

Cost-effective Custom Solution Helps Funeral Homes Transition from Static to Digital Signage



Challenge

- ▶ To help overcome resistance to change in the conservative funeral industry, funeral directors needed an attractive, cost-effective digital signage solution

Solution

- ▶ ViewSonic® All-in-one, VSD220 and VSD221 Smart Displays for Android™ provided an ideal, cost-effective starting point
- ▶ Sleek, customizable enclosures transformed the 22" displays into sophisticated Signature Series signage for a perfect fit into any funeral home environment
- ▶ Optimized for the FuneralScreen network, the VSD220/VSD221 enable easy content management from any computer

Results

- ▶ Digital signage reduces the costs and labor time associated with printed and felt-board signage
- ▶ Imparting an up-to-date feel to the environment, digital signs enable personalization of content for each family served
- ▶ Funeral directors who have implemented digital signage report that families react very favorably to the personal information and images of their loved one
- ▶ The Signature Series was unveiled at the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association annual convention to great enthusiasm

Customer Profile

Greene Valley Media delivers the latest in digital signage technology, serving a wide range of customers with complete turn-key solutions or à la carte components, including software and hardware plus content development and management. In 2009, Greene Valley Media launched FuneralScreen to provide comprehensive products and services for the funeral industry. The goal of FuneralScreen was to make an easy and painless transition from impersonal felt boards with plastic letters and printed announcements. In 2011 FuneralScreen received the National Funeral Directors Association's Innovation Award and today is the top provider of digital signage solutions for the death care industry.

The Challenge

Often considered recession-proof, the 17 billion dollar-a-year death industry is in fact a highly competitive market. With nearly 20,000 funeral homes in the US, consumers have options when it comes to selecting the environment in which they feel most comfortable honoring their deceased loved ones¹. Overwhelmingly family owned, operated and passed on through the generations, the funeral home business is characterized by a conservative mindset and is slow to adopt change. Times, however, have changed, and in today's market, to stagnate is to risk losing increasingly discerning, cost-conscious and tech-savvy customers.

A recent trend finds funeral homes seeking to distinguish themselves by providing an even more personalized experience, on top of the comfortable, comforting environment that has always been a top priority. Despite this trend, says Jeff McCauley, founder and president of Greene Valley Media and subsidiary FuneralScreen, the approach to funeral home lobby directory signs and other signage has largely gone unchanged.

"The technology has stayed the same for decades; impersonal and unattractive," says McCauley. "Sometimes the funeral home prints service information on paper or, worse yet, is still messing with plastic letters on a felt board sign."

Digital signage presents a logical and – with the types of resources provided by Greene Valley Media/FuneralScreen – easy solution. The challenge, says McCauley, himself a funeral director, is overcoming the power of tradition and a conservative mindset.

"This is an old-school business, passed down from grandfathers to their grandchildren. Funeral directors haven't tended to be very tech savvy, and they're often not eager to change their ways. But as younger generations take over, this challenge is decreasing."

Even when the concept of digital signage is accepted, an additional challenge remains: fitting the signage into the funeral home's environment in an attractive, non-obtrusive way.

"How the screens integrate into the funeral home décor is important," says McCauley. "And most digital signage products are not conducive to this right out of the box."

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Uses of Digital Signage in a Funeral Home Environment

- ▶ Display photos of deceased
- ▶ Guide families and guests
- ▶ Serve as a digital concierge
- ▶ Display community events and news
- ▶ Display photo slideshows
- ▶ Play memorial tributes
- ▶ Display emergency announcements
- ▶ Display promotional content about funeral home

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A final challenge in the equation, cost is always a factor. Funeral directors need to know that the digital signage solution is a good value for their business, offering tangible benefits that offset the cost of the investment.

The ViewSonic® GVM/FuneralScreen Solution

Digital signage in a funeral home setting can be used to direct and educate guests and families in lobbies, coffee lounges, chapels, arrangement offices, and other locations. It offers a dynamic means of personalizing and customizing each message for every service. The lobby directory can display service information along with a photo of the deceased. Wayfinding signage directs visitors throughout the home along with displaying personal information and images chosen by the family. Room signs can be entirely unique rather than listing information for a full day of services. Signage within the chapel can display memorial tribute slide shows, videos, or comforting images personalized to families' wishes.

A new generation of funeral directors and the snowballing integration of technology into daily life have helped overcome the resistance of tradition. However, cost and cohesive integration into the funeral home décor have continued to present challenges to the adoption of digital signs in funeral homes.

To help keep down costs, FuneralScreen turned to ViewSonic's VSD220 and VSD221 Smart Displays for Android™, which offered an ideal platform for running and managing FuneralScreen content. However, the displays tended not to blend in well with traditional funeral home décor.

“We had used the ViewSonic VSD220 and VSD221 Smart Displays and liked them because they offered a lower cost solution for digital signage compared to a TV screen or monitor with a computer,” says McCauley, “And they work well with our content management system. But out-of-the-box they weren't making the right impression for our funeral home customers.”

McCauley contacted a woodworking company known in the funeral industry for manufacturing high-end specialty furniture. The company's advanced CNC machining capabilities were a perfect fit for his vision of packaging the VSD220 and VSD221 displays in a sophisticated custom cabinet. Thus was born the FuneralScreen Signature Series Display, boasting rich-looking custom wood and metal enclosures suitable for any discerning funeral director's décor.

At the heart of these custom-designed digital signs, the ViewSonic VSD220 and VSD221 Smart Displays feature integrated sign players optimized for the FuneralScreen digital sign network. This empowers users to easily create, update, and schedule their sign content from any computer.

Crafted from quality hardwoods and premium metals with precision CNC manufacturing and a state-of-the-art finishing processes, Signature Series digital signs are designed to integrate into virtually any funeral home's décor, with four wood finishes and three metallic tones to choose from. The enclosures can be engraved with customized text or a funeral home's logo and can also be custom matched to any color. Single and dual-screen models offer flexibility for use throughout a funeral home. At a compact 24" W x 22.25" H x 2.5" D, the single screen model fits in easily over a register stand, as a room sign, or in a small lobby. With double the impact, the 24" W x 37" H x 2.5" D dual screen version captures attention in larger lobbies and enables the display of secondary messages along with the primary announcements. And at just 2-1/2" deep, these sleek enclosures fit flush against walls for unobtrusive, space-saving information display.

“Because the ViewSonic VSD220 and VSD221 Smart Displays are compact and contain their own operating system, we were able to create an attractive, all-in-one unit that's perfect for fitting into funeral home décor,” says McCauley. “With other displays that need a computer, it would be a challenge to fit all the components into a usable package that would be small enough.”

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VSD220 Smart Display

- ▶ 22" (21.5" viewable) 1080p LED panel
- ▶ Dual-point optical touch
- ▶ TI dual core CPU with Android 4.0
- ▶ Micro HDMI, MicroSD card slot, USB (Type A x2, micro x1)
- ▶ 1.3MP webcam with Mic
- ▶ Integrated RJ45, WiFi and Bluetooth



VSD221 Smart Display

- ▶ 22" (21.5" viewable) 1080p LED panel
- ▶ Dual-point optical touch
- ▶ TI dual core CPU with Android 4.1
- ▶ Micro HDMI, MicroSD card slot, USB (Type A x2, micro x1)
- ▶ 1.3MP webcam with Mic
- ▶ Integrated RJ45, WiFi and Bluetooth

The Results

Greene Valley Media/FuneralScreen debuted the Signature Series displays at the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association (ICCF) annual convention in Las Vegas, NV in April 2014, where it was received with great enthusiasm by the audience of more than 1,000 cemetery, cremation and funeral service owners and managers.

"They loved the way it looked," says McCauley. "It was very well received and we had many funeral directors interested in using it."

If FuneralScreen's past experience with customers who have made the move from static to digital signage is any indication, the new Signature Series displays are destined to deliver satisfying results to the funeral homes who install them, offering a reduction in the costs and labor time associated with printed and felt board signage as well as a more personalized experience for the families they serve.

"Customers we have signed up with digital signage love it," says McCauley. "It really makes a difference to the families they serve. When the family walks in the door and is met with a photo of their loved one on a dynamic sign, they take pictures of it, touch it and really stop and look. It's been very positive. You don't get that kind of reaction with plastic letters on a board."

Looking Ahead

With their compact profile, custom design options, all-in-one touchscreen functionality, and at a competitive price tag, McCauley anticipates that the Signature Series will bring advantages to many other industries as well, including hospitality, enterprise, healthcare and others. For more information, visit: www.funeralscreen.com or www.mygvm.com.

¹ Mathisen, Tyler, JANUARY 15, 2013, FIND OUT EVERYTHING YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE BUSINESS OF DEATH. Accessed 2.25.14 at <http://www.cnn.com/id/100381173>

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