

Times Journal Achieves Obituary Increases of 30% with Memoriams

Background

Times Journal Inc. is a family-owned group of newspapers in northwestern Georgia. Their two dailies, one bi-weekly, one tri-weekly and fourteen weekly publications provide extensive community coverage in the region. With a combined circulation of over 319,000, area families depend upon this local voice. The old process of obituary receipt was typical of that for many newspapers—delivery by email and fax from funeral homes. Obituaries then required several people to input and edit the entries every day. Funeral homes were also time-pressed, as their business model has been severely impacted by the growth of cremations vs. traditional funerals.

The goals for Memoriams were to:

- Streamline internal resources and production costs
- Eliminate errors, make-goods and limit customer support
- Provide a satisfying 24/7 experience for the funeral homes
- Increase revenues locally and from out-of-area

Solution

Times Journal successfully launched the Memoriams obituary order entry strategy for funeral directors in September of 2018. All properties streamlined their formats and packages according to best practice recommendations. Upsells were then configured between the dailies and weeklies, adding greater coverage for the obituary message, and enhanced revenue opportunities. A collaborative, no cost memorial, We Remember by Ancestry, is provided with every print obituary. We Remember adds digital value and community. Local branding for the newspaper and funeral homes is also included as part of the interface.

On-site training received a very positive response. A number of funeral homes were already familiar with Memoriams, due to the extensive penetration of the Memoriams network in Georgia. Therefore, they were favorably predisposed to embrace the change, ensuring a smooth transition. The newspaper team set a firm cut-over date of two weeks from training. This allowed funeral directors ample time to adjust. Subsequent web trainings were available for funeral directors who could not attend in person. Each attendee received one hour of free Continuing Education Credit (CEC) from the Georgia Funeral Home Association. Memoriams is accredited with them, providing credibility from day one.

Results

Memoriams has exceeded expectations across all properties. Revenue per local order has increased by 30%. Top upsells have been the addition of funeral home logos and icons such as religious symbols, branch of service emblems and local fraternal organizations. Ten additional copies of the newspaper are also offered with every order. These can be shipped to the family, providing convenience at a difficult time. Single copy sales are counted towards circulation in the next audit period.

Photo processes improved, too. Memoriams recognizes each paper's image sizes and specifications upon upload, thereby blocking the ability for poor photos to be sent to print. Exact pricing and previews in InDesign eliminated errors and make-goods as the obituaries were pre-approved upon submission. Obituaries are sent as print-ready PDFs, which also saves production time.

Memoriams has streamlined customer support processes and production time is down considerably, according to Travis Knight, VP of Sales and Marketing. He further stated, *"We went from several people touching obits every day to one person who spends one hour or less per day. We reallocated those resources to other functions in the advertising department and on the copy desk."* Knight went on to share, *"It's a great platform that does what it should. The training and assistance with the launch is important and the team helped us throughout. We're very happy."* Continued seven day a week customer support, which is standard with Memoriams, is also an important benefit to the Times Journal staff and funeral homes.

Receiving thousands of dollars in network-driven obituaries from outside of their local market is an important and exclusive Memoriams value for these properties. In the first year of launch, through September 2019, Times Journal Inc. has received 307 Network obituaries from other markets, totaling over \$67,000. 55% of Times Journal area funeral homes regularly use this exclusive aspect of Memoriams by placing an obituary into a local edition, and out-of-market in the same seamless order, too.

Memoriams is the only network helping to secure print obituaries for local newspapers and the industry. With over 3000 newspapers configured in North America, Memoriams solves your funeral directors' #1 challenge by submitting obituaries in multiple markets, via a single order. This proven success is entirely replicable, as demonstrated by Times Journal, Inc.

For more information, please contact Deb Dreyfuss-Tuchman, EVP of Sales, ddt@adpay.com or (720) 863-3808.

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