

ONLINE

donation and tribute management

This month, we hear of the impact of COVID on funeral collections from Donatis, explore the latest developments in online tribute and funeral arrangement information with MuchLoved and Love2Donate, and look at options for memorial services with Tributes.

A cloud with a potential silver lining?

By Howard Rawlings, Donatis

Under normal circumstances, the largest contributor to any in-memoriam fundraising would be the church service collection but, due to COVID restrictions, this is no longer the case. This is obviously having a terrible effect on charities' income, but may be good for both funeral directors and charities in the long term. Managing cash donations is a headache and usually deprives the charity of valuable Gift Aid, whereas online giving enables the funeral director

to build relationships with donors (most of whom live in their trading area), simplifies management and, as around three quarters of online donors add Gift Aid, boosts the charity's income by up to 25%.

As the authors of InMemory - the only zero-commission solution that manages all forms of donation - we, at Donatis, are in a unique position to observe changes in donor behaviour. We also manage donations

for the UK's number one online tribute portal, Funeral-notice.co.uk, where online donations can be added to a notice with a single click. With over one million unique visitors monthly, this is the simplest and most effective way to fundraise online, and we have also seen significant behavioural changes in this area with online donations currently at more than 150% of pre-lockdown levels.

Pre-lockdown, a typical InMemory dashboard showed a donation breakdown of 22% cash, 34% cheques and 44% online. Gift Aid claims for offline donations are rare, so more than half of all funds raised missed out on a 25% boost. Conversely, in the three months to June 2020, cash donations dropped to less than 5% while online increased to around 80%. So while overall donations fell in line with attendance, the impact was softened slightly by a boost in Gift Aid.

DONATIS



Although providing little short-term comfort to charities struggling to maintain their income during the COVID crisis, if funeral directors continue to enjoy the benefits of online donations after lockdown a long-standing missed opportunity could finally be laid to rest.

Innovating to support increased online donations

By Chris Hankin, Love2Donate

COVID-19 has certainly had a real impact on us at Love2Donate. Initially, when lockdown began and people were petrified of losing their jobs and incomes, donation volumes dropped dramatically. With the introduction of the furlough scheme, donor confidence returned and donation levels increased back to, and beyond, pre COVID levels.

With the increase in donation volumes came requests from funeral directors to improve how mobile devices can access tribute and donation pages.

In order to make donating easier and quicker than before, we have implemented two new ways to access a tribute page:-

- **QR code functionality:** this means the donor need only scan a QR code shown on the back of an order of service, allowing them to be taken directly to the Love2Donate Tribute and

Donation page. Alternatively, a QR code can be printed and displayed at the entrance to a funeral service, providing a convenient and timely way to access a tribute page;

- **Automated text messages:** a text message is now sent to the funeral director with a 'short link' embedded into the message body. The funeral director is then able to forward that text message to the client - who then cascade it to friends and family - providing a one-click link to the donation page.

Many people have friends and family mobile numbers stored as contacts on their phone, but few have email addresses for all of those contacts. A text message offers yet another way for families to share important information and links.

Both of these new facilities remove the need for a URL to be manually entered, thereby reducing the time and

frustration of having to type a website URL into mobile web browsers and, as with all Love2Donate services, there is no charge to a funeral director for either of these new facilities.

As funeral numbers have increased over the past few months, so has the demand for high quality memorial jewellery. Love2Donate's sister company, Footprints and Whispers has seen a marked increase in online sales and enquiries from their affiliated funeral directors who benefit from a share of sales profits.

We've enhanced our website and increased our product range, and we invite NAFD members to take a look at what is available for your clients.



MuchLoved assesses how online tributes have been affected by the pandemic

By Jonathan Davies, Chief Executive, MuchLoved Charitable Trust

The extraordinary times we have faced recently have highlighted how vital online bereavement care is, not only for grieving families but also for the funeral industry - to be able to provide your families with the same quality of support and dedication that you always have.

MuchLoved is the UK charity that enables funeral directors to create bespoke memorial pages for families, including both the practical details of the funeral service, and a lasting tribute to the deceased person. The family can remember and celebrate the life of their loved one with memories,

stories, photos and music, and donate to good causes in their memory.

We're proud to say that, over the last fourteen years, working together we've helped over half a million people commemorate and honour their loved ones, and raised over £50 million for good causes across the UK.

We've seen the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, not only on the funeral directors that partner with us, but also through the amount of people using our service. In order to see just how online tributes have been affected by the pandemic, we carried out a review to compare May 2020 with the same time last year and can share the following summary of results with you.

During this time we saw the average funeral director using MuchLoved



Tribute pages have provided a way to help commemorate and memorialise their loved ones...

create more tribute pages - the number jumped by over 40%, so more and more families are using the service to remember those they've lost. We also saw that people are still giving generously despite the difficult times; charities received over 140% more in donations compared to this time last year.

The different ways to remember someone online and honour their life also increased in popularity. A good example of this is lighting virtual candles. This has become particularly popular with users during the pandemic. Looking at a sample of twelve of our funeral partners, during May 2019 just over 1,200 candles were added to their tribute pages yet, in May this year, we've seen this number more than double to over 3,000 candles lit.

Photos have played a hugely important part too. For the same sample of funeral directors, their families have

added almost 5,000 pictures in May this year, compared to 1,600 for the same period last year.

People are increasingly using their tribute pages for funeral collections, as an alternative to being able to donate cash at the service. Many families are also choosing to split their donations among multiple charities. As we are now able to collect donations for causes and organisations such as care homes and medical centres that aren't registered charities, we're finding this option is proving popular too.

MuchLoved was founded to give bereaved families access to meaningful online bereavement support. Whilst this crisis has meant that bereaved families often couldn't have the funeral services that they wished, tribute pages have provided a way to help commemorate and memorialise their loved ones, regardless of social distancing and lockdown restrictions.

Giving families comfort at a difficult time

By Susan Macmillan, Tributes

For families unable to give loved ones the funeral they would wish, a thoughtful and personal memorial service may help to heal and comfort.

The funeral has already taken place and there is no coffin, but the deceased person can still be beautifully and tastefully represented, and be a focus for friends and family at a celebration of their life in one of Tributes' lovely Photo Memorial Ashes urns.

Photo urns are perfect for a memorial service. The ashes are discreetly contained within the urn and display a lovely photo so that the deceased can

be with their family while they say their last farewells. This will help families feel that they have at last been able to mark the departure of their loved one in a respectful and traditional way.

Family and friends might like to write messages or memories and these can be hand-written, or engraved, onto Heart Tags to be kept by the family. Collections, condolence cards, personal messages and orders of service can be collected in a pretty donation box that can be kept to store these mementos for the family to treasure.

Tributes has a range of lovely, personalisable keepsakes and family members can even design their own keepsakes and engravings using the easy-to-use personalisation tool on its website.

For families who are scattering ashes, Tributes - the inventor of the original Scatter Tubes - has a wide range, which can be supplied with wildflower seeds to combine with the ashes

or planted for an environmentally-friendly and long-lasting memorial.

Call our friendly Customer Care team for details of Tributes' new leaflet, which is packed with ideas and inspiration for your families to help them plan a memorial service to say their long awaited goodbyes.

