



A Better Approach to Cosmetic Application for the Funeral Professional

Would you rather sell a \$3,000 casket or a \$300 cremation urn? If you are a funeral director or the owner of a funeral home, it really is an easy answer. You would probably prefer to sell a casket rather than an urn. So why do families who have used traditional burials for generations, suddenly consider the next time they have a death in the family to use cremation? That is a good question and one that I believe consists of many factors that need to be taken into consideration before concluding an answer. Perhaps there was an unforeseen financial strain or burden that the family may have encountered due to medical and long term care expenses. Or maybe the children or siblings are more accustomed to cremation due to influences from other friends, family or acquaintances. I have a personal belief that many people are choosing direct disposition because they've probably had a bad experience with attending a visitation or funeral for a family member or friend.

I am a funeral director who has been licensed for over 20 years. I occasionally assist funeral homes in the state of Iowa when they need a few days off, or maybe just need an extra hand because of their workload. I have been honored over the years to work with a large number of highly-skilled funeral directors and embalmers. I still remember a funeral director who once told me that you make your money in the prep room, not the selection room. If you give families and friends a positive experience during the visitation and funeral process, they will return to you when another family member dies. All the bells and whistles in the world will never replace the fact that their loved one looked nice during the viewing and that they had a positive experience.

So if the prep room is vitally important, then what should you do to improve this process? When it comes to cosmetic application you should first pay attention to everyone you see. How many of those people have the same exact complexion? Obviously, the answer is none. Go into your preparation area and see how many different colors of cosmetics are used on a regular basis. I would guess that no more than 3 or 4 different colors are used for every case. Now, if we want everyone to look the same, then that may be okay. But remember, not everyone looks the same in life. So why should they look the same in death?

Airbrushing cosmetics can be a simple process depending on how complex you wish to make it. But with over 200 different colors available and the ability to mix colors together in the same application, you have the ability to make everyone look like they did in life. I have worked with airbrush cosmetics for the past 4 years and have yet to have a bad experience. In fact, it is typical that most families will almost rush to tell me how good their loved one looks.

There are several companies offering airbrush cosmetic systems. One company began in the movie and television industry and developed their technique because of the hot lights and the heat generated from them on the movie productions. After all, the last thing we want to see in the movies is someone's makeup running. It is a water based makeup that is applied using a dot pattern at a

low pressure. The reason for this is simple; the makeup should go into the pores of the skin and the natural lines of the face and hands. An airbrush system allows for the makeup to blend in with the person's face and hands because it penetrates into pores and lines of the skin. In contrast, when using standard brush technique of application, the makeup is basically being laid on the top of the face and hands. Another problem with a standard application is the makeup must be dried with powder, while hoping that the makeup stays in place and does not rub off or get on the clothing or the interior of the casket. Airbrushing techniques allow a light layer of cosmetics; that dry on contact with the skin and allow the funeral director to actually use less cosmetics than would be required doing the standard brush application technique.

Using an airbrush system also has other benefits; it gives the funeral director the ability to cover deep bruises, traumatized areas and treat jaundice cases without a line of demarcation. By using low pressure and a dot pattern, we can easily apply cosmetics over waxed areas without any brush marks or stipple marks and it will not have a shiny appearance over these areas. It also allows for the application of the cosmetics into the hairlines without getting directly into the hair. In the case of jaundice or severe discoloration, it can allow the back of the head to look as good as the face. And remember, a water-based cosmetic can be removed with soap and water should the need arise.

There are many airbrush systems available to funeral service professionals today. It is important to know that some may use a theatrical oil based makeup that may contain hazardous materials, which can lead to dehydration and possible tissue damage. They also may use a high pressure application with different tips for the airbrush itself, which can add another degree of difficulty. For some it may be easier to keep things simple by using one tip while using the dot pattern of application.

If you are considering the purchase of an airbrush cosmetic system for your firm, I would highly recommend that you ask the following questions before purchase.

1. How long has the company you are looking at purchasing from been in business, and how much do they know about the product?
2. Does their system use water based or oil based cosmetics?
3. Do they offer onsite training and advanced training for cosmetic application?
4. Do they offer 24 hour customer support, 365 days a year, should you have a question or problem?

After all is said and done, I think most funeral directors would rather sell a \$3,000 casket than a \$300 urn. **FBA**

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