TALKS #1
The Value of The Celebration
Lee Longino, Service Corporation International

DEAD TALKS #2
The First Call: Every Option Every Time
Jennifer Graziano, Graziano, Coxe & Graziano Funeral Home

DEAD TALKS #3
Selling More Than Space: The Psychological Value of Permanent Placement
Jason Troyer, Healing Path Cemetery

DEAD TALKS #4
Park Tours: Where History and Sales Come to Life
Honolora Hubbard, Coldspring

12:00 - 12:30 PM

Q&A WITH SPEAKERS
Doug Gober, Foresight

12:30 - 2:00 PM

LUNCH

2:00 - 3:15 PM

KNOWLEDGE + PASSION = CONFIDENCE

DEAD TALKS #5
Lead with Heart, Speak with Intention: Closing with Compassion and Confidence
Noble Sines, Domani Preneed

DEAD TALKS #6
Brisket and Tomatoes: A Recipe for Efficient Time Management
John Bolton, CCE, CCrE, CSE, CXE, Park Lawn Corporation

DEAD TALKS #7
Continue to Motivate Yourself and Eliminate Excuses
Néctar Ramírez, Forest Lawn Memorial-Parks & Mortuaries

3:05 - 4:10 PM

HOW TO GET MORE LEADS

DEAD TALKS #8
Networking and Marketing in the Real World
Phil Zehms, Park Lawn Corporation

DEAD TALKS #9
The WOW Factor
Cathy Younkin, Fairfax Memorial

DEAD TALKS #10
Unlocking Sales Growth Through Strategic Aftercare
Brad Palmer, Service Corporation International

4:10 - 5:15 PM

MANAGING SALES

DEAD TALKS #11
Performance Multiplier; From Recruitment Marketing to Consistent Sales Success
Eric Battles, Precoa

DEAD TALKS #12
The Role of Effective Sales Leadership: Define. Drive. Deliver
Gary O'Sullivan, CCFE, The Gary O'Sullivan Company

DEAD TALKS #13
Motivational Leadership
Tony Armogida, Global Atlantic Financial Group

THURSDAY,
January 15

8:30 - 8:45 AM

Educational Foundation Presentation

8:45 AM - 12:00 PM

The Seminar Success Workshop: Your Complete Blueprint for Success
Tony Armogida, Global Atlantic Financial Group;
Erin Creger, Security National Funeral Homes & Cemeteries;
René Negrete, Inglewood Park Cemetery

12:00 - 12:30 PM

Wrap-Up / Monday Morning Mindset
Shane Pudenz, Carriage

Schedule of Events

Tuesday, January 13

3:30 – 3:45 PM

FIRST TIMERS ORIENTATION IN BALBOA

3:45 - 4:15 PM

ICE BREAKER

LORI BOLTON, CSE, CXE,
PARK LAWN CORPORATION

4:15 - 5:15 PM

WHEEL OF OBJECTIONS

MODERATORS:

JOHN BOLTON, CCE, CCRE, CSE, CXE
PARK LAWN CORPORATION

LORI BOLTON, CSE, CXE
PARK LAWN CORPORATION

PANELISTS:

ERIN CREGER
SECURITY NATIONAL FINANCIAL CORPORATION

NÉCTAR RAMÍREZ
FOREST LAWN MEMORIAL-PARKS & MORTUARIES

GREG NORRIS
HOMESTEADERS LIFE COMPANY

DAN KIENTZEL
SERVICE CORPORATION INTERNATIONAL

Get ready to level up your closing game at Dead Talks 2026 with "Wheel of Objections," a fast-paced, game show-style session hosted by industry pros John and Lori Bolton. Watch four expert panelists tackle the profession's toughest sales objections—from "I need to think about it" to pricing and timing concerns—and walk away with proven phrases, reframing techniques, and strategies to turn hesitation into commitment. You'll gain actionable, ready-to-use tools to handle objections with empathy, build undeniable value, and boost your pre-need and at-need closing ratios the moment you return to your firm.

5:15 - 6:30 PM

WELCOME RECEPTION

Wednesday, January 14

8:30 AM

WELCOME

8:40 - 9:55 AM | Keynote

DAVID PRIEMER

Author and "Sales Scientist" David Priemer joins DEAD Talks to share how empathy and behavioral insight can transform your sales approach. Drawing from his book Sell the Way You Buy, David will reveal how to guide families toward confident, high-value decisions—especially in pre-need sales. This is a keynote you won't want to miss!

10:00 - 10:05 AM

OVERVIEW OF EVENT

MIKE HARENS

MATTHEWS INTERNATIONAL

10:05 - 11:55 AM | Educating the Consumer

THE VALUE OF THE CELEBRATION

LEE LONGINO

SERVICE CORPORATION INTERNATIONAL

Funeral services for decades have provided a place for people to honor their loved ones and say goodbye, but today most families are moving away from tradition to true celebrations of life. We will cover how to transform and modernize your facilities and offerings to meet your customers' changing needs.

THE FIRST CALL: EVERY OPTION EVERY TIME

JENNIFER GRAZIANO

COXE & GRAZIANO FUNERAL HOME

Deathcare providers today often have one shot to secure a family, and secure "the call". In the era of price shoppers, even trusted previously served families are weighing options when it comes to selecting a funeral service provider. Deathcare providers and staff need to be at the top of their game to create an initial bond of trust, educate the family on available options, and why they should select this funeral home. Without bombarding families with prices and numbers, a confident, thoughtful, well-versed pitch must be made in that first contact phone call. This course will walk you through tactical responses to families in need of your services as well as ways to secure the call.

SELLING MORE THAN SPACE: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL VALUE OF PERMANENT PLACEMENT

DR. JASON TROYER

HEALING PATH CEMETERY

Families aren't just choosing a plot of land – they're choosing an anchor for their grief, a safe space for ritual, and a legacy for generations to come. In this session, Dr. Jason Troyer draws on grief psychology to explain why permanent placement in cemeteries provides healing to bereaved families. You'll discover how the power of place shapes acceptance, fosters intergenerational connection, and gives families "somewhere to go" long after the funeral is over. This program will equip sales professionals with compelling language and insights to show families that they are truly selling more than space – they are providing a pathway to healing.

PARK TOURS: WHERE HISTORY AND SALES COME TO LIFE

HONNALORA HUBBARD

COLDSPRING

In this session you will discover the art of crafting a cemetery tour that seamlessly blends the rich historical tapestry of the cemetery

with the practical aspects of selecting and purchasing the perfect resting place for families. This dual-purpose approach not only honors those who have come before us but also empowers families to make informed decisions about their own future.

Q&A WITH SPEAKERS

DOUG GOBER

FORESIGHT

12:30 - 2:00 PM

LUNCH

2:00 - 3:05 PM | Knowledge + Passion = Confidence

LEAD WITH HEART, SPEAK WITH INTENTION: CLOSING WITH COMPASSION AND CONFIDENCE

NOBLE SINES

DOMANI PRENEED

In a world where trust is low, sincerity and compassion aren't optional — they're the foundation of every meaningful interaction. Families can sense authenticity instantly, but compassion alone isn't enough, words and frameworks matter. Intentional language, practiced delivery, and a proven structure provide both clarity and confidence, ensuring families feel supported rather than sold. True service comes from combining empathy with leadership — guiding families through difficult decisions in a way that is both heartfelt and purposeful. When we lead with heart, speak with intention, and guide with compassion, rejection loses its sting — because it's not a verdict on us, but simply part of the family's process. We can walk away confident we've done our job at the highest level.

BRISKET AND TOMATOES: A RECIPE FOR EFFICIENT TIME MANAGEMENT

JOHN BOLTON, CCE, CCRE, CSE, CXE

PARK LAWN CORPORATION

38-year cemetery executive and competitive BBQ Pitmaster John Bolton compares the art of competition barbecue to the practice of effective time management for sales professionals. It uses the "low and slow" philosophy of barbecue as a metaphor for disciplined work, and explains how two specific tools, the Pomodoro Technique and the Eisenhower Matrix, can help a salesperson prioritize tasks, maintain focus, and avoid burnout.

YOU FIRST: THE SECRET TO LONG-TERM SALES SUCCESS

NÉCTAR RAMÍREZ

FOREST LAWN MEMORIAL-PARKS & MORTUARIES

In the emotionally demanding world of funeral sales, professionals are often required to show up with empathy, clarity, and strength day after day. This session is designed to equip attendees with practical strategies to protect and prioritize their own mental, emotional, and physical well-being, ensuring they can consistently perform at their best. Participants will explore tools for managing stress, setting healthy boundaries, and cultivating daily habits that restore energy and resilience. By learning to care for themselves first, funeral sales professionals will be better prepared to serve families with compassion, build meaningful connections, and sustain long-term success in this uniquely challenging and impactful career.

3:05 - 4:10 PM | How to Get More Leads

NETWORKING AND MARKETING IN THE REAL WORLD

PHIL ZEHMS

PARK LAWN CORPORATION

What if I told you that the most effective marketing strategy for funeral homes and cemeteries has nothing to do with advertising—

and everything to do with trust? In a profession where families turn to us in their most vulnerable moments, the question isn't 'How do we sell more?' but 'How do we show up more? From handwritten notes to Friday night football games, from Rotary clubs to hospice houses, the secret is simple: relationships built on curiosity, generosity, and authenticity. Marketing creates awareness. Networking creates connection. But together, they create trust—and trust is what people remember long after the service is over. This isn't just about funeral service. It's about leadership, business, and life. Because in every community, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. In his talk Phil Zehms will share marketing and networking strategies that work.

THE WOW FACTOR

CATHY YOUNKIN

FAIRFAX MEMORIAL

In the funeral profession, true customer service goes far beyond professionalism—it's about presence, compassion, and creating moments that matter. "The WOW Factor" explores how one funeral home has reimagined service through powerful community events and deeply personalized touches that honor each family's story. From hosting memorial 5Ks and art therapy workshops to creating heartfelt tributes and small, consistent gestures of care, this session reveals how intentional service builds trust, connection, and healing. Discover how embracing "The WOW Factor" transforms not only the families served but the entire profession.

UNLOCKING SALES GROWTH THROUGH STRATEGIC AFTERCARE

BRAD PALMER

SERVICE CORPORATION INTERNATIONAL

Discover how to effectively schedule and conduct aftercare appointments to enhance client relationships and drive long-term sales. This session will explore proven strategies for generating referrals and gathering valuable insights—drawn from the experience of the nation's largest funeral and cemetery provider.

4:10 - 5:15 PM | Managing Sales

PERFORMANCE MULTIPLIER; FROM RECRUITMENT MARKETING TO CONSISTENT SALES SUCCESS

ERIC BATTLES

PRECOA

How do you recruit, train, and motivate a sales team in a world that's more data-driven and fast-paced than ever before? Through strategic creativity. In this session, learn how creative thinking results in more attractive recruiting strategies, more engaging performance development, and more effective support. From recruitment marketing to sales enablement tech, discover what it takes to build a high-performing sales culture that results in more prearranged families.

THE ROLE OF EFFECTIVE SALES LEADERSHIP: DEFINE. DRIVE. DELIVER

GARY O'SULLIVAN, CCFE

THE GARY O'SULLIVAN COMPANY

Sales leaders carry the responsibility of ensuring their teams know exactly what it takes to succeed. This presentation will show you how to define the role with clarity and precision, drive accountability by monitoring daily activity and outcomes, and deliver consistent results through disciplined leadership. By focusing on leading indicators rather than lagging reports, you'll learn how to create a culture where success is predictable—not accidental.

MOTIVATIONAL LEADERSHIP

TONY ARMOGIDA

GLOBAL ATLANTIC FINANCIAL GROUP

Motivational leaders are those who know when to step outside of the lovely quote posters and dig in with those around them. An understanding of what motivational leadership means is required to help your team be its best and do its best work, whether you are a member of the team or serve as its manager.

Thursday, January 15

8:30 - 8:45 AM

EDUCATION FOUNDATION PRESENTATION

THE SEMINAR SUCCESS WORKSHOP: YOUR COMPLETE BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

TONY ARMOGIDA
GLOBAL ATLANTIC FINANCIAL GROUP

ERIN CREGER
SECURITY NATIONAL FUNERAL HOMES & CEMETERIES;

RENÉ NEGRETE
INGLEWOOD PARK CEMETERY

This workshop will equip participants with the knowledge and confidence to deliver engaging and effective preneed seminar presentations that build trust and drive results. Attendees will explore the essential tools and resources every presenter should have in their toolkit, from presentation materials to follow-up strategies. Best practices will be shared on how to connect with audiences, overcome objections, and create meaningful conversations that lead to long-term relationships and preneed sales.

WRAP-UP / MONDAY MORNING MINDSET

SHANE PUDENZ
CARRIAGE

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