

PROFESSIONAL *development*

Why invest in developing your employees?

“AN INVESTMENT IN KNOWLEDGE ALWAYS
PAYS THE BEST INTEREST.”
Benjamin Franklin

Every employee within the funeral sector can benefit from developing their professional, vocational, communication or customer service skills, no matter how experienced they are.

Many NAFD member firms already work hard to develop the skills and experience of their employees, focusing on achievement of not only the NAFD Diploma qualifications, but others essential to the future of the profession related to embalming, celebrancy, monumental masonry and other skills.

Yet, for others, in the daily and weekly pressures of managing a business it's something that doesn't always feel like

top priority. Sometimes, it might feel like it's hard enough just to get to the end of the week, much less create and deliver a comprehensive plan for each individual employee's professional development.

First Vice-President of the NAFD, Kate Edwards, will focus on the benefits of lifelong learning during her Presidential year, which runs from May 2020 - May 2021.

As an NAFD tutor, she is passionate about the development of funeral professionals: "I would encourage all employers to support the NAFD's qualifications. Investing in your team validates your belief in them. It shows them that their hard work

and commitment in achieving their qualifications allows their gained knowledge and confidence to provide a bespoke and high level of service to every family you and they serve."

Following the conclusion of the current Competition & Markets Authority market investigation, it is quite possible that, in the future, some level of professional qualification or training will become mandatory as part of the introduction of statutory regulation.

But why wait until it's forced upon your business? There are numerous proven business benefits to delivering an employee development programme from which your business could start to benefit right now.

Here's our top five.

1. It helps attract and keep great employees

Employee retention is a huge challenge (and expense) for employers. So is the recruitment process.

Employee development can be seen as a benefit, and that is something employees weigh in the "pros" column when finding a job. Hourly employees, especially, don't always receive the benefits that salaried workers in larger companies are accustomed to. Providing employee development as part of the hiring package gives you a competitive advantage over other similar jobs and wages.

The calibre of your applicants will improve. By offering training, Continuing Professional Development (CPD), Conference attendance or other learning opportunities, with the understanding that you expect them to participate you will attract potential employees who are actively looking to improve their capabilities and experience.

It also builds loyalty. Loyal employees aren't prone to quitting. Knowing that



their employer is willing to provide training and development makes an employee feel important and it makes them loyal.

It boosts your reputation as an employer. Having a reputation as a good employer - one who cares enough to provide training - is great both for hiring new employees as well as how customers see you. Word travels fast about who is good to work for, especially in such a niche sector as funeral arranging.

2. It helps you create promotable employees

While fresh perspectives are always useful, hiring at least some of your managers and other senior employees from within is a good idea too. They are familiar with your day-to-day business - and motivated to help you succeed.

However, it's never wise to promote someone without getting them ready for the role first - and so a training and development plan, delivered over time, can help you create a strong succession plan for your team that will help your business be robust. It will also help you identify and address any strengths and weaknesses in your employees.

3. It keeps employees engaged while at work

Bored or disaffected employees are a recipe for disaster, particularly in a sensitive, customer-focused environment such as funeral arranging and directing. A negative attitude can be infectious and can quickly cause damage to relationships with other employees and customers.

Engage your employees through interesting training opportunities that are both fun and challenging - something they can look forward to.

NAFD tutor Andrew Cutmore, of T & A Funeral Studies in Hampshire, has seen the benefits to businesses of motivated individuals at first hand. He said: "The students I have been lucky enough to help so far have been incredibly motivated individuals. They have fully embraced the syllabus and applied their learning into their everyday work. This, in turn, has made them feel empowered at work to help and assist other colleagues, which has been great to witness. They grow as individuals and embrace their learning, always wanting to do better and be more knowledgeable the more they study."



Future proof your career.

Achieve your Diploma in Funeral Arranging and Administration.

Start your exciting journey in successfully achieving your funeral qualifications with NAFD Approved Tutor, Kate Edwards BEd (Hons), DipFD, by attending her highly successful residential course for the NAFD's DipFAA 2020/21.

For full details on fees and course content, please contact Kate on kate.edwards.tutor@gmail.com or call her on 07966 148837

The next scheduled residential weekend will be held on 24th to 26th April 2020 with a follow up weekend prior to the March 2021 examinations.

What is included?

Everything you need to successfully achieve your DipFAA will be provided including learning materials; revision tools and importantly Kate's support throughout your qualification.

This is an attractively priced option that

allows you to work and study alongside your DipFAA colleagues but also provides for feedback and coaching on a one to one basis in between the weekends. Your dinner, bed, breakfast, lunch will also be provided at no additional cost for each weekend.

Where will all this take place?

In a private training suite at the De Vere Cotswold Water Park Hotel which is situated in Gloucestershire and easily accessible from the M4 and M5 motorways.

T&A Funeral Studies Ltd

Are you looking to gain a recognised qualification in 2020?

Courses run by an accredited tutor for the National Association of Funeral Directors.

Places are available for the Dip FAA and Dip FD syllabus.

Based in Hampshire but also offer nationwide coverage and flexible learning to suit your location.

Flexible payment terms available. Discount available for group bookings. T & C's apply.

For further details, please contact:

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Develop the professional skills of your team in 2020

The NAFD's two Diploma courses provide comprehensive training for funeral service professionals and are considered the 'gold standard' qualifications for the sector.

The Diploma in Funeral Arranging & Administration (DipFAA) and the Diploma in Funeral Directing (DipFD) are studied across a period of between 9 - 15 months (dependent upon the qualification) and are delivered by a team of highly qualified NAFD approved tutors and assessed by the NAFD Team of Examiners.

As well as the two Diplomas, the Association is also supported in delivery of its education programme by the London Association of Funeral Directors (LAFD), which operates the LAFD Certificate in Funeral Arranging & Administration (CertFAA). Launched in 2007, the twelve-week course has been designed specifically as a qualification for those in the frontline of funeral service.

"For me, it has been a genuine pleasure being able to be part of their learning journey and helping them to achieve their goals and aspirations."

4. It forces you to look to the future of your business.

Thinking about employee development means that you will be spending time considering the future needs of your business. That's never a bad thing to do as a business owner or manager.

- What kind of leaders do you need for the future of your business?
- What industry or regulatory changes are coming down the line?
- What will clients need from your employees as expectations and requirements of funeral directors change?

Great employee development programmes don't happen without planning. The training that worked last year might not be appropriate next year. The culture of your funeral firm might be shifting according to customer and industry needs. You might need to attract a different kind of employee and your training and development plan might need to evolve to reflect that.

Peter Linford, Head of Training at CPJ Field and a qualified NAFD tutor, believes that training and ongoing professional development provides the bedrock of the service that clients expect of funeral professionals. "The pastoral and emotional work we do with our clients, as well as providing the funeral service itself,

must be grounded in careful and thoughtful training. At a time of great change in our profession, we must also keep on top of often rapid developments in legislation and in what our clients ask of us. Through CPJ Field and the NAFD I am proud to be able to offer education and support to students which, I believe, enables brilliant and imaginative funeral arrangers and directors to take our profession into its future."

5. It helps you save and earn money.

A good employee is like money in the bank. Well-trained, confident and engaged employees do better work and they stick around for longer. It's that simple. It also helps to save money through compliance, such as health and safety, which is vital in the funeral sector.

But what if they take their new-found skills and leave the business?

This fear is often cited as a reason for not spending money on employee training - but it's very much a false economy.

Well-trained, supported and motivated employees are less likely to leave than those who feel unsupported. A national survey of employees spanning three generations, reported in the *Training Journal* last year, revealed that 70% of respondents felt the training opportunities available to them played a huge influence in their decision on whether to stay in their current role.

The NAFD is also putting the finishing touches to something new to support the CPD of funeral employees - please look out for news on some exciting developments in education as 2020 unfolds, including the Frontline Funeral Service Operative course, the pilot for which commences in March, and a summer school event at Durham University in August.

For further information about NAFD training and qualifications, please contact the NAFD Education Team at trainingadmin@nafd.org.uk, call 0121 711 1343 or visit www.nafdeducation.org.uk where full details of the NAFD's courses and fees can be found.

Supporting sector skills through sponsorship

A GROWING AND DIVERSE RANGE OF MEMBER FIRMS ARE BACKING NAFD EDUCATION AND TRAINING

At the *Celebrating Success* event in December, the NAFD was privileged to have sponsor support from a selection of different member firms, all committed to helping funeral sector employees to be the best they can be. Whilst extremely diverse, all of these sponsors demonstrate an ongoing commitment to improving the skills of the funeral sector through the training they provide in conjunction with their business.

The sponsors included specialist suppliers like coffin and casket manufacturers JC Atkinson and FE Harris, memorial item specialist Funeral Products and embalming equipment supplier Dodge, which has rebranded from January 2020 as the MazWell Group (see *Supply & Demand* feature). It also included organisations offering learning and development support, like Rosedale Training based in East Anglia and CPJ Field based in Sussex.

First-time NAFD event sponsor, Coastal Media, was inspired to get involved after launching its bereavement portfolios to the funeral industry at the 2019 National Funeral Exhibition and having found a warm and collaborative welcome from the sector.

Long-term NAFD event supporter, funeral planning specialist Ecclesiastical, has sponsored the *Celebration of Success*

event for many years and Helen Guyan, its Business Development Manager, attended on the day to join in with the celebrations. She believes that professional development is key to the future of the sector: "Demonstrating expertise has never been more important as regulation looms," she said. "At Ecclesiastical, we are committed to helping firms to do this through our face-to-face training programme and with the development of our Funeral Director Development Academy."

"As the regulatory picture becomes clearer we will use our experience as part of a regulated financial services group to provide clear guidance to firms, and are pleased to be speaking on this topic at the NAFD Conference Education Day."

For JC Atkinson, its business is about far more than simply selling coffins and caskets - it's about building partnerships. Says Sales Director Jamie Luckley: "We do not wish to be just another supplier, we pride ourselves on offering our customers a substantial business partnership that has been developed to assist our customers to succeed and increase revenues and profits in what is a very competitive marketplace. We have developed a package of products and services that, combined with enhanced training and engagement, helps our clients sell a broader range of products."

Funeral Products is a regular sponsor of NAFD events and, for its UK and Ireland Director Michael Brooks, it sees many levels of value in working closely with the Association. In December, Funeral Products also sponsored the Scales Award, which recognises the highest marks achieved in the examinations. Andrew Jones (DipFD) was presented with his award by NAFD President David Barrington. Paul Riley who, unfortunately, was unable to attend the ceremony, will be presented with his award by NAFD Second Vice-President Kate Edwards at the NAFD Northern Ireland Area Federation AGM on 26 February.

Said Michael: "One of the benefits of being involved with NAFD events is helping celebrate the hard work and achievements of the next group of leaders coming through the ranks inside our profession at this event. Being able to provide the individual awards for those at the top of the class is both important and quite special to us."

"Another benefit is what it means to our company to be seen in a good light with the wider NAFD membership group - to be seen as a true partner of the Association, not just a supplier. We look forward to many years to come growing our partnership with the NAFD and its members."

Funeral Products sponsored the 2020 Scales Awards. Here, NAFD President David Barrington presents winner Andrew Jones with his award. ▼



Kate Edwards
BED(Hons): DipFD
Peter Linford
Mark Hall
Anne Beckett-Allen



Broaden skillsets with wider sector qualifications

In addition to funeral directing qualifications, funeral employees can also benefit from a wide range of other skills and experiences, from funeral masonry and embalming to training in taking funeral services. Here is some information about funeral celebrancy training and humanist funerals.



Civil funerals

Anne Barber, Civil Ceremonies

“It is vitally important to have a qualification as a funeral celebrant and also vitally important that the qualification is of the highest level (ie the Level 3 Diploma in Funeral Celebrancy - which is Ofsted approved). This proves that the training undertaken is rigorous and professional, and that certain elements of a celebrant's job have been covered and passed. Qualifications could become the key to opening the doors of the profession for new celebrants.

“The celebrant profession is not regulated and so is self policing. Good professionally-recognised qualifications are the first step to ensuring high quality funeral celebrants for the funeral directors and for families. There are differing views amongst celebrants as to what constitutes further professional development. The good ones want to learn and embrace the changes within the industry and are prepared to look at ways of improving their skills and their role.”

Humanist
Ceremonies

Humanist funerals

Isabel Russo, Humanist CeremoniesTM

“Humanist CeremoniesTM was the first ever provider of training for celebrants. We always aim for the highest standards possible, keeping abreast with the fast-moving changes in the funeral industry, at the same time as encouraging each individual to develop the core skills and confidence that it takes to fully meet the needs of the people that they work with.

“Our training takes place over three months, including two residential weekends and a visit to a crematorium where the trainees have the opportunity to practice taking a ceremony that they have written. Our trainers are highly skilled and all outstanding, experienced celebrants themselves, so when a trainee completes the training they feel fully prepared and supported by the best the profession has to offer.”

