



# Funeral Directors *and* **Flowers**

Insights into Floral Tributes  
in the Funeral Industry



A guide to floral tributes in funeral services, consumers' reactions, and feedback to improve relationships with floral retailers.

2014

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## About the Floral Marketing Research Fund

Volunteers of the American Floral Endowment (AFE) Board of Trustees established the Floral Marketing Research Fund (FMRF), in 2008. The purpose of the FMRF is to collect funds from industry sources to be used in the support of funding consumer research benefiting the entire floriculture industry.

## Survey Procedure and Participated Funeral Director Demographics

In August 2014, a survey was administered via e-mail to members of the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA). The survey questions were aimed to learn about their attitudes toward the use of floral tributes in funeral services. Additionally, they were asked about consumers' reactions toward sympathy flowers and the symbolism connected to sympathy flowers; their current relationships and experiences working with local floral retailers; their opinions on the use of donations instead of floral tributes at funerals; what floral retailers can do to improve floral tributes, post-funeral floral tribute use, and additional services that would improve their relationships with floral retailers. Business demographics (number of employees, location, years in business, etc.) were also included in the survey.



In exchange for participating, participants were entered in a drawing for free registration to the 2014 NFDA Convention. A total of 192 funeral directors participated in the study.

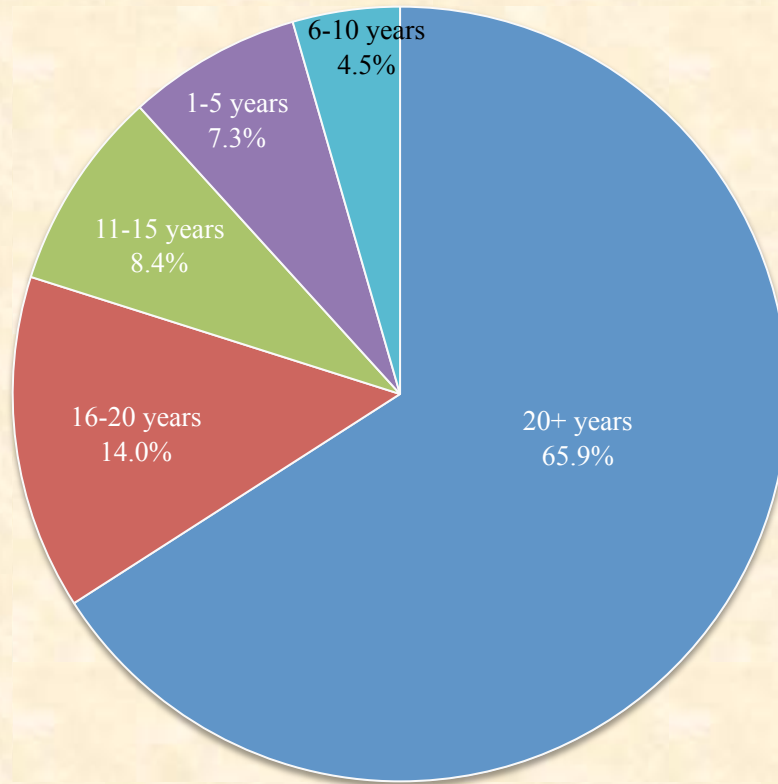


Forty-one continental U.S. states were represented, plus participants from the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Ohio had the most responses (16), followed by Pennsylvania (15), Michigan (11), Illinois and New Jersey (9). The other states had fewer participants.

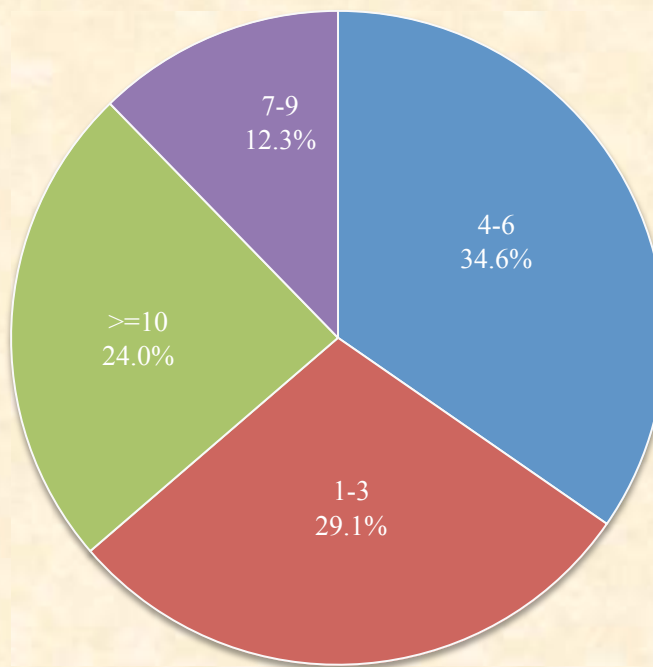
Seventy-three percent of respondents were male. Sixty-six percent of the sample had more than 20 years of experience, 14% had 16 to 20 years of experience, 8% had 11 to 15 years of experience, and 12% had less than 10 years of experience (Figure 1).

Most businesses (64%) employed less than 6 people and were independent/single location businesses (Figure 2 and Figure 3). Thirty percent of the businesses were serving a city/community with less than 10,000 people, 41% of them were serving a city/community with 10,000 to 50,000 people, 14% of them were serving a city/community with 50,000 to 100,000 people and 15% of them were serving a city with more than 100,000 people (Figure 4).

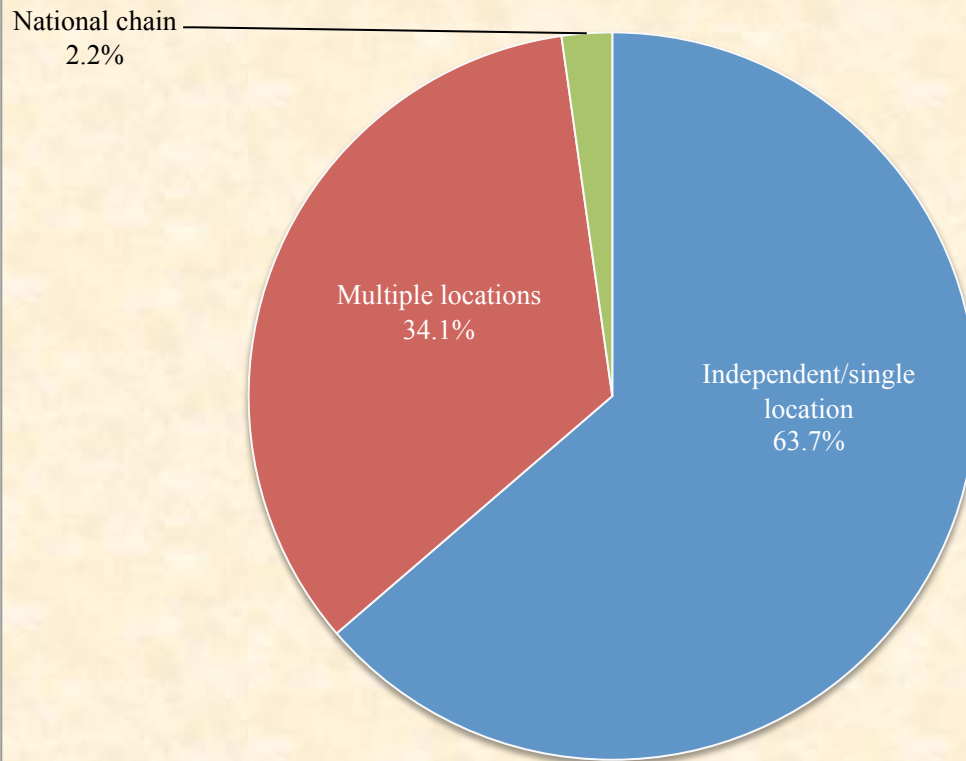
**Figure 1. Funeral directors' years of experience**



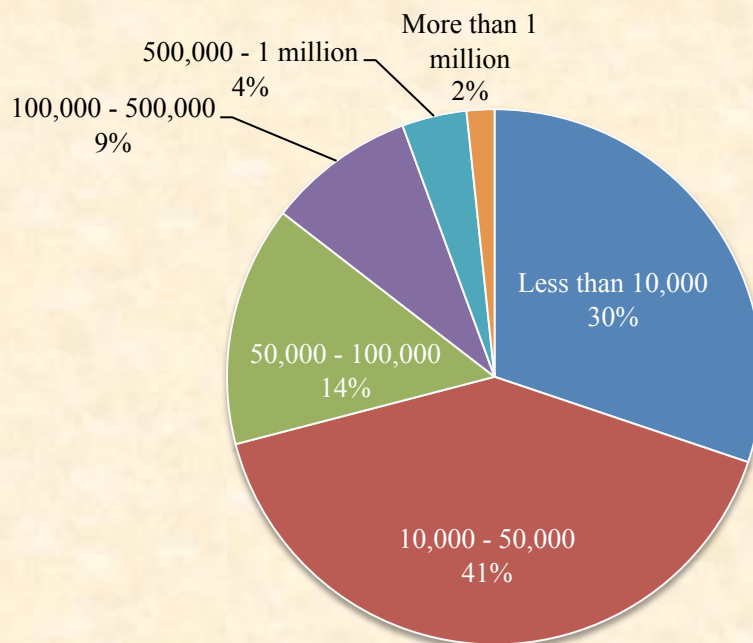
**Figure 2. Number of staff(s)**



**Figure 3. Which best describes where you work?**



**Figure 4. What is the population of the city or community you serve?**





## Executive Summary

The findings from the Funeral Directors and Flower Survey offer insights into flowers and plants at memorial services from close to 200 funeral directors nationwide.

The information gathered from this survey can assist in enhancing the educational and marketing materials provided to funeral directors. These materials, aimed at consumers, would illuminate the emotional, psychological and physical benefits flowers bring to grieving families.

Findings include:

- ❖ Funeral directors considered flowers and plants as providing the most comfort to the bereaved, followed by sympathy cards, for non-human sources of comfort.
- ❖ Seventy-three percent of funeral directors believe their clients recall flowers and plants as a comfort.
- ❖ From the viewpoint of the family, the majority of funeral directors (51%) believe floral memorials are an expression of sympathy, followed by tribute/respect for the deceased.
- ❖ Seventy-four percent of funeral directors encourage flowers at the services and nearly 18% of them view floral tributes as a significant tradition that should be preserved.
- ❖ Funeral directors recall approximately 64% of clients talking about flowers/plants.
- ❖ Sixty-eight percent of funeral directors are unaware of any studies showing the benefits of flowers at services.
- ❖ Twenty percent of those who completed the survey indicated that families of the deceased always request donations instead of flowers, 70% stated their clients sometimes request donations and 10% specified donations are rarely/never requested.

## Executive Summary (Continued)

- ❖ Sixty-four percent of funeral directors do NOT use the term 'in lieu of' flowers in funeral announcements.
- ❖ The majority of funeral directors (63% were visited by a local florist in the past 3-4 months while only 19% were visited 1+ year(s) ago or never.
- ❖ Eighty percent of funeral directors stated they have a working relationship with at least one local florist, 7% have a local florist but not a real working relationship, and 2% have an in-house floral designer/shop.
- ❖ Seventy-four percent of funeral directors encourage families to have flowers at their service, 6% only sometimes encourage flowers/plants, and 16% have no preference.
- ❖ The majority of directors (44%) believe funeral flowers are sometimes a hassle while 18% of them think funeral flowers are a hassle indicating there is room for improvement.
- ❖ The cards attached to memorial flowers are another area for improvement for 89% of funeral directors.
- ❖ The majority of funeral directors (75%) also expressed the use of containers that avoid spills as helpful, followed by adjusting the arrangement (45%) transporting flowers to the cemetery (23%) and setting up the flowers in the service area (15%).

# Top 10 Key Insights

- 1. Maintain an on-going relationship with funeral directors and encourage them to recommend floral retailers to their clients.**
  - a. Schedule a meeting with funeral director every six months.
  - b. Provide business cards to funeral directors for them to share with their clients.
  - c. Ask for a link on the funeral home's webpage.
  - d. Acknowledge funeral directors' referral through occasional thank you notes, flowers, compensation, etc. Refer the funeral home/director to potential clients.
  - e. Give compensation to funeral directors.
  - f. Train delivery staff to spend more time developing relationships with the employees at the funeral home.
- 2. Help funeral directors with product set-up, care, transportation and post-service disposal to reduce the potential hassle for funeral directors and staff.**
  - a. Provide set-up assistance with hard to handle (e.g. heavy) or display pieces.
  - b. Offer to help water/care for the flowers/plants and replace wilted flowers if necessary.
  - c. Help transport flowers to different places (family, churches) if needed.
  - d. Offer to remove larger pieces from the funeral home after the funeral or collect unwanted floral tributes and recycle vases.
  - e. Deliver items that are intended to homes or table arrangements directly to residence of the family.
- 3. On time delivery is ESSENTIAL.**
  - a. Floral retailers need to be conscious of the time of the visitation/services. Either look in the obituaries for the times or ask the funeral home staff.
  - b. Floral tributes need to be delivered at least one hour before the family/friends arrive to allow set-up time.
  - c. If the floral tribute is late, please include a forwarding address or deliver directly to the family/friends of the deceased.
- 4. Floral arrangements need to be easy to transport.**
  - a. Eighty-three percent of clients take the floral tributes home.
  - b. Floral tributes must be able to withstand handling and transportation from the visitation to the service and other destinations.
- 5. Floral tribute structure is very important to funeral directors and clients.**
  - a. Keep floral tributes a manageable size, lightweight and transportable.
  - b. Promote stable designs with low centers of gravity.
  - c. Avoid shedding flowers/fillers, cement tributes, and glass/breakable containers.
  - d. Encourage smaller floral tributes.
  - e. Use containers that do not leak/spill water.



# Top 10 Key Insights

(Continued)

**6. The information on floral tributes needs to be clear and informative.**

- a. Provide descriptions of the floral tributes (flower names, meanings, legends, history, etc.)
- b. Make sure the deceased's name and the name/address of the sender are on the card.
- c. Provide two cards (one for the album, one for the display).
- d. Provide a photo of the tribute.
- e. Put the forwarding address on the card in case the arrangement is late.

**7. Provide up-to-date product information to funeral directors.**

- a. Keep product books and pricing in the books up to date. When there are specialty pieces share photos to add to the promotion books.
- b. Provide brochures that include pricing information to give to families.

**8. Promote the value of floral tributes to funeral directors and end consumers.**

- a. Promote that flowers are the most important non-human source of comfort to the bereaved.
- b. Educate funeral directors and consumers about emotional/physiological benefits (comfort, calming, etc.) and physical benefits (softening funeral atmosphere) of floral tributes.
- c. Provide visual examples of the benefits of floral tributes. For example, floral retailers could provide photos of the funeral parlor with and without floral tributes to emphasize these benefits in promotions.

**9. Develop strategies to cope with the increasing use of donations.**

- a. Partner with charitable organizations or promote an option to donate a percent of each sale to a specific charity in the deceased's memory.
- b. Develop floral tributes with similar designs but different sizes that are sold at different price points.
- c. Provide silk options or partial silk options.
- d. Address limited floral longevity by offering small, keepsake memorial options.

**10. Floral tributes shipped via FedEx or UPS are not liked by funeral directors.**

- a. The delivery is not on time.
- b. Flowers' quality is not very good. Vase size is not right or vase is damaged.
- c. The funeral directors are expected to do all the set-up work. It takes time and needs extra labor. It is a hassle for funeral directors because designing floral arrangements is not their specialty.

## Chapter 1.

# Funeral Rituals and Flowers – Flower Meanings and Consumer Preferences

### BACKGROUND

Traditional floral tributes are an important element of commemorating the deceased. They are often sent to close friends and family members to express sympathy, provide comfort, and symbolize love and concern. The following chapter provides an in-depth analysis of how consumers perceive sympathy flowers and what those flowers provide to the funeral rituals from the perspective of funeral directors. It is important to understand the role memorial flowers play in funeral rituals in order to design floral memorials that align with customers' needs.

Sympathy Collection Photograph Provided by Bachman's

### RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Funeral directors' perspectives on the value of floral tributes

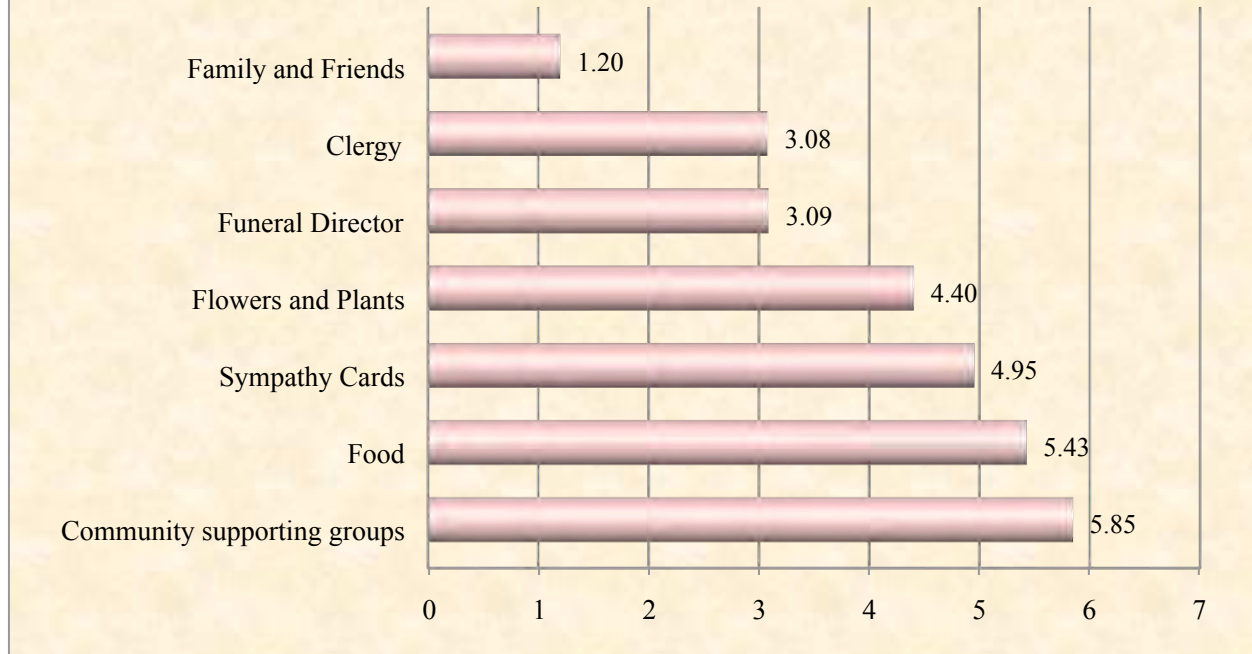
It can be challenging to find comfort while grieving the loss of a loved one.

Floral tributes are one potential source of comfort. From the

perspective of funeral directors, the most comfort comes from human sources starting with family and friends, followed by the funeral director and clergy members (Figure 5).



**Figure 5. When thinking of funeral rituals, how would you rank the following with regard to the comfort they provide for the bereaved?**  
(1=Providing the most comfort, 7=Providing the least comfort)

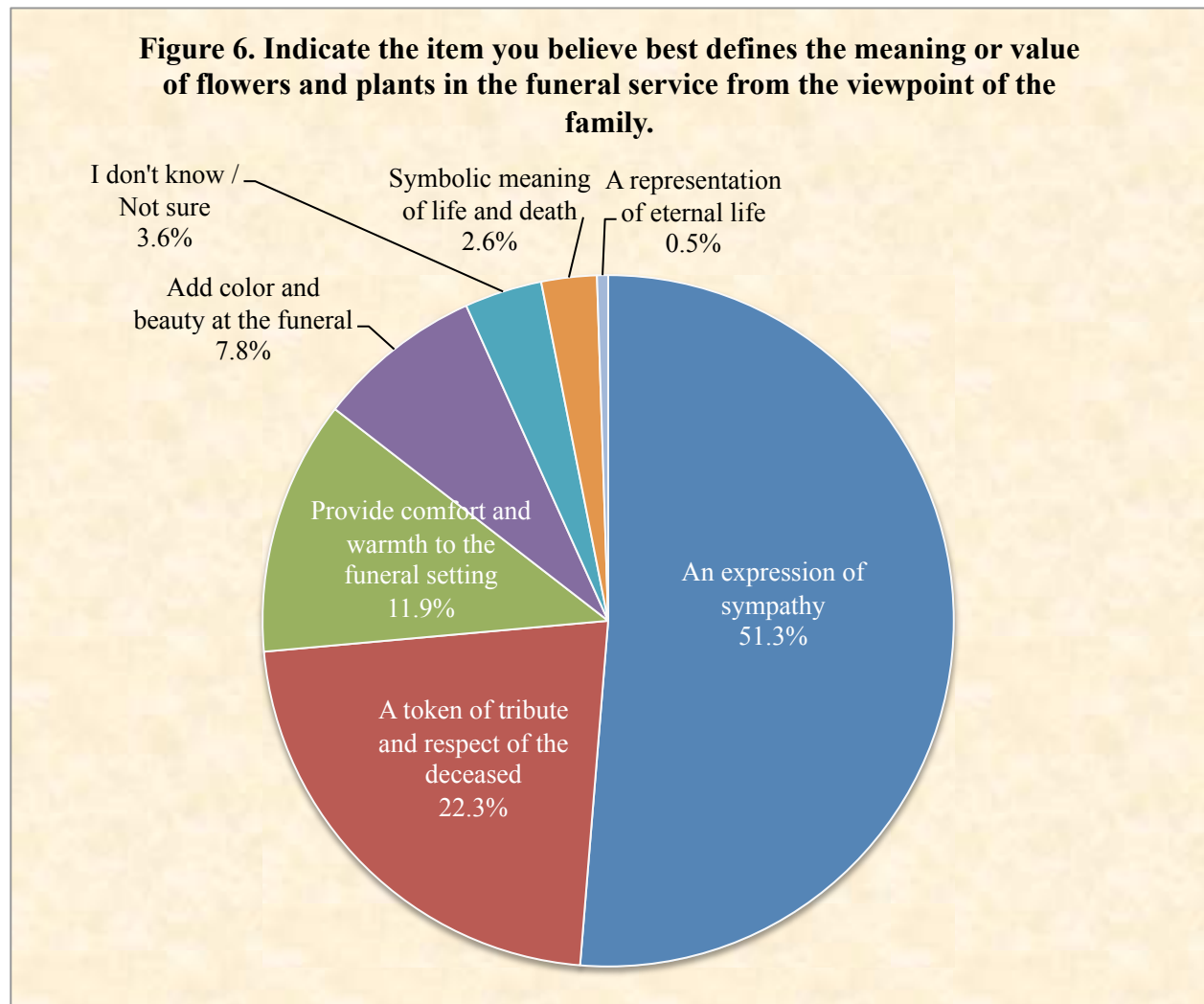


Regarding non-human sources of comfort, funeral directors consider flowers and plants as providing the most comfort to the bereaved, followed by sympathy cards.

Ten percent of funeral directors have heard from the bereaved that flowers are the most comforting, 54% heard flowers were sometimes a comfort while only 35% had never heard the bereaved state flowers were comforting.

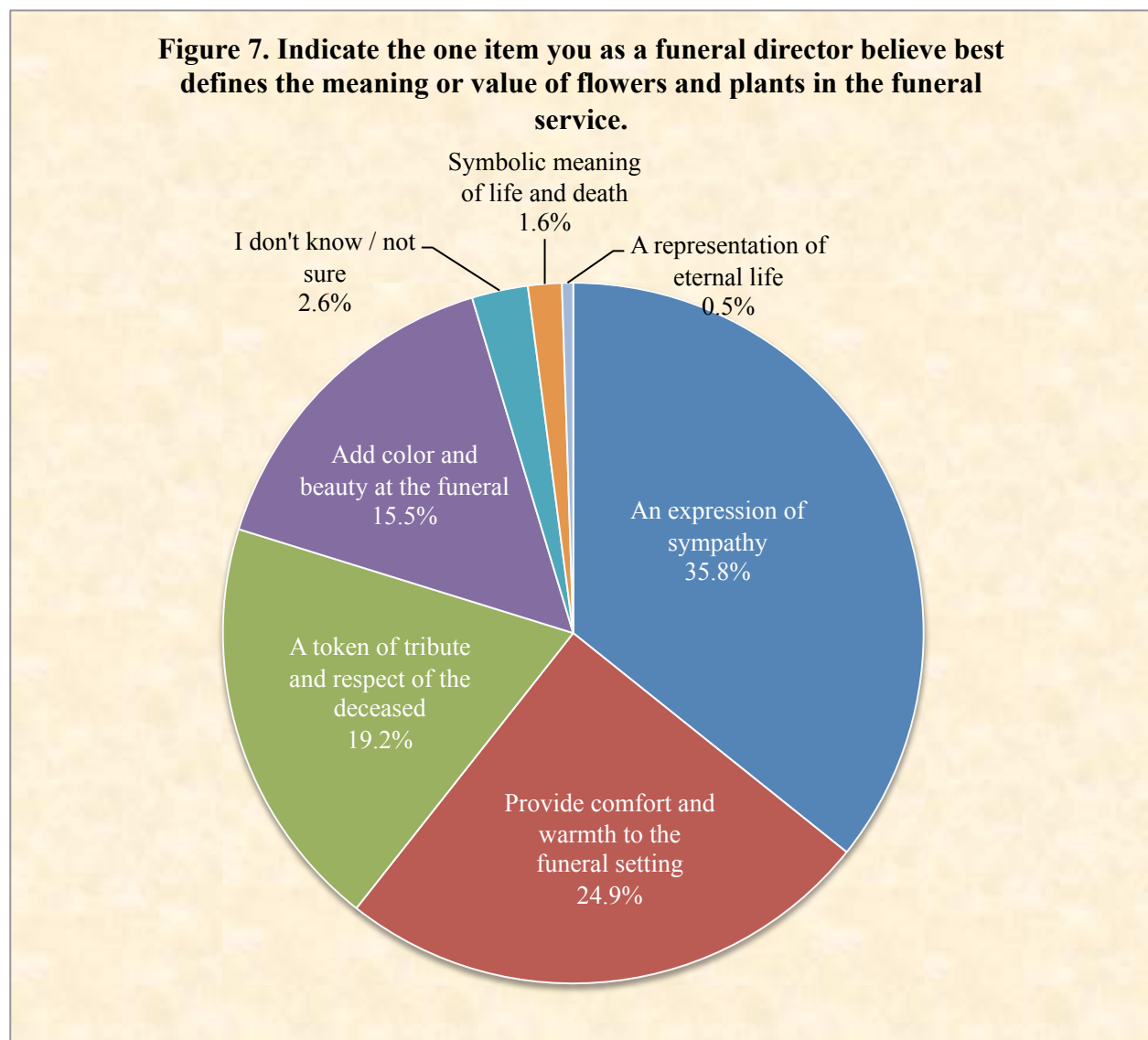
Seventy-three percent of funeral directors believe their clients recall flowers/plants as a comfort.

From the viewpoint of the family, the majority of funeral directors (51%) believe floral memorials are an expression of sympathy, followed by tribute/respect for the deceased, source of comfort/warmth to the setting, and add color/beauty to the setting (Figure 6).



Funeral directors have similar perceptions of the benefits of floral memorials during the funeral service (Figure 7). However, they place more emphasis on the ability of floral tributes to visually soften the funeral venue by providing comfort/warmth to the setting and adding color and beauty at the funeral.

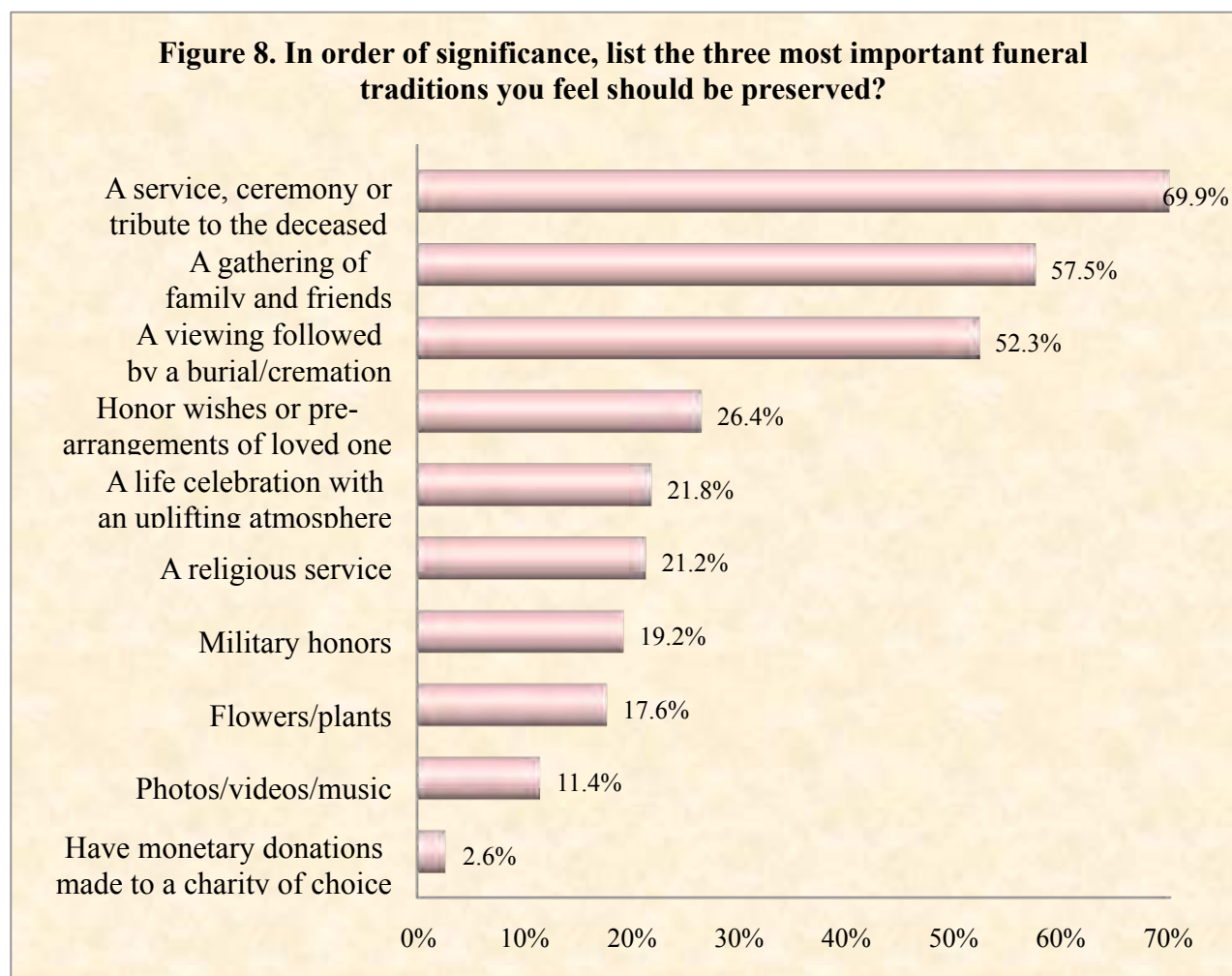
Floral tributes' symbolic meaning of life/death and representation of eternal life were less important for the bereaved and funeral directors.



**Seventy-four percent of funeral directors encourage flowers at the services** and nearly 18% of them view floral tributes as a significant tradition that should be preserved (Figure 8). Independent/single-location funeral directors are more likely to choose flowers/plants as one of the three most important funeral traditions (22%) than multiple-location funeral directors (13%). The funeral directors with fewer staff are more likely to view flowers/plants as the top three most important funeral traditions.

Funeral directors perceive the service/ceremony/tribute as the most important funeral tradition that should be preserved, followed by the gathering of family/friends, viewing and burial/cremation, honoring the deceased's pre-arranged wishes, a life celebration, religious service, and military honors.

The traditions that are considered as more important than flowers/plants are all gathering/service-related. Actually, **flowers/plants are considered as the most important physical element followed by photos/videos/music**. Monetary donations are considered the least important physical elements among funeral traditions. Floral tributes can be used in the important gatherings/services to add ambiance and comfort.



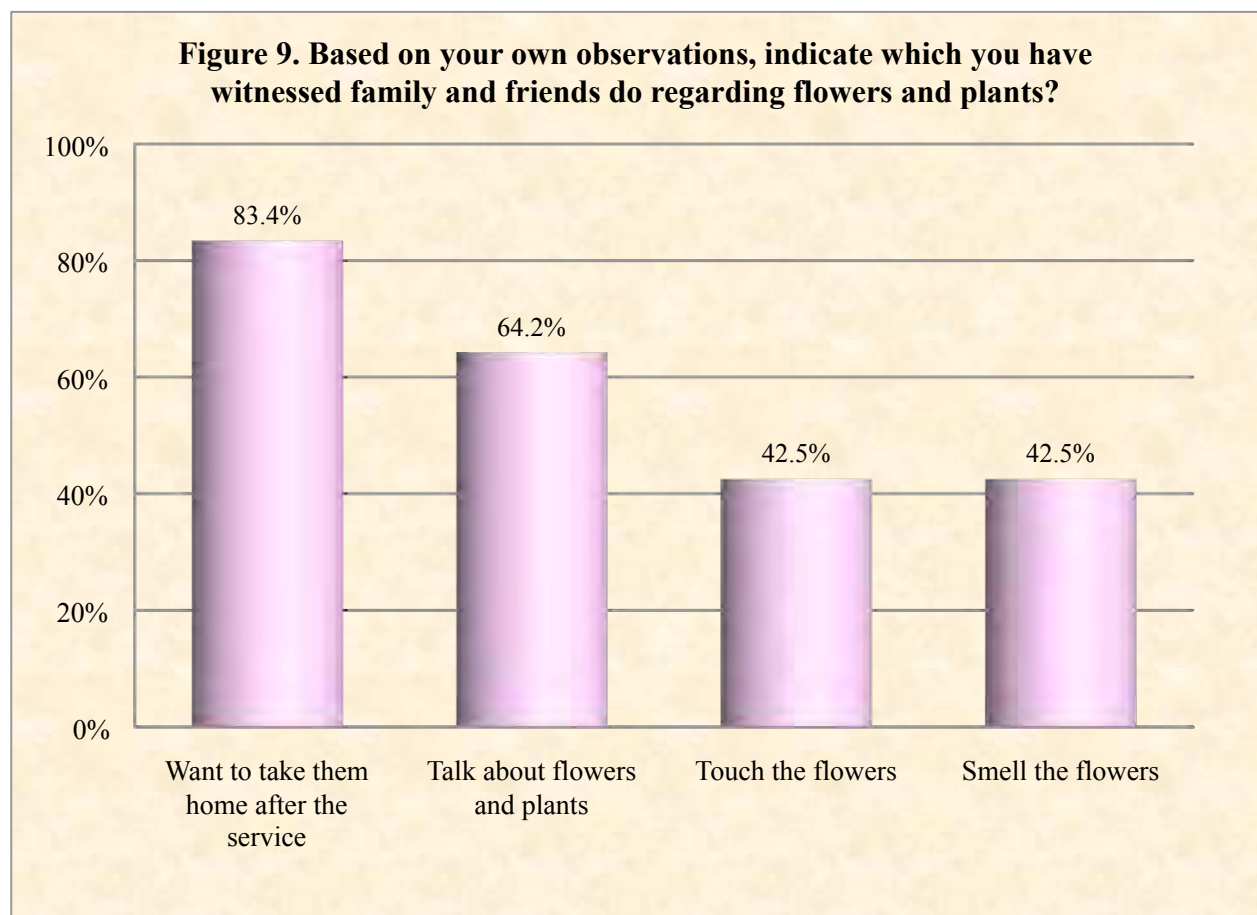


***Results indicate that funeral directors know floral tributes are important from their personal experiences; however, the majority of funeral directors (68%) are unaware of any studies showing the benefits of flowers at services.***

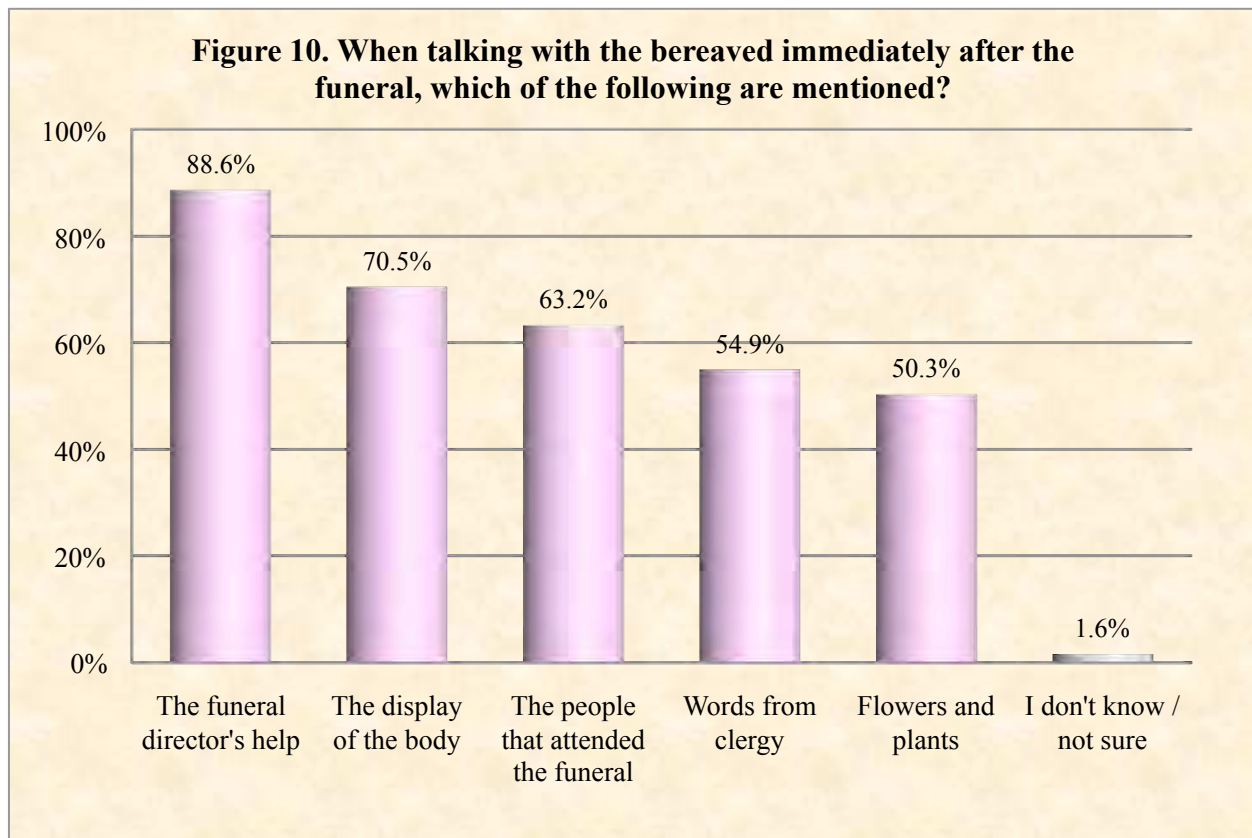
*Clients' responses to floral tributes*

Approximately 23% of clients know what types of flowers they want for the service and 59% sometimes know what types of flowers they want. During the service/visitation, approximately 23% of attendees want to know the name of the flowers and 47% sometimes want to know the name of the flowers.

Funeral directors recall approximately 64% of clients talking about the flowers/plants. Additionally, many families want to take the flowers home after the service, touch the flowers, and/or smell them (Figure 9).



About 50% of clients mention the floral tributes to the funeral directors immediately after the service (Figure 10).



It is important to note that due to financial stresses, family dissensions, and decreased religious affiliations, the number of funeral services is decreasing and some families are instead opting for 'celebrations of life' to commemorate the deceased. Instead of floral tributes, donations are collected at these events to offset the cost and/or donate to an organization/charity that was important to the deceased.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE INDUSTRY

**Funeral directors regard flowers/plants as the most important non-human source of comfort to the bereaved.** Flowers/plants soften the atmosphere and provide warmth, color and beauty to the funeral setting.

**A majority of clients talk about, touch or smell flowers/plants after funeral services, which mean they are very important to clients.** These messages should be promoted to consumers using educational or reminder advertisements, which can potentially encourage the use of flowers/plants at funeral services.



Sympathy Collection Photograph Provided by Bachman's

Since clients talk about the floral tributes, it is very important that the flowers and plants are high quality and visually appealing. Floral retailers can include discrete brand logo/contact information on the card so people who like the display can order floral products from them in the future. High quality floral tributes can generate word of mouth advertising which is free and highly trusted by end customers.

Floral tribute designs should be very stable to withstand being touched by memorial attendees. Additionally, the flower/plant selection should be robust to withstand the touching (and transportation). If the floral tribute falls apart after being touched or moved, it would not reflect well upon the floral retailer, funeral director, or sender of the tribute.

Floral retailers can offer fragrant floral tribute options. However, they need to be aware of the physical setting of the services in order to not overdo the fragrant flowers. For instance, if the setting is fairly small, one fragrant arrangement or one or two fragrant flowers mixed into the arrangements are adequate for the area.

**The majority of clients (67%) do not know or only sometimes know the types of flowers they want for the services.** Floral retailers can provide services to help those who do not know what they want. Having information about the legends/stories/meanings of different flowers can be of great help to clients when they match different types of flowers with the theme of the service (or personality of the deceased). **This is also an opportunity for floral retailers to educate consumers about the value of flowers at memorial services.**

Electronic devices (e.g. iPad) with photos of product options, prices, color availability, fragrance options, flower types, and small add-ons (photo holder, memorial charm, memorial quotes, etc.) would be an easy means of having an up-to-date, easy to use catalog. Printed materials also serve to communicate product options to clients. Since floral tributes often provide visual benefits, having high quality images is very important in promotions.

**Nearly 70% of attendees at the service/visitation show interest in knowing the name of the flowers.**

Floral retailers should provide the flower names/descriptions on the card so they are readily available for people who are interested.



Floral retailers can encourage the use of floral tributes by promoting the benefits of the products. Beneficial promotions should be given to funeral directors, the bereaved and families

and friends of the bereaved to educate them about the emotional/physiological (comfort, calming, etc.) and physical benefits (atmosphere, ambiance) of floral tributes.

It is important that the floral tributes are high quality so they hold up throughout the memorial services and in clients' homes. Product stability also needs to be considered so the tributes can withstand transportation and handling. Both quality and stability serve to build the floral retailer's reputation through improved customer satisfaction.

To address changing memorial trends, designing and promoting personalized floral tributes are one way of entering the '*celebration of life*' market. For example, a floral arrangement of the deceased's favorite sports team colors or an arrangement designed to hold photos of the deceased can be used to celebrate the life of the deceased.

## Chapter 2.

### Donations versus Floral Memorials

#### BACKGROUND

Floral tributes are an important element in funeral services. However, there is a recent trend in the funeral service industry: loved ones are frequently asking for donations to charities/organizations in memory of the deceased. Understanding the tradeoffs consumers make when they request for donations instead of floral tributes is important in better understanding consumer needs. In this chapter, the most common reasons consumers prefer donations are discussed from the funeral directors' perspectives. By knowing why consumers make these requests, floral retailers can be better prepared to identify the best means of competing with and/or collaborating with these charity organizations.

#### RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Recently, donation requests instead of flowers/gifts have become more popular in funeral services. In this study, 20% of the funeral directors indicated that families of the deceased always request donations instead of flowers, 70% stated their clients sometimes request donations, and 10% specified donations are rarely/never requested.

Charities recognize this opportunity for fundraising and as a means to increase awareness. **Sixty-one percent of funeral directors stated they had been contacted directly by charities requesting their recommendations to families.** Often charity donations are selected by families based on the deceased's involvement, interests or manner of death.

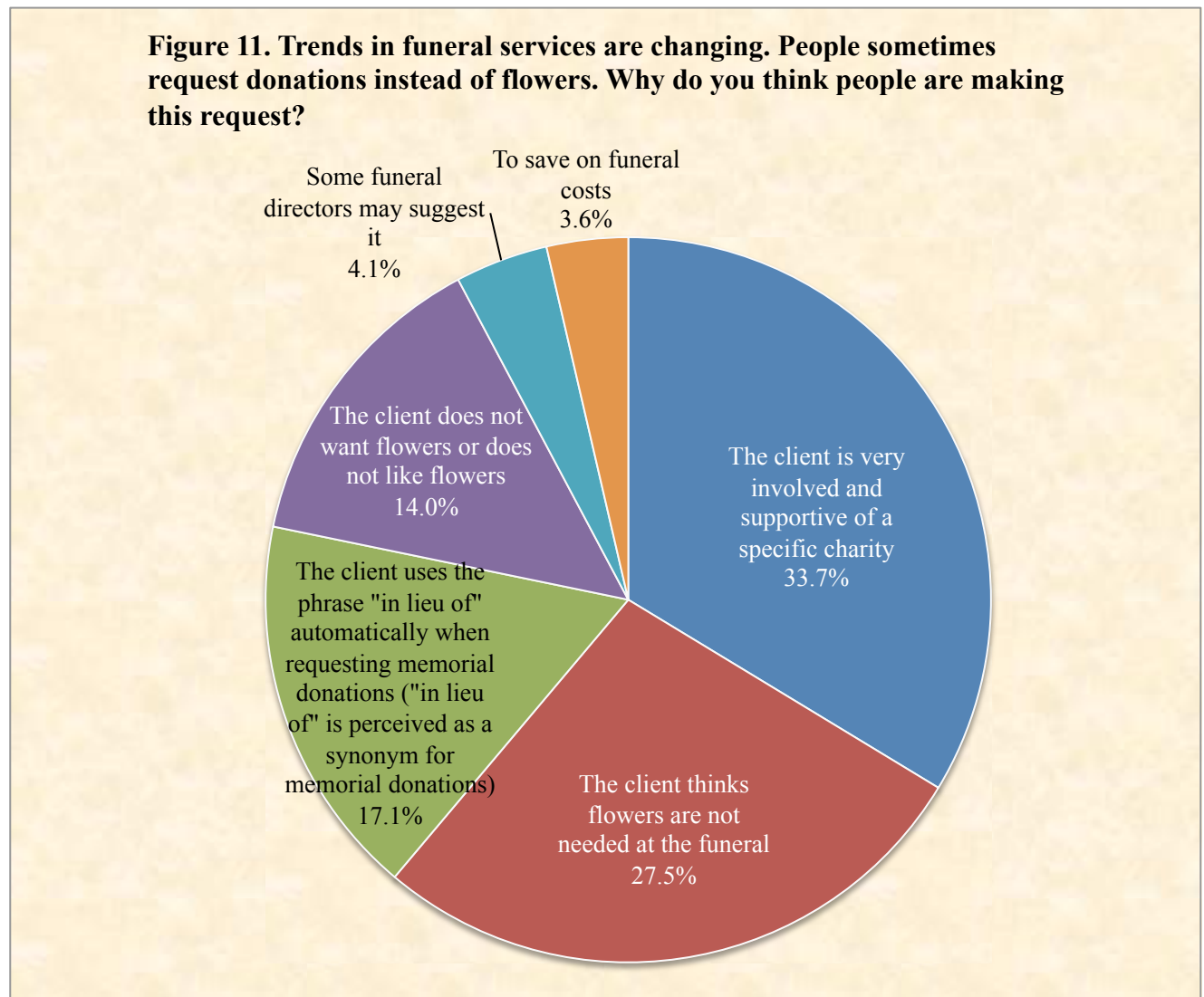
Specifically, the majority of funeral directors (34%) indicated people request donations instead of flowers because the deceased was very involved/supportive of the charity, followed by 27% of clients believing flowers are not needed, the client used 'in lieu of' automatically when requesting memorial donations, client does not want/like flowers, to



Sympathy Collection Photograph Provided by Bachman's



save on cost, and the funeral directors suggest it (Figure 11).



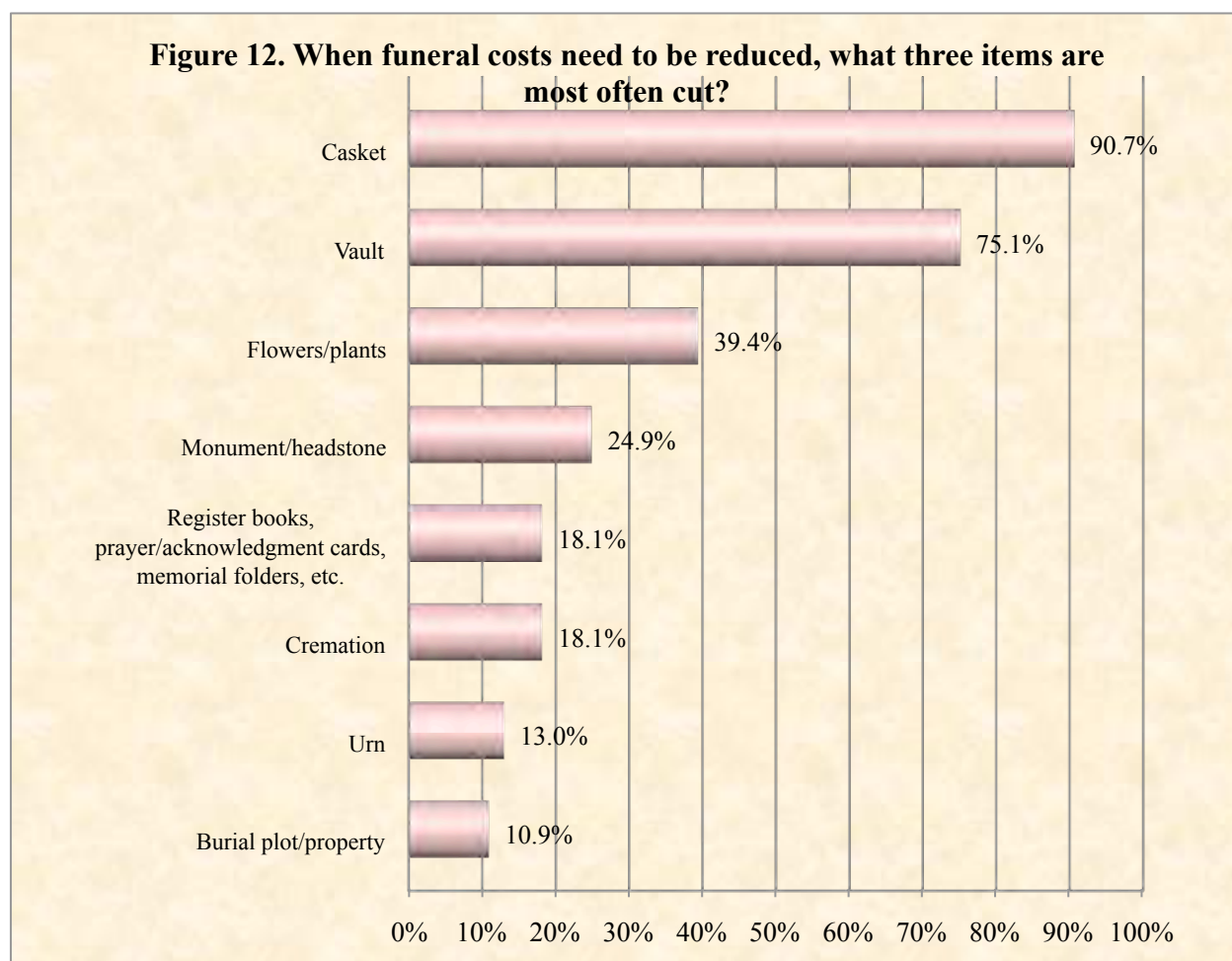
**Sixty-four percent of funeral directors do not use the term ‘in lieu of’ flowers in funeral announcements.** Often, if the family insists, different terminology is used such as ‘should friends desire, memorial contributions may be made to...’ or ‘flowers are accepted, yet the family requests memorials... One funeral director mentioned that ‘In lieu of’ is not frequently used because it is viewed as disrespectful of the floral industry.

This shows the importance of florists’ relationships to funeral directors and to continue with this message.



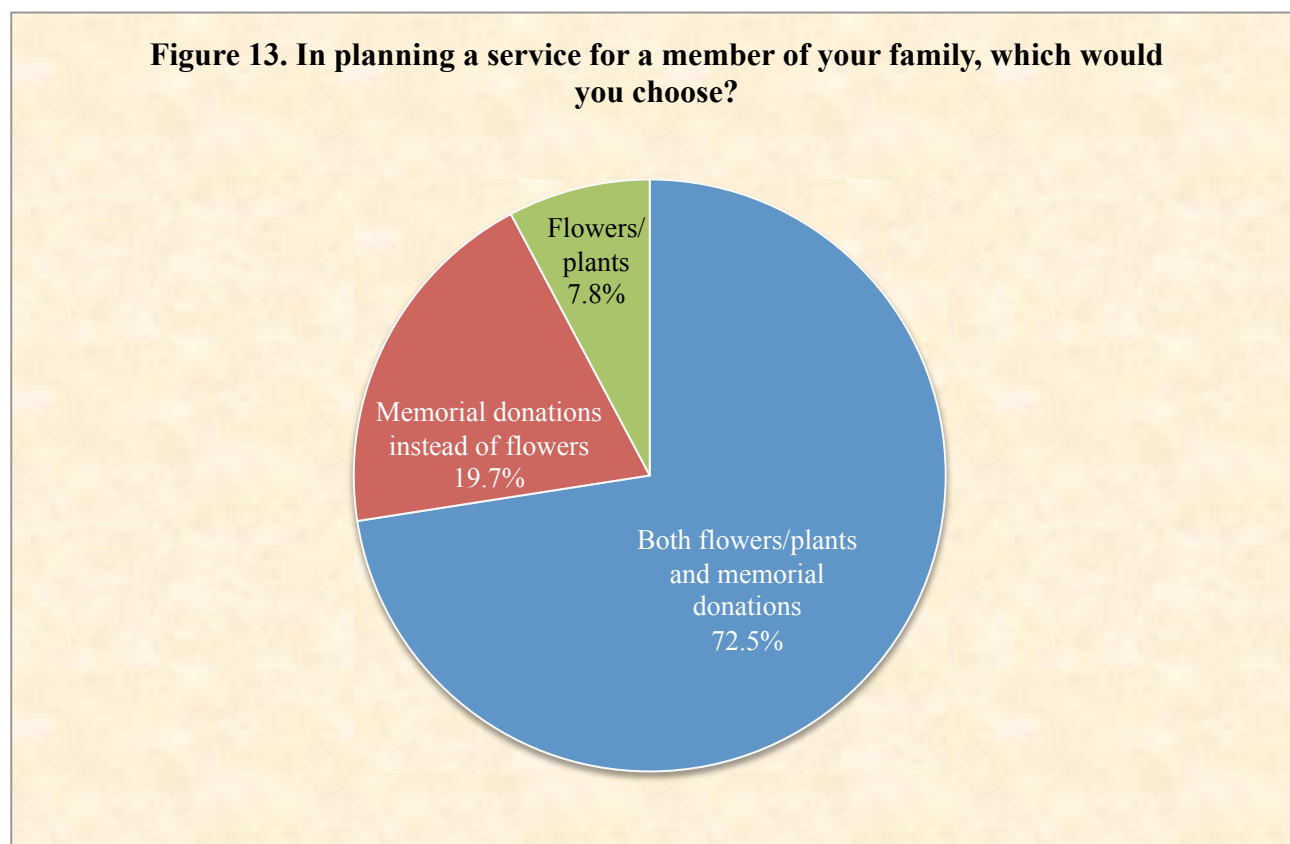
Requests for monetary donations at funeral services are particularly prevalent among families that are economically stressed. **Results show flowers are the third cut item (behind the casket and vault) when families are trying to reduce funeral costs (Figure 12).**

Some of the primary reasons funeral directors believe donations are requested instead of flowers include: flowers do not last long while donations allow the gifts keep on giving, the quality of flowers has decreased while prices have increased, set-up and transportation of flowers is too much hassle, and families like receiving flowers but they want to support an important charity/organization through memorials donations instead.



Despite this trend, floral tributes are important to many people. Among funeral directors, 72% of them would choose both floral and donation tributes for members of their families, followed by donations instead of flowers (20%), and only flowers/plants (8%) (Figure 13).

**Many funeral directors indicate that floral tributes are necessary to soften the atmosphere and provide visual comfort.** One funeral director stated *'A funeral without flowers is a big step towards no funeral at all'* indicating flowers are an instrumental part of the funeral service, but it can be challenging to communicate the benefits to grieving clients.



## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE INDUSTRY

With the increased use of donation requests, there is an opportunity for floral retailers to work with specific charitable organizations to build a connection for the bereaved. Floral retailers could partner with charitable organizations or promote an option to donate a percent of each sale to a specific charity in the deceased's memory. Setting up an Internet service allowing long-distance orders and donations for people who are unable to attend the service would also benefit the clients and funeral directors. If the floral retailer offered or promoted these services and served as the liaison, there would be more incentives for families to retain the floral retailer's services.



Financial constraints are one of the main reasons people bypass floral tributes. Floral retailers could offer alternatives such as silk flowers or mixes containing silk and real flowers that can be dried as keepsakes. The silk portions could be made available for the funeral services and then collected afterward for future reuse. Floral retailers can also better promote floral tributes with similar designs but different sizes that are sold at different price points. Budget conscious consumers can still find the design they like but at a reduced price. Having budget conscious solutions provides families with a means of having floral tributes even when their budgets are tight.

**Funeral directors realize that floral tributes are necessary to soften the atmosphere; however, the bereaved are not necessarily aware of this benefit.** Promoting the benefits of floral tributes (visual warmth, sympathy, remembrance, etc.) to end consumers is one means of highlighting their importance at memorial services.

This should be done not only through print materials and on your website, but in social media promotions, contests, etc.

For those consumers who do not like flowers or feel flowers are not needed at funerals, floral retailers can emphasize flowers soften the atmosphere because this highlights the valuable role floral tributes have at the memorial service.

## Floral retailers could:

- ❖ Provide photos of the funeral parlor with and without floral tributes to emphasize these benefits
- ❖ Display silk flowers in the showroom to demonstrate the impact flower make
- ❖ Provide up-to-date promotional materials to funeral directors so that they can share with the bereaved as they plan the memorial.

**Short longevity is one of the main reasons people chose donations instead of flowers.** Floral retailers can address longevity by offering small, keepsake memorial options such as sympathy/memorial blankets, wind chimes, candles and other items that can be added to floral tributes and then be easily taken home by the bereaved.

The floral tributes also need to be of high quality since they are reflecting the floral retailer's business, the sender, the deceased, and the funeral home.

To improve ease of transportation, floral retailers can promote easy to transport options (smaller sized, lighter weight, more durable products) and offer delivery/transportation to the services to assist the funeral director and then to the family's home to reduce the burden on the bereaved. Floral retailers can also offer to help set up the floral tributes for the funeral directors.



Sympathy Collection Photograph Provided by Bachman's

## Chapter 3.

### Floral Retailer – Funeral Director Relationships

#### BACKGROUND

Floral arrangements and potted plants are used in times of bereavement to provide comfort, express sympathy and symbolize remembrance. While funeral directors and floral retailers have worked together to assist the bereaved, their relationships and the relationships' impact on the services provided have not been studied in more than 20 years.

This chapter explored the current relationship between floral retailers and funeral directors. Knowing funeral directors' viewpoints of their relationships with floral retailers is vital because it highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the current relationships and helps investigate the opportunities for strengthening these business alliances.

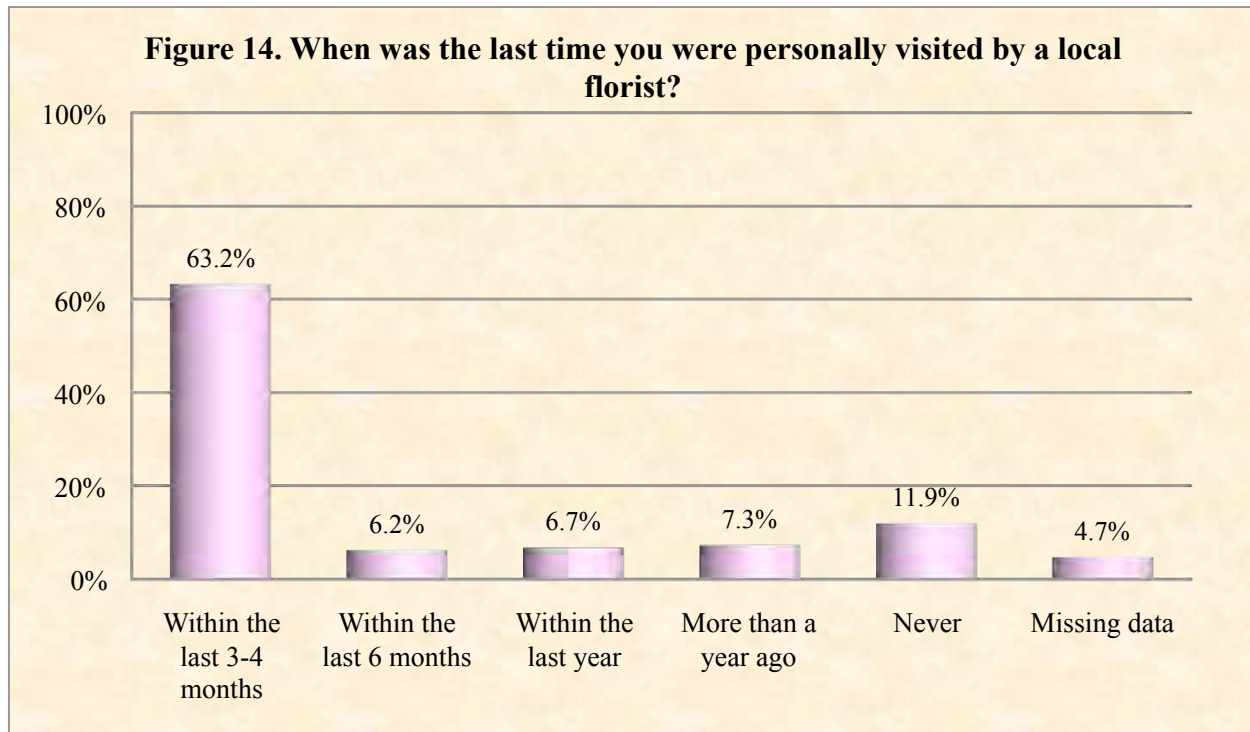
#### RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Funeral directors are incredibly in-tune to the needs of their clients. Many funeral directors are experienced, run small companies, and operate in areas with lower population densities. Therefore, floral retailers' relationships with funeral directors are important to bring repeat business.

**In-person visits with funeral directors provide floral retailers with the opportunity to remind funeral directors of their products/services, address existing/potential problems, and build long-term relationships.**



**The majority of funeral directors (63%) were visited by a local florist in the past 3-4 months while only 19% were visited 1+ year(s) ago or never (Figure 14).**

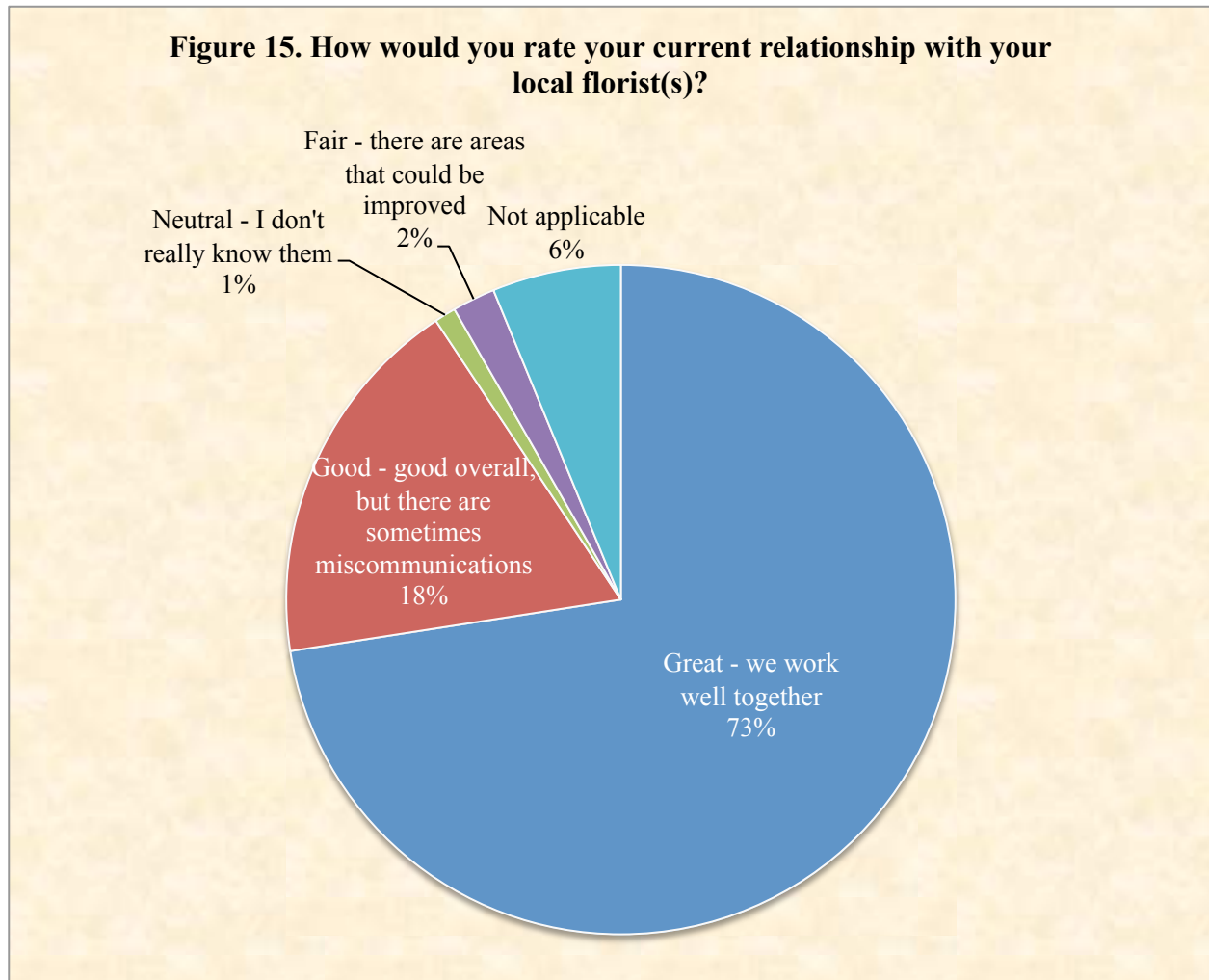


Funeral directors are conduits of information providing service options for families that need funeral services.

**Funeral directors' relationships with floral retailers are imperative in generating referrals and repeat business for those retailers.** Eighty percent of funeral directors stated they have a working relationship with at least one local florist, 7% have a local florist but not a real working relationship, and 2% have an in-house floral designer/shop.

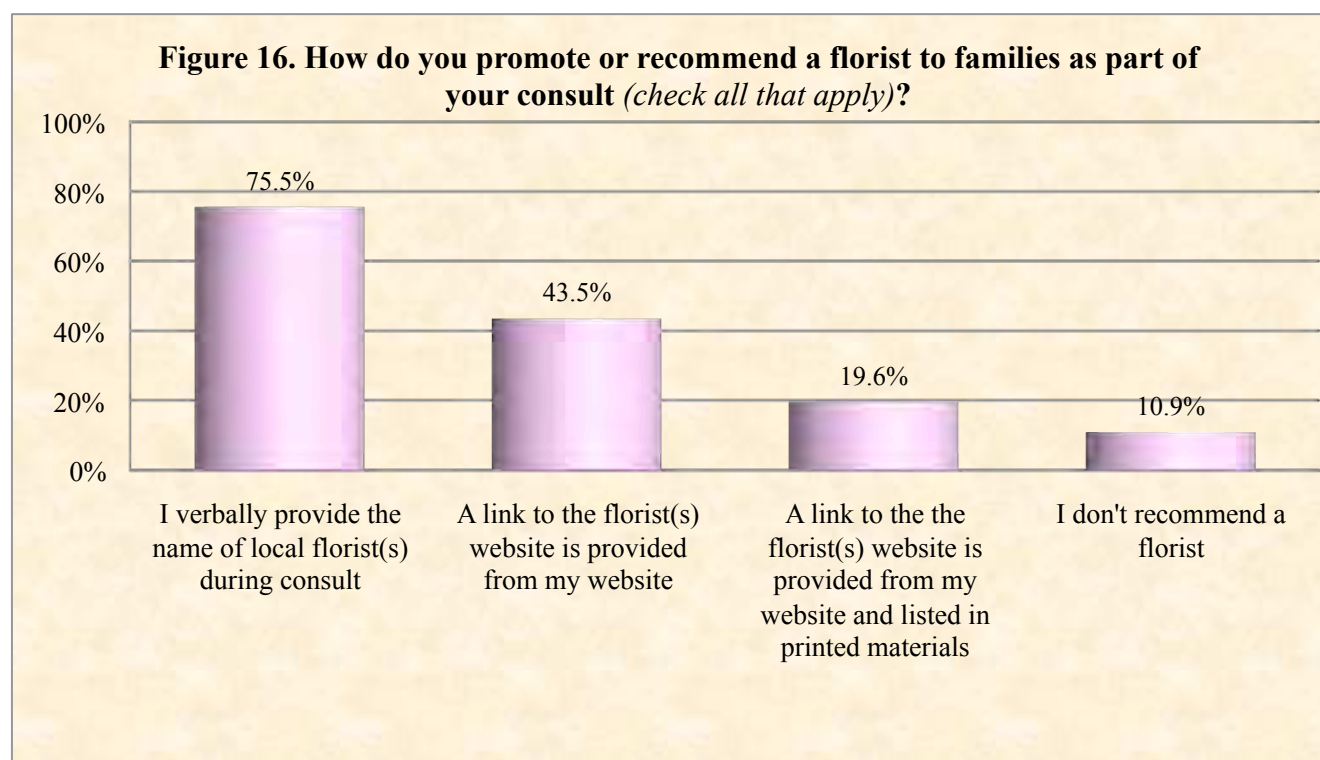


**When asked to describe their relationship with the local floral retailer, the majority (72%) of funeral directors stated they have a great relationship with their floral retailer, 18% classify their relationship as good, and 3% say the relationship is neutral, fair or poor (Figure 15).**



**Funeral directors greatly influence their client's choices.** Seventy-four percent of funeral directors encourage families to have flowers at their services, 6% only sometimes encourage flowers, 4% do not encourage flowers, and 16% have no preference.

When it comes to referring specific floral retailers, most funeral directors verbally provide contact information, followed by having a link on their websites, a website listed on printed material, and 11% do not promote a specific floral retailer (Figure 16).



Eighty-one percent do not receive referral compensation from their local floral retailers, 11% do receive compensation, and 8% sometimes receive referral compensation. **Sixty-three percent of funeral directors stated that receiving referral compensation would not encourage them to promote flowers at a service**, 20% stated 'maybe', and 17% said 'yes'.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE INDUSTRY

Some funeral directors indicate that there are sometimes miscommunications with floral retailers. Floral retailers can regularly visit and maintain on-going communications with funeral directors to help minimize miscommunications.

Regular provision of up-to-date promotional materials (product offerings, availability, and price options) is one means of staying connected and nurturing a good business relationship. **Floral retailers can use social media to keep their inventory list and design options updated and available to consumers and funeral directors.** The promotional materials should help improve the ease of ordering floral tributes.



Floral retailers also need to continue to provide excellent and consistent product service and customer service. Good customer service helps improve the communication process and build trust that the product will meet customer expectations. Trust leads to repeat business and recommendations from funeral directors and end customers.

Most funeral directors verbally provide the name of local florists during consults and many of them like to have the link to the florist's websites on their websites as a way for recommendation.

**Floral retailers can partner with funeral directors and make sure the links to their websites are featured on the funeral directors' websites and other promotional materials.** Having business cards and other promotional materials with website link information readily accessible to funeral directors can also potentially encourage funeral directors to recommend the florists to their clients.

**The FMRF offers a FREE Social Media Guide geared toward retailers and wholesalers, and other consumer preference study results – visit [www.floralmarketingresearchfund.org](http://www.floralmarketingresearchfund.org)**

If the funeral director gives the floral retailer a referral, the floral retailer can acknowledge the referral and refer the funeral home/director to potential clients to improve their business relationship. Occasional thank you notes, flowers, compensation, etc. are all acceptable acknowledgements.

Floral retailers can also use social media to refer the funeral home and promote floral tributes.

The floral retailer and funeral director can refer to each other's businesses to generate consumer interest.



Thirty-seven percent of funeral directors indicate receiving referral compensation would or might encourage them to promote flowers at a service, while only 11% of them are currently receiving compensation regularly. Giving compensation to funeral directors may, in some cases, lead to increased recommendation and use of floral tributes at funeral services.

**However, 63% of funeral directors stated referral compensation would NOT encourage them to promote flowers at a service, so good communication and service to the funeral director seems a more viable way for florist to establish and maintain good relationships.**

The funeral home often gives a floral tribute to the bereaved family, giving a discount to the funeral home would be another means of showing appreciation for their business.

## Chapter 4.

### Improving Floral Tributes and Services

#### BACKGROUND

Floral tributes are often used in memorial services to communicate comfort, sympathy, remembrance and respect. Funeral directors have great influence on their clients' choices of floral tributes. Unfortunately, floral tributes can become a burden to funeral directors if they are a hassle.

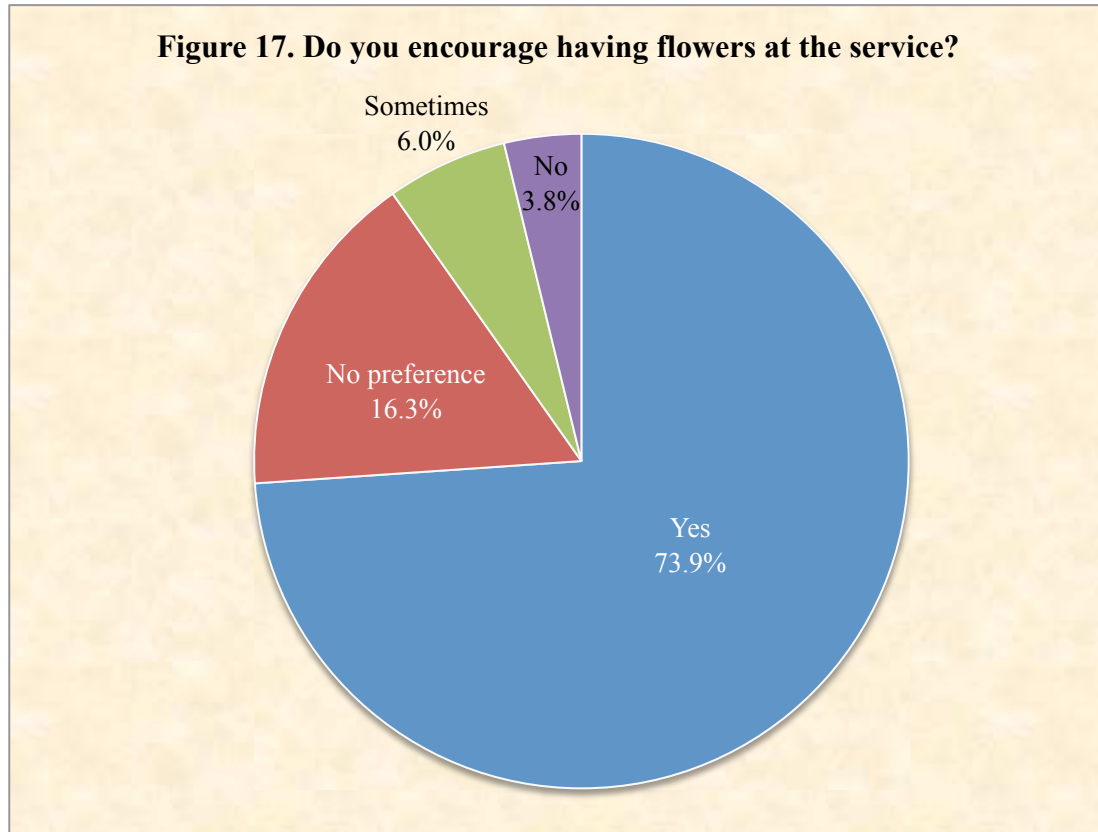
This chapter investigated ways to improve floral tributes and identified additional services floral retailers could provide to funeral directors to improve ease of using floral tributes.

These options benefit the funeral director by allowing him/her more time to improve other aspects of memorializing the deceased. Floral retailers benefit through improved reputation and customer satisfaction. The deceased's family benefits through experiencing the powerful effects of flowers.



## RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

**Seventy-four percent of funeral directors encourage families to have flowers at their service, 6% only sometimes encourage flowers, 4% do not encourage flowers, and 16% have no preference (Figure 17).**

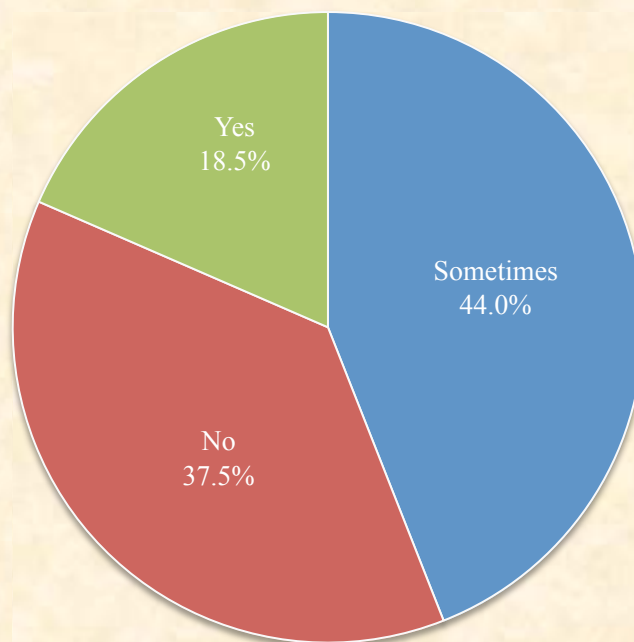




**Floral tributes are sometimes discouraged (or not emphasized) due to the hassles related to having flowers/plants at the memorial service.** The majority of directors (44%) believe funeral flowers are sometimes a hassle, while 18% of them think funeral flowers are a hassle -- indicating there is room for improvement (Figure 18).

Specifically, they noted that floral tributes are transported frequently to different locations so in transporting can be a major hassle. Other hassles include floral tributes are not delivered on time, finding uses/places to donate the post-service flowers, means of disposing of the floral tributes, and lack of information on the cards (including contact information for thank you notes, deceased's name, legible writing, etc.)

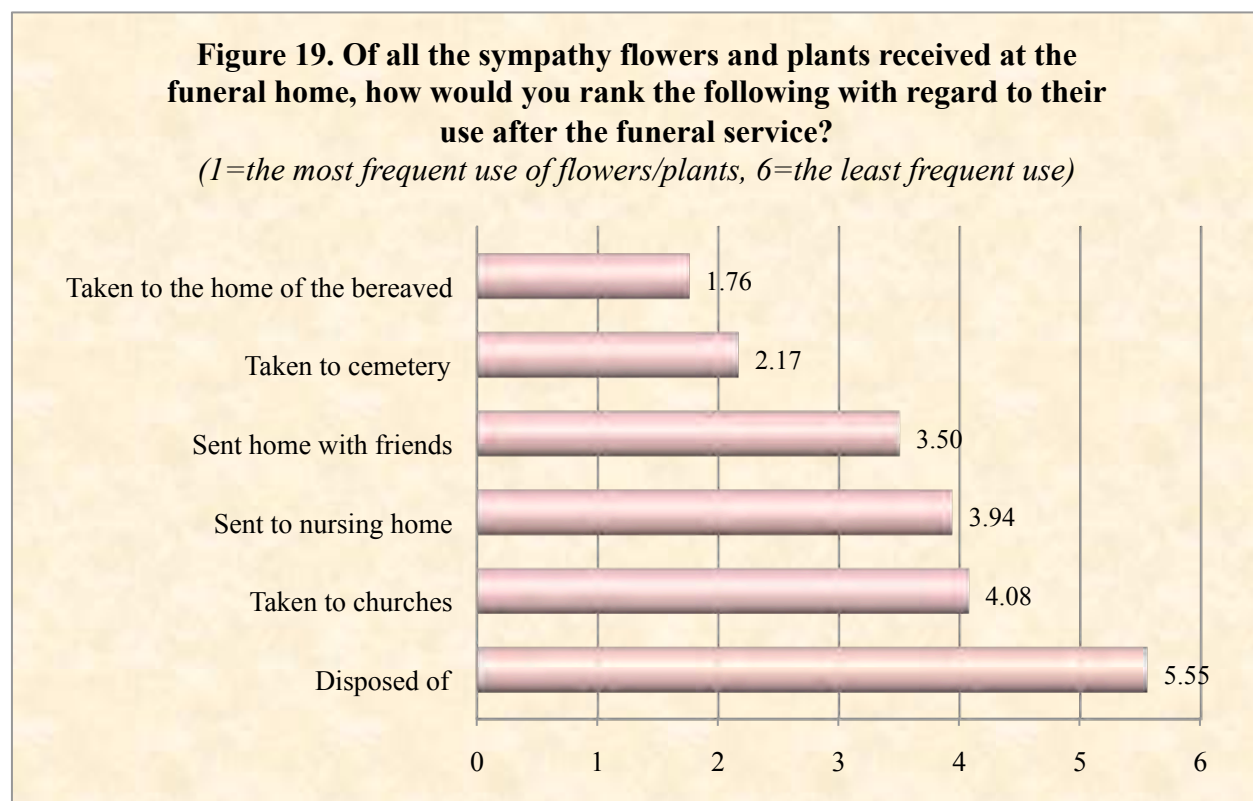
**Figure 18. Do you as a funeral director think flowers for a funeral service are a hassle?**



After the service, floral tributes that are not left at the funeral home or cemetery need to find new homes.

Some funeral directors indicate that floral tributes can be a hassle partially due to after service removal. Floral tributes are often taken home by the bereaved, followed by taken to the cemetery, and donated to churches/nursing homes (Figure 19).

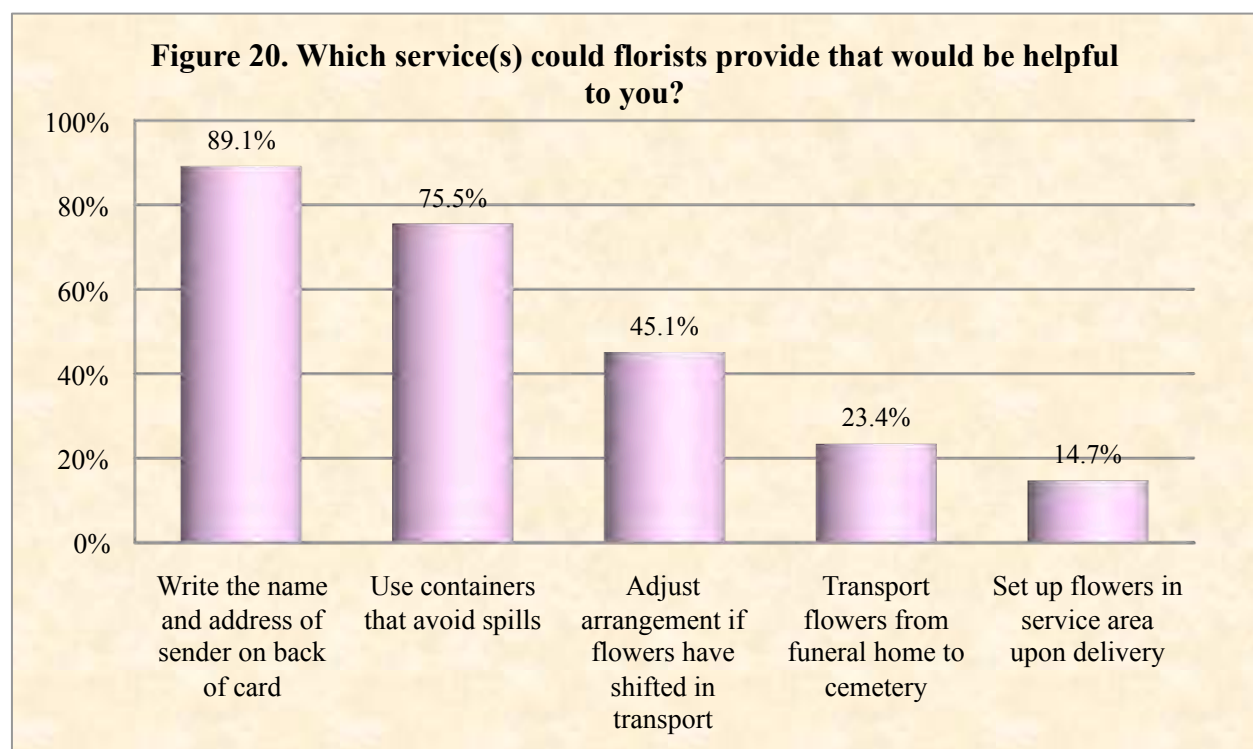
Additionally, some arrangements are sent home with friends. Very few floral tributes are 'disposed of', meaning it is important to have manageable arrangements in terms of size, transportability, etc. Some families ask the funeral director to handle the post-service flower distribution. In such cases, floral tributes could become a burden to the funeral director.



**The cards attached to the memorial flowers are another area for improvement for 89% of funeral directors (Figure 20).**

If handwritten, the cards need to be very legible and (at minimum) include the deceased's name and sender's name/address. Additional information (description of arrangement with flower types, etc.) is also frequently appreciated.

The majority of funeral directors (75%) also expressed the use of containers that avoid spills as helpful, followed by adjusting the arrangement (45%), transporting flowers to the cemetery (23%) and setting up the flowers in the viewing area (15%).



## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE INDUSTRY

Size, design, structure and weight all impact how easily a floral tribute can be transported. Ease of transportation is important to the funeral director and the family of the deceased. Specifically, funeral directors encourage 'bike basket' size or smaller floral arrangements and plants with low centers of gravity to prevent tipping.



Floral tribute design is very important in transportation and displaying the tribute. **Florists need to select plants/flowers that do not shed, are sturdy for transportation, and will last the duration of the memorial** (several days). Abiotic components should not be glass (breakable) or cement (heavy). Smaller, stable arrangements are easier to transport and manage for both the funeral directors and families.

Regarding the appearance of the floral tributes, since the same floral retailer often provides multiple floral tributes to the same funeral, being conscious of what has been ordered and coordinating the plant to flower ratio and colors to make the funeral have better aesthetic appeal would be appreciated. Offer a variety of low light, colorful, easy-to-care for plant options to account for environmental differences between

venues and clients' homes.

Floral retailers need to plan ahead in terms of how the arrangement will be physically connected to the casket or displayed.

Floral retailers should be aware of space limitations (in the funeral home and/or cemetery) and guide customer selections accordingly.

Easel arrangements should be minimized because they can be cumbersome for funeral directors and families. Preparing extra easels (if easel arrangements are requested), pillars, and stands would reflect positively upon the floral business.

Floral retailers should use containers that do not leak/spill water. Spills can damage the funeral home, stands and vehicles used in transportation. The floral tributes should be well watered, but drained prior to delivery. Additionally, floral retailers can offer to stop by and water the flowers/plants if necessary.

If there are many floral tributes, floral retailers could offer to assist in delivery/ transportation. This gives the floral retailer the opportunity to fix any aesthetic issues (flowers wilting, rearrange arrangements that shifted in transportation, etc.) and water flowers/plants where needed.

A fair amount of staging occurs in the funeral industry. Therefore, timing is very important and a late floral tribute can disrupt the flow of the memorial and leave the director/staff scrambling to rearrange the memorials. On-time delivery (meaning at least 1 hour before the family/friends arrive) is essential. Often funeral directors prefer working with local floral retailers rather than having floral tributes shipped by FedEx or UPS because flowers delivered though FedEx/UPS are of low quality, do not arrive on time, and require extra time and labor to set up the flowers.

**The funeral industry is a 24/7 business and call forwarding is important in case the director needs to contact the floral retailer outside of normal business hours.**

Floral retailers can improve their value to funeral directors by providing services and solutions to post-service floral tribute uses. If there are unwanted floral tributes, floral retailers could offer to collect them and donate them in memory of the deceased. They could offer to recycle vases for the families after the flowers are gone. If they are unable to collect unwanted tributes, they could provide funeral directors with an updated list of locations willing to accept floral donations.





Another option would be to provide unique solutions and how-to instructions (similar to Pinterest) to family members for new ways of using memorial flowers (jewelry, shadowboxes, drying, rosary beads, candles, etc.) or other local businesses that may use them (restaurants, artists, art school, FFA chapters, floral design schools, co-ops, etc.) and facilitate funeral directors' and/or family members' communications with these local businesses. Donating the arrangements to another service may be an option.

**The information provided on the floral card is very important.** If more than one funeral is occurring around the same time, it is imperative that the deceased's name is on the card. Also, many funeral homes give families a keepsake album of the service. Floral retailers can help them in this effort by providing two cards (one for the album, one for the display) and a photo or description of the tribute.

Each card should have the name of the deceased, the name/address of the sender, a brief description/name of the flowers, and a forwarding address in case the arrangement is ordered late. This information helps the funeral directors and families as they manage the floral tributes.



Simple changes to product design and service offerings can improve the floral tributes and the efficiency of using floral tributes in the funeral industry. By addressing the potential problems, floral retailers can assist funeral directors in their businesses and keep loyal customers.



## Appendix I. Detailed Suggestions from Funeral Directors

Many funeral directors are positive about the local floral retailers and the products and services they offer. However, they had many suggestions on actions floral retailers could take to improve the services they provide to the funeral industry. This appendix lists specific actions retailers can take to improve their business from the funeral director's viewpoint.

### Relationships

- Spend more time developing relationships with the employees at the funeral home.
- Train delivery staff. They are guests at the funeral home.
  - Be conscious of entering someone else's home. Do not prop doors open. This lets flies in and the air conditioning (or heat) out of the building.
- Communication with funeral staff - make certain the arrangements are manageable for the space, time and location.
- Offer classes for continuing education. Educate clients about the meaning of flowers.
- Come to conventions or talk with funeral directors about how best to work together to help the families.
- Small appreciation gifts are welcome.
- Offer funeral home fresh flowers weekly or bi-weekly.

### Referrals

- Create a referral system where the funeral home and floral retailer both recommend each other.
- Refer clients to the funeral home.
- Referral fees may encourage business.
- Be positive about the funeral home services when talking to a family they sent.
- When families are referred to the floral retailer to purchase flowers, the floral retailer could occasionally send a thank you bouquet for special occasions.

**Floral Tribute Cards**

- Provide duplicate cards – one for the floral display and one for the family’s memorial album.
- If the card is hand written, make sure it is legible.
- Add the deceased’s name to the card.
- On the back of the card provide the sender’s name and address and provide description of the flowers. Be consistent in writing the name/description of the flowers.
- Take a photo of the arrangement and include it with the card. Alternatively, take digital photos of all the arrangements and provide copies to the funeral director for the family.

**Product Availability**

- Provide funeral homes with free up-to-date product books or brochures with pricing information.
- When making the product book, make sure the designs are applicable to the real world. Think about visual appeal at the funeral home/service and how it will attach to the casket/etc.
- Offer photos of specialty pieces for the funeral directors to share with clients.
- Provide a better selection of color options/products year round.

**Product Design**

- For cremation services, provide designs using pictures of the deceased and incorporate the urn as a centerpiece.
- Make certain the floral tributes fit their designated purpose. For instance, the tribute needs to fit on the casket, inside the funeral coach, inside the casket lid, and so on.
- Create designs that will last through the memorial event and do not shed leaves/petals/etc.
- Make practical arrangements that are easy to set up and transport to decrease the risk of damage (to the product / transportation vehicle / funeral home / staff / etc.) Encourage smaller, transportable floral tributes.
- If there is a memento attached to the floral tribute, make sure it is secure so it does not fall out when the product is moved.

**Products to Avoid or Minimize Use**

- Avoid breakable glass/ceramic containers.
- Stop selling concrete memorials (heavy). If a concrete memorial is desired, please have them delivered directly to the family not the funeral home.
- Avoid containers that leak and let excess water drain out before delivery.
- Reduce size / weight of floral tributes.
  - Offer more concise packages.
  - Provide senders the option of splitting their order into two smaller versions or something else to meet the request/cost.
- Eliminate large/heavy tropical plants (stay <15 pounds or 'bicycle basket' sized).
- Do not deliver evergreen trees. If a live landscape plant is desired, have it delivered directly to the family.
- Minimize easel arrangements - they are difficult to transport, cumbersome, and less desired by the family/friends after the service.

**Price**

- Prices have increased; the product quality needs to reflect the prices paid.
- Establish a set yearly price for delivery.

**Promotions**

- TV ads need to be honest in terms of price, product availability, etc.
- Clients should be encouraged to use local florists.
- Encourage using professional florists, not businesses that have floral arrangements as a side product.

**Delivery / Transportation**

- Bring the flowers to the funeral home at least one hour prior to the family's arrival.
- Check the website, read the paper, or call to confirm the memorial times. If calling, be informed beforehand by checking the website/paper.
- When calling the funeral home, identify yourself as a florist so the staff can provide the best time for delivery.
- Do not deliver anything late. Deliver late items directly to the family.
- In cold weather, wrap flowers for delivery. Remove the wraps before leaving.
- If the floral tribute, blanket, or memorial item is in packaging, remove the packaging for the funeral director and check that the item is in display condition.

- Offer to transport and place the floral arrangements, especially if there is a large quantity of arrangements or heavy, cumbersome arrangements.
  - Offer to deliver the flowers to the church or transport them from the mortuary to the service.
  - Offer to deliver floral tributes to the family after the service.
  - Improve the product/service for floral tributes sent by UPS / FedEx.
- Specific problems with UPS / FedEx shipping flowers include:
- The delivery is not on time.
    - Flowers are delivered too far ahead of time and flowers might start to wilt before the service.
    - Flowers are delivered too late and there is not enough time to set up the floral tribute or the flowers arrive after the service.
  - Flowers' quality is not very good.
    - Funeral directors use expressions like "ugly, dead, substandard, not fresh, smashed, in rough shape, wilted, terrible, horrible, too small/not full, flowers do not last long, look cheap, very basic," etc.
    - Floral tributes lack value for the money spent.
    - Senders are often disappointed and complained about size and appearance.
    - Floral tributes are often frozen during cold winters.
    - Sometimes flowers have wrong information on them.
  - The funeral directors are expected to do all the set-up work (opening and disposing of the box, unwrapping the flowers, assembling the flowers, re-arranging flowers, adding water and fertilizer, provide something to put the card in, etc.).
    - It takes time and requires extra labor.
    - There are no instructions on how to make the arrangement most appealing.
    - More importantly, designing flowers is not funeral directors' specialty.
    - It's a hassle for funeral directors.
  - Issues with vases, including:
    - Flowers do not fit into the vase very well.
    - Many flowers arrive without a vase.
    - Some vases are damaged.

### **Additional Services**

- Be kind to Internet users when problems arise.
- The funeral service is a 24/7 profession and funeral directors work for the families. Try to be open similar hours or use call forwarding when away from the shop.
- Coordinate the variety of flowers/plants for the funeral to enhance visual appeal.
- Call the funeral home if multiple (10+) arrangements will be delivered at the same time.
- Offer to place heavy trees/plants for the funeral home and deliver them to the family home after services.
- Help with set-up, transportation and post-service disposal (offer to pick up left over arrangements).
- Plan ahead and provide proper hooks, hangers, pins, stands, etc. that are needed to display the tributes.
  - If stands are rented out for blanket/chimes/etc. pick them up after the services.
  - If the attachment (to the casket/etc.) is difficult, offer to assist the staff.
- Make sure floral tributes are adequately watered, but not leaking or overfull.
- Return to check the arrangements to insure they are fresh and replace flowers that wilt.
- Note to whom and where flowers/plants should be delivered in case the funeral services are over when they are delivered. Follow through and deliver those items to their destinations.

### **Post-service Floral Tribute Uses**

- Divide among family/friends.
- Leave at the cemetery in remembrance.
- Place in the casket and buried with the deceased.
- Place on other family members' graves.
- If live plants are unclaimed, they can be used at a park/cemetery or other community space for plantings.
- Donate flowers to:
  - Community colleges, YWCA, VoTech schools, and universities for floral design classes.
  - Local high school biology department for dissection.
  - Veterans' memorials, senior centers, hospice, shut-ins, hospital, Easter Seals Program (for art projects), co-ops, or the funeral home for reuse/repurpose.

- Floral retailers can provide a list of local organizations that accept floral donations since some hospitals and nursing homes reject them due to patient allergies/medical issues.
- The flowers can be dried or pressed as mementos. These can then be used as a keepsake, shadowbox, art or as a holiday ornament.



## Appendix II.

### Actionable Items to Increase Floral Tribute Use in the Funeral Industry

<b>Chapter 1. Funeral Rituals and Flowers</b>	<b>Chapter 2. Donations versus Floral Memorials</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Give funeral directors up-to-date product books or electronic links/websites with photos, prices, color availability, fragrance, and add-on options.</li><li>✓ Use educational advertising to inform consumers about the benefits (atmosphere, aesthetics, comfort, warmth) of floral tributes at memorials.</li><li>✓ Give funeral homes a 'complementary set-up' with flowers/plants and take before and after photos. Use these images in promotions.</li><li>✓ Provide flower/plant names on the product cards.</li><li>✓ Use stable designs that can withstand handling/transportation.</li><li>✓ Use high quality plants and flowers since quality impacts your reputation and repeat business.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Partner with charities to give families and friends options to pair floral tributes and donations.</li><li>✓ Offer alternatives, such as silk flower mixes that can be used at reduced prices, lower cost/smaller arrangement options, etc.</li><li>✓ Extend floral tribute longevity by selecting longer lasting flowers and incorporating small keepsake items (blankets, candles).</li><li>✓ Reduce the funeral home staff's work related to the floral tributes (offer transportation, care, clean-up) to encourage floral tribute use.</li><li>✓ Improve products/services for floral tributes sent through UPS/FedEx.</li></ul>

<b>Chapter 3.</b> <b>Floral Retailer – Funeral Director Relationships</b>	<b>Chapter 4.</b> <b>Improving Floral Tributes and Services</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Schedule a meeting with the funeral director every six months.</li> <li>✓ Provide copies of a one-page flyer that shows several floral display options with price ranges for funeral directors to provide to their clients; include the benefits of flowers information.</li> <li>✓ Discuss “in lieu of” alternate language i.e. “flowers are accepted and memorial donations can be sent...”</li> <li>✓ Provide business cards to funeral directors for them to share with their clients.</li> <li>✓ Ask for a link on funeral directors webpage.</li> <li>✓ Acknowledge funeral directors’ referral through occasional thank you notes, flowers, compensation, etc.</li> <li>✓ Refer the funeral home/director to potential clients.</li> <li>✓ Give compensation to funeral directors.</li> <li>✓ Give a discount to the funeral home if they order flowers from you.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Include the name/address of the sender, deceased’s name, and flower names on the back of the card.</li> <li>✓ Know the times of services and the funeral home layout (ceiling height, space, etc.)</li> <li>✓ Monitor arrangements being ordered to insure they are aesthetically pleasing when assembled as a group, fit the location, and are easy to transport (small, light, sturdy).</li> <li>✓ Minimize the arrangements that may be less desired by families after the service (easels, larger arrangements).</li> <li>✓ Provide additional stands/pins/clips/easels if needed and collect them post-service.</li> <li>✓ Deliver on time (at least 1 hour before the family/friends.)</li> <li>✓ Send late arrangements to the home of the deceased’s family.</li> <li>✓ Help transport arrangements.</li> <li>✓ Help remove floral tributes after the funeral.</li> <li>✓ Provide ideas for post-service use (donations, dried or pressed as mementos and keepsakes, etc.)</li> <li>✓ Make arrangements with local businesses or organizations to take the remaining floral tributes after the services.</li> </ul>

## Appendix III. Callout Quotes, by Chapter

The following table includes quotes directly from the surveyed funeral directors.

### Chapter 1 - Rituals

- *"A funeral without flowers is a big step towards no funeral at all."*
- *"It lets the family know that the sender cared and the flowers have a role in the funeral ritual for beauty and warmth."*
- *"When a family sees a floral arrangement, and reads the name of who sent the arrangement, they are deeply touched because the sender thought so much of them to take the time and expense to send flowers."*
- *"Flowers are included in all major events, happy or sad. It can offer some brightness at a dark time."*

### Chapter 2 - Donations

- *"As we are looking for ways to keep our prices as low as possible, the florists should do the same. Both industries are struggling showing value for the amount of money being spent."*
- *"Most of our families like to receive flowers, but they also wish to support their church or other organization through memorial donations."*
- *"Comments from my families include 'The money could be better used. Flowers die in a few days.'"*
- *"For some, but not all, donating to a charity allows their gift to keep on giving, whereas flowers are more temporary."*

### Chapter 3 - Relationships

- *"I want to assist my families the best way possible. I, at times, feel unprepared to do so with flowers when my local florists are not responsive to my requests to update their floral books and prices. This causes me to recommend other florists above them, because I can show a family a book of arrangements and the prices are up to date and the florist can create the arrangements in the pictures."*
- *"I have a good relationship with my local florist; they are friends, but I cannot even approach the referral fee."*
- *"We always ask the families what florist they would like to use. If they don't know any, then we mention the 3 florists we have in town and usually someone in the family suggests one. If no one decides, we decide and rotate where the order goes among the 3."*
- *"Please order from local florists – do not use online services. Having the funeral director act as the floral arranger makes everyone look bad."*

## Chapter 4 – Additional Services

- **Card** - *"So many times the family gets a flower arrangement from Mary. They do not know: Mary who?"*
- **Card** - *"I write all of these (the flower names/descriptions) in the register book and it would save me time to not have to look one up that I don't know."*
- **Leaky containers** - *"Our flower stands have gotten rusty, and the finish is coming off the wood stands from wet containers."*
- **Transportation** - *"The set-up, transporting, set-up again, (in the winter, wrap and un-wrap), transporting to the family home, church, nursing home or other place, and sometimes taking pictures of each arrangement takes hours. The family is upset if I charge extra for flower care/transportation. What to do? I recommend donations, memorials, candles, balloons, food, papers goods as the family will be hosting, stamps, anything but flowers or plants."*
- **Transportation** - *"I work hard to keep your merchandise looking nice and typically move them 3 or 4 times before the services are over. I spend more on delivering funeral flowers than you do."*
- **Transportation (weight)** - *"Taken the concrete items and plants over 15 pounds to the family home. That way we do not have to handle them or deliver them."*
- **UPS/FedEx** - *"Arrangements that are shipped to us are a hassle, because we have to assemble them prior to displaying them. For example, we must open (and dispose of) the box, unwrap the flowers, put the flowers in the vase provided, add fertilizer, and add water. We aren't florists!"*
- **UPS/FedEx** - *"If the sender is present, they are often quite disappointed with their online order. I/we as a funeral home are not thrilled to be arranging flowers that are shipped this way. It is not our area of expertise, and takes time away from something else we could be doing."*
- **Post-service use** - *"We have a retired florist who breaks them (floral tributes) up and makes center pieces and/or floral designs for shut-ins."*
- **Post-service use** - *"We have 2 businesses in the community that make jewelry from the flowers and it is very popular. I use a book and photos to help the family with flower selection. I often integrate photos and memorabilia into the arrangements."*
- **Post-service use** - *"More often than not, families are asking friends if they would like to take flowers/plants because the family lives out of the area and cannot transport the flowers/plants. Also, families comment that they do not have room for all of the flowers/plants or some of the arrangements are too large to do anything with."*

## FLORAL INDUSTRY RESOURCES

**Below are ready-to-use resources for the FLORAL industry, and links to information you can put to use immediately.**

**A very special thanks to the Society of American Florists (SAF), and AboutFlowers.com for resource contributions.**

- ❖ **Care and Handling Instructions for Flowers and Plants (PDF)**  
Personalize this one-page document and share with funeral directors or use in your shop.
- ❖ **Flower Health Benefits and Research (AboutFlowers.com)**
  - Research Shows Flowers Help Emotional Well Being
  - Emotional Impact of Flowers Study
  - Flowers Boost Senior's Well Being
  - Flower Givers Perceived as Successful and Caring
  - Additional Studies available on AboutFlowers.com
- ❖ **Use AboutFlowers.com** to help promote your business to consumers... lots of home décor tips, flower meanings, design ideas, consumer statistics, holiday survey information, a floral blog, and more!
- ❖ **Get involved with your state funeral directors association.** Submit articles for their newsletters, advertise in their publications, and exhibit at their trade shows. It's up to all of us to help promote the benefits of flowers and plants!
- ❖ **SAF Members have access to many other resources** (checklists, talking points, sample letters and articles, promotional ideas, print ads, etc.) at **[www.safnow.org/sympathy](http://www.safnow.org/sympathy)**

## FUNERAL DIRECTOR RESOURCES

**Below are ready-to-use resources for the FUNERAL industry, and links to information you can put to use immediately.**

**A very special thanks to the Society of American Florists (SAF), and AboutFlowers.com for resource contributions.**

❖ **Care and Handling Instructions for Flowers and Plants (PDF)**

Personalize this one-page document with your own logo. Print and distribute this to bereaved family members when they take flowers and plants home.

❖ **Flower Health Benefits and Research (AboutFlowers.com)**

- Research Shows Flowers Help Emotional Well Being
- Emotional Impact of Flowers Study
- Flowers Boost Senior's Well Being
- Flower Givers Perceived as Successful and Caring
- Additional Studies available on AboutFlowers.com

❖ **Value of Flowers and Plants (PDF)**

Learn about the value of flowers and plants at services, and how you can help create a memorable, healing experience for your customers.

❖ **Online Florist Directory (AboutFlowers.com)**

Quickly search the free online directory of florists in your area and nationwide. All florists listed are members of the national trade association, Society of American Florists.

❖ **Flower Meanings (AboutFlowers.com)**



# THANK YOU!

## On behalf of the Floral Industry, we appreciate:

- ❖ The TIME you take to receive floral arrangements and place them.
- ❖ The EFFORT you make to keep flowers beautiful, often through several days
- ❖ The HELP you give families, including collecting cards so acknowledgement cards can be written
- ❖ The TRANSPORTATION of flowers to churches, nursing homes, hospitals, and to the gravesites so those services may be more beautiful.
- ❖ The EFFORTS you make to communicate with florists, working with them to address mutual concerns.



## Alternative Phrases to “In Lieu of Flowers”

The floral industry recognizes memorial donations as a worthwhile cause in remembering loved ones, and simply suggests donation requests be done without a negative reference to flowers.

Choosing one of the suggested alternative phrases eliminates the expression “in lieu of flowers” and achieves three important goals: It honors the family’s request for a charity, meets the high standards of good taste and decorum, and does not dictate to friends the manner in which they express their sympathy.

- ❖ Memorial contributions may be made to ...
- ❖ The family suggests memorial contributions be sent to ...
- ❖ Should friends desire, contributions may be sent to ...
- ❖ Memorials may be made to the charity of your choice.
- ❖ As an expression of sympathy, memorial contributions may be sent to ...
- ❖ The family has designated ... for memorial contributions.
- ❖ Remembrances may be made in the form desired by friends.
- ❖ Flowers are welcome; Contributions may be sent to ...

# Can We Bury “In Lieu of Flowers”?

## An Open Letter From the Floral Industry

Dear Funeral Director,

Your customers express sympathy for loved ones in a variety of ways. One tradition that has been part of nearly every culture throughout history is sympathy flowers.

According to research by Rutgers University and Harvard University, **flowers increase feelings of compassion and happiness, and people feel less depressed, anxious and agitated in their presence.** Such compelling research shows flowers can be critical part of the bereavement process.

In light of these findings, it is difficult to imagine a funeral or memorial service without flowers sent from family and friends to express condolences, but the increasing use of the “in lieu of flowers” phrase runs the risk of just that. Please consider removing this phrase from the death notices you write.

Your customers who honor loved ones with charitable contributions rarely want a service completely devoid of flowers. It is possible to recommend donations without a negative reference to flowers. For example, “The family suggests memorial contributions be made to...” eliminates the reference and honors the family’s request.

**Get personal with your local florist.** It is their job to help you enhance your services and make you look good while you create a memorable, healing experience for your customers.



**For a Florist Directory or more information on the Harvard or Rutgers research, visit [www.aboutflowers.com](http://www.aboutflowers.com)**





### **About the Floral Marketing Research Fund**

Volunteers of the American Floral Endowment (AFE) Board of Trustees established the Floral Marketing Research Fund (FMRF), in 2008. The purpose of the FMRF is to collect funds from industry sources to be used in the support of funding consumer research benefiting the entire floriculture industry.

**[WWW.FLORALMARKETINGRESEARCHFUND.ORG](http://WWW.FLORALMARKETINGRESEARCHFUND.ORG)**

### **About the American Floral Endowment**

The American Floral Endowment (AFE) is an independent nonprofit organization that funds research and scholarships in floriculture and environmental horticulture for the benefit of growers, wholesalers, retailers, allied industry organizations and the general public.



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