



Matthews Aurora™
FUNERAL SOLUTIONS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

— Course Guide —

Course Guide

SEMINAR TOPICS

The Matthews Aurora™ Professional Development Courses are divided into four distinct tracks: Arranger Skill Building, Cremation Training, Culture and Teamwork, and Vision and Leadership. The core courses are identified within each track. These courses provide the foundation of our training and require 1-6 hours of dedicated personnel time.

Arranger Skill Building

Core Courses:

Communicating with Today's Changing Consumer - NEW!

Mindset for Change: Training Our Brains for Success - NEW!

WOW Them! With Service They'll Never Forget

Raising the Bar: Ethics in the Arrangement Conference

Thriving in Today's Changing Marketplace

Lifetimes: Making the Emotional Connection*

Decoding the Generations*

Navigating through Conflict*

Funeral... FUNeral... Moving Families from Grieving to Remembrance

Cremation Training

Core Courses:

The Art of Cremation Phone Inquiries*

The Sky's the Limit: Getting Creative with Cremation Families

** Available as online training*

Culture and Teamwork

Core Courses:

Creating a Culture of Trust - NEW!

Put Your Mask on First

Integrity in the Workplace: Setting Standards of Excellence

Building Teamwork:

Creating Collaboration and Unity

Vision and Leadership Development

Core Courses:

Building Superstars: Retaining and Developing Your #1 Asset - NEW!

The Evolving Consumer: Shifts in Desires and Habits For Funeral Service - NEW!

What Now? The Virtual Reality of Funeral Service

From Church Bulletins to Yelp:

Building Your Business

Be Audacious in Business

Developing Leaders in Funeral Service

Course Guide

Our Commitment to Professional Development

At Matthews Aurora™ Funeral Solutions, we believe that people are our greatest asset. We value both our internal customers and external customers which is why we continue to invest in professional development. Our dynamic courses are designed to support and encourage the growth of our own employees and those of our customers. Professional development has a direct impact by improving employee engagement, morale, motivation, productivity, and responsiveness in meeting organized objectives.

We are also committed to excellence in funeral service. This noble profession is ever changing which requires leaders who are nimble enough to make adjustments and, at the same time, persistent in communicating vision. Our seminars and workshops are designed to help employees grow in both skills and leadership, helping them to reach their full potential.

Today's employees not only want training, they expect it. Join us for any one of our series of engaging topics, designed to bring out the best in your people.

Arranger Skill Building

Communicating with Today's Changing Consumer

Many funeral directors lament the growing number of families who are impatient, difficult, and on guard these days. As one funeral home owner said not long ago, *“What happened to all the nice families?”*

This workshop helps funeral directors understand why these changes are occurring and address the skills needed for communicating effectively with today's “changed” funeral consumer. You'll learn tips for managing the arrangement conference, ways to build trust with families, language that helps us connect, methods to “meet people where they are” via technology, and how to make those technical interactions effective. We will also discuss how to avoid the pitfalls in listening, how to use affirming language to empower families, lastly, you will learn specific nuances for communicating with women and men, as they process information differently.

This is not arrangement skills 101; rather, it is a deep dive into effective communication.

You Will Learn:

- Consumer trends and changes
- The right and wrong way of handling death
- Delivering what the client wants and needs
- How to make a charismatic first impression
- Language that helps us connect and affirm others
- Active listening skills
- Common non-verbal cues
- Steps for handling conflict
- How to make an apology
- Cell phone courtesies
- Tips for virtual arrangements
- Differences in how men and women process and communicate

Credit: 1 - 1 1/2 hour

Who should attend: Funeral directors and pre-need counselors

Available as: on-site seminar; webinar

Mindset for Change: Training Our Brains for Success

Ever hear the expression “*You can’t teach an old dog new tricks?*” Well, recent developments in brain research indicate that we are far more adaptable to change than previously believed. Rather than being wired for specific skills, our brains are highly adaptable. We have control over our abilities and can choose to develop new skills which lead to achievement and success.

This mind-opening seminar is designed to help funeral directors understand the working of the brain, how they can adapt to the ever-changing environment of funeral service, and how to build new skills for serving families

You Will Learn:

- How our malleable brains create new neurological pathways
- Former and current findings on growth vs. fixed mindset
- How our thinking defines our experience
- The power of our internal dialogue
- A victim mentality vs. overcoming setbacks
- Negative personality drivers that are hurdles to success
- Pitfalls of constant distraction
- Positive boosters for achieving goals
- The 10-year rule for becoming an expert
- Deep practice methods for growing skills throughout life
- New habits by cultivating grit

Credit: 1 hour

Who should attend: All funeral home employees, owners, and managers
Available as: on-site seminar; webinar

WOW Them! With Service They'll Never Forget

Navigating just about anything in today's ever-changing world can be confusing. Add loss and grief and you have consumers who do not know which way to turn. Many of today's families are searching for something new, a way to memorialize and celebrate their loved one that reflects their lifestyle and tells their story. Many more are holding their own celebrations "outside" of funeral service.

All of this can create confusion. BOTH our profession and the consumer can "get lost" in finding the best path forward.

This seminar will provide a pathway for building a strong culture of creativity and innovation within your funeral home that consumers can relate to and appreciate. We will explore six "perception points" as opportunities to impress and WOW families. These will both help them on their journey to healing and elevate your funeral home as the place to celebrate a loved one.

You Will Learn:

- How poor service creates opportunities
- What we can learn from the hospitality business
- Perception points in which families form opinions
- Tips for a warm transfer
- Excelling on the first call
- Getting the arrangement conference off on the right foot
- Ways to go above and beyond at the visitation, ceremony, and post-funeral
- Building a strong culture of creativity and innovation
- Traits to hire for in service-oriented staff
- Leading staff to the extraordinary

Credit: 1 hour

Who Should Attend: Funeral directors, funeral home owners and managers, pre-need counselors

Available As: Keynote address; on-site seminar; webinar

Raising the Bar: Ethics in the Arrangement Conference

Funeral directors operate within a difficult reality: our businesses survive and succeed in an industry that is rooted in other families' loss and personal tragedies. The core of the problem is that families must make difficult decisions - personal, financial and spiritual - on what is often the worst day of their lives. In their grief, they operate at a very real disadvantage, with their judgment clouded and their emotions raw. Much of the ethical criticism we face in funeral service comes from the perception that we exploit that disadvantage.

The Raising the Bar seminar restructures the arrangement process to eliminate or at least minimize that disadvantage. Through a series of exercises, we help funeral directors sharpen and clarify their moral compass and share techniques that foster sincerity and transparency and build trust.

You Will Learn:

- Cognitive impairments of grief
- Information imbalance
- The baggage families bring
- Strengthening your moral compass
- The 36 qualities of ethics, excellence and caring
- Building on your strengths
- Tackling the blind spots
- Building a lifestyle of integrity
- Ethical solutions for the arrangement conference
- Full disclosure
- Empowering families
- Providing a “safe place” for grief and support
- Creating win-win situations

Credit: 1 hour

Who Should Attend: Funeral directors and pre-need counselors

Available As: Keynote address or on-site seminar

Thriving in Today's Changing Marketplace

Funeral service is ever changing. Over the past two decades, we have experienced a remarkable increase in cremation and a decline in traditional religious funeral services. Leaders in funeral service need to be vigilant, creative and nimble to stay fresh and relevant for today's consumer.

This engaging, full-day workshop helps funeral directors understand the needs of funeral clients. Through exercises and discussion, you will develop skills and solutions for not only surviving, but thriving, in change. The full-day seminar explores five specific trends: individualized services, non-religious clients, family conflict, communicating across generational lines and cremation inquiries.

You Will Learn:

- Why we resist change
- A formula for adapting to change
- Establishing value through personalization
- The WOW factor – exceeding expectations
- Discovery questions and effective listening skills
- Understanding non-religious trends
- Helping non-religious families find meaning
- Techniques for navigating through conflict
- How to handle difficult conversations with employees
- Common challenges in working with other generations
- Ideas for meeting the needs of four distinct generations
- Best practices for handling cremation telephone inquiries

Credit: 4-6 hours

Who Should Attend: Funeral directors, pre-need counselors and aftercare coordinators

Available As: Keynote address or on-site seminar

Lifetimes: Making the Emotional Connection

The Lifetimes seminar is a proven framework for the funeral arrangement conference, based on the belief that every funeral should genuinely reflect the life of the individual, and designed to not just meet family needs, but exceed their expectations.

You Will Learn:

- Techniques for connecting with families and building credibility
- The Relate - Explore - Advise - Assure Framework
- Creating a MAP for managing family expectations
- How to grow in empathy and emotional intelligence
- Questions that get to the heart of the matter
- Tuning out distractions and listening fully
- How and when to advise
- Designing meaningful services through props, products and participation
- Creative ideas for exceeding family expectations

Credit: 1 1/2 - 3 hours

Who Should Attend: Funeral directors, pre-need counselors and aftercare coordinators

Available As: On-site seminar; online training; webinar

Decoding the Generations

Today's families include members from four distinctly different generations: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials. As a funeral director, how do you relate to family members of the various generations to ensure that their needs are met?

You Will Learn:

- Common history, values and consumer motivations of each generation
- Communication preferences and styles
- What type of funeral products and services appeal to each generation to better meet their needs

Credit: 1 - 1 1/2 hours

Who Should Attend: Funeral directors, pre-need counselors and aftercare coordinators

Available As: Keynote address; on-site seminar; online training; webinar

Navigating through Conflict

Due to the rise in divorce and single-parent families, the American family is more complex than ever before. Funeral directors report increasing conflict, tension and disagreements during the arrangement conference. This insightful seminar provides strategies and skills for navigating through difficult conversations with courage and tact and helping families resolve conflict.

You Will Learn:

- How to create a safe environment for open discussion
- Skills for diffusing situations before they get out of hand
- Techniques for remaining calm and restoring dialogue
- Engaging the family in problem solving
- The steps for discovering a path forward
- Finally, participants will practice learned skills

Credit: 1 hour

Who Should Attend: Funeral directors and pre-need counselors

Available As: On-site seminar; online training; webinar

Funeral... FUNeral... Moving Families from Grieving to Remembrance

Are your families more interested in a FUNeral than a funeral? Would they rather throw a party or celebration rather than grieve? If you and your employees are struggling to explain why families should have a funeral, you'll want to attend this dynamic presentation. While much in funeral service has changed, the benefits of funeral rites and rituals hold true. Funeral and memorial services help families grieve and celebrate the life of the one they love. This insightful discussion provides funeral directors with the understanding and skills needed to communicate the value of your services to today's funeral client.

You Will Learn:

- How the changing society is challenging funeral service
- Cognitive impairment of grief
- Public perceptions/criticism of the funeral industry
- Funerals in the past and changing consumer preferences
- Marks of a "Good" funeral
- How to respond to challenges from families
- Educating and empowering families about the value of a funeral/FUNeral

Credit: 1 hour

Who Should Attend: Funeral directors and pre-need counselors
Available As: Keynote address and on-site seminar

Cremation Training

The Art of Cremation Phone Inquiries

Most funeral homes receive cremation phone inquiries weekly, if not daily. This workshop provides practical tips and a framework to ensure that every funeral professional can communicate the value of the services you offer.

You Will Learn:

- To view the call as an opportunity and yourself as the specialist
- Tips for making a proper introduction
- How to engage the caller through discovery questions
- Words that add value
- How to exceed the caller's expectations
- Methods for taking one next step in building a client relationship
- Proper business phone etiquette
- To lock down techniques through skills practice

Credit: 1 1/2 - 2 hours

Who Should Attend: Funeral directors, pre-need counselors and administrative assistants

Available As: On-site seminar; online training; webinar

The Sky's the Limit: Getting Creative with Cremation Families

Cremation continues to grow as the choice for many families. As funeral professionals, we need to become experts in addressing this growing preference. This seminar is designed to provide you with inspiration and best practices to serve the needs of cremation families, with the goal of helping families plan memorable life celebrations.

You Will Learn To:

- Communicate the value of your services
- Set the tone of the arrangement conference by focusing on the family's loved one
- Equip families for the "Decision Zone" prior to the arrangement conference
- Manage expectations through MAP statements
- Discover family cremation traditions
- Partner with the family to create unique ceremonies
- Present four consumer-friendly cremation packages
- Ask a key question for urn selection

Credit: 1 hour

Who Should Attend: Funeral directors and pre-need counselors
Available As: On-site seminar; webinar

Culture and Teamwork

Creating a Culture of Trust

Creating culture is a lot like making cake: it takes a variety of good ingredients and setting a mood for something great to take shape! Does your organization have mission, vision, and values statements that create buy in (*the ingredients*)? Does your team work together like a well-oiled machine (*the set up*)? Is everyone heading towards the same goal? You must have agreement that a cake IS the desired outcome.

These are just some of the challenges we will tackle in this session. Together, we will discuss what strategies/mixtures work for building and maintaining strong and successful teams that make your business a place of attraction for others. People know you make good cake—*so, let them eat cake!*

You Will Learn To:

- Intentionally create business culture
- Communicate your vision and mission statement
- Identify your funeral home's core values
- Build trust with four core values
- Lay a solid foundation through honor
- Show compassion through active listening
- Be transparent in your communication
- Demonstrate your dependability to families
- Drive positive culture in your business through employee engagement

Credit: 1 hour

Who should attend: Funeral directors, owners and managers
Available as: Keynote address, on-site seminar, webinar

Put Your Mask on First BEFORE Assisting Others - Self-care in Funeral Service

“In the event of an emergency, please put on your oxygen mask BEFORE assisting others.” This is a message most of us have learned to tune out. However, in ignoring this message, we put our health and well-being at risk as well as those we serve.

It is vitally important for funeral service professionals to take care of themselves in order to be effective and of value to the community. Yet, this message is regularly ignored.

This seminar looks at what happens when we allow our protective shield to falter and what we can do to ensure we stay at top form. This presentation is geared to help you find your own “oxygen masks” in order to avoid burnout and to continue to do what you do best, which is serving families in their time of need.

You Will Learn:

- About inherent stressors
- How our protective shield gets depleted
- How to create balance
- The art of saying “no”
- To make time for yourself
- A pathway to a healthier you!
- What’s your BIG WHY?
- To be your best everyday

Credit: 1 hour

Who Should Attend: Funeral directors and pre-need counselors

Available As: Keynote address and on-site seminar

Integrity in the Workplace Setting Standards of Excellence

Funeral service is often criticized for its ethical lapses. When a funeral home fails to deliver on its promises or engages in misconduct, it sets itself up for criticism, a loss of community trust, and diminished reputation. But how can funeral directors ensure that every employee is operating at the highest standard of excellence.

The “Integrity in the Workplace” seminar provides a three-step process for strengthening the moral compass of your employees and enhancing your funeral home’s culture.

Participants will learn best practices within each step that lead to positive change in attitude, behavior, and ultimately your funeral home’s working environment.

You Will Learn:

- Common danger zones for ethical missteps
- Why culture and ethics matter
- Making the commitment to integrity
- Providing moral leadership
- Setting high standards
- Defining your core values
- Integrating values into HR
- How to create a caring community

Credit: 1 hour

Who Should Attend: Funeral home owners and managers, funeral directors
Available As: Keynote address and on-site seminar

Building Teamwork: Creating Collaboration and Unity

Creating a well-orchestrated, seamless memorial event involves many moving parts. Does your staff work together like a well-oiled machine? This comprehensive and energizing training teaches strategies for building and maintaining strong and successful teams throughout your organization.

You Will Learn To:

- Identify obstacles to successful teamwork
- Foster trust and cooperation among co-workers
- Fulfill commitments in the face of difficulty
- Adjust to change
- Evaluate the level of teamwork in your organization
- Reinforce positive values that promote unity and cooperation
- Develop a strong team with clear goals, guidelines, expectations, and encouragement

Credit: 2 - 4 hours

Who Should Attend: All funeral home employees

Available As: On-site seminar

Vision and Leadership Development

Building Superstars: Retaining and Developing Your #1 Asset

Hiring talent AND THEN retaining talent can be a challenge. Far too often, we hear, “*I can’t find good people,*” or “*Do you know any talented licensed funeral directors looking to make a move?*” Worse, we hear, “*It’s like a revolving door, people keep leaving.*” Great funeral directors are hard to come by; they are even harder to retain. Rather than having to look outside of your funeral home for talent, this course focuses on developing the employees that you already have.

This enlightening session shares insights into the characteristics and work preferences of four generations currently in the workforce and techniques for making your employees feel valued and a part of the team, ultimately leading to loyalty and retention and making your funeral home a workplace of attraction.

You Will Learn:

- Common challenges in working with other generations
- Shared history, influences, values, and motivations of each generation
- Insight into the working styles of each generation of employees
- Techniques of employee engagement and building loyalty
- The importance of communicating your vision and expectations
- Building loyalty through the open door and listening
- How and when to provide feedback
- What it takes to coach and mentor today’s employee
- Solutions for common generational conflict

Credit: 1 hour

Who should attend: Funeral home owners and managers
Available as: keynote address; on-site seminar; webinar

The Evolving Consumer: Shifts in Desires and Habits for Funeral Service

No one could argue that we live in an ever changing world. In fact, it has been said that we live in one of the most aggressive technological growth evolutions of our time. Nowhere is this press for change and growth more apparent than within the funeral service profession. What was once seen as “emerging change” is now expected advancement.

So, how does the funeral service profession keep up and adapt? What changes directly affect how we better serve our families? And lastly, what solutions are already in place to help us “meet families where they are?”

In this informative and engaging course, we will discuss and share new studies that show us where the evolving consumer is going and how they want to get there. We will talk about solutions that enable funeral service professionals to stay ahead of the curve. At the end of the day, funeral service is about helping families move from grieving to remembrance.

Attendees will leave this session not only knowing what shifts are taking place and why, but they will emerge knowing what resources are available and what they can do to better serve and show the true value of working with funeral service professionals.

You Will Learn:

- Changing consumer trends affecting funeral service
- How the pandemic accelerated change in shopping habits
- The effect of declining religious affiliation and American’s isolation from death
- How the pandemic ignited an interest in pre-planning
- New technologies in funeral service to meet consumer desires
- Creative ideas for cremation memorialization

Credit: 1 hour

Who should attend: All funeral home employees, owners, and managers
Available as: on-site seminar; webinar

What Now? The Virtual Reality of Funeral Service

The COVID crisis has made us instantly reinvent our business. Now what? What changes that we were forced to make can we carry forward? Are lessons on being flexible and creative in this journey? What best practices can help us serve families now and well into the future?

This enlightening session will make you think about change and next steps you can take now to ensure the future of your business and career, as these adjustments may just be a part of our new normal.

You Will Learn:

- How to deal with dramatic change
- To see the opportunity in challenges
- Potential long-term consumer shifts following crisis
- The collective experience of “ambiguous loss”
- Actions we can take to avoid feeling helpless
- Short-term fixes and guidelines
- Long term implications for marketing your funeral home
- The growing importance of your online presence
- Upping your technology game
- Tips for virtual arrangements
- How your telephone skills are more important than ever

Credit: 1 hour

Who Should Attend: Funeral directors, funeral home owners and managers

Available As: Keynote address; on-site seminar; webinar

From Church Bulletins to Yelp! Adjusting Your Business Strategies for Longevity

For many decades, funeral service has thrived in an environment where name recognition and relationships within the community were an almost guarantee for future business. Once upon a time, a church bulletin advertisement for a funeral home found in the church pew or stapled to a wall was held onto by a family and tucked away until needed. Today, families search online and often on Yelp! where they can read what perfect strangers have said about your company. This online world has forever changed how our industry communicates our value to families and communities.

This talk is all about YOU, who are you and what you stand for. How do you share who you are with the world and how do you engage your employees so that they too represent the best you? What about your community... do they know you or are you just another business trying to sell them something.

Together we will look back and then forward to how we can adjust our business strategies to fit into today's ever changing world. This talk is about you building your business to last the test of time.

You Will Learn:

- Defining your mission, vision and values
- Creating your story
- Technology and funeral service
- Developing your online presence
- Signing and name
- Creating community
- Involving and engaging your staff
- Practical tips and examples

Credit: 1 - 1 1/2 hours

Who Should Attend: All funeral home employees

Available As: Keynote address; on-site seminar; webinar

Be Audacious in Business

Funeral service is undergoing dramatic change. In fact, it is true to say that all successful businesses require change to thrive in today's technological world. The cookie-cutter approach to funerals is no longer working as many families are moving away from tradition and even religion. Families "shop" for their funeral service needs and competition has popped up in some very unlikely places. These changing times require leaders to take bold actions in responding to the needs of today's funeral clients. This eye-opening presentation looks at shifting paradigms and perceptions in funeral service and challenges the participant to step forward to be better, be proactive...in fact, Be Audacious!

You Will Learn:

- How to perform when the odds appear to not be in your favor
- The price of doing things the same as "we've always done it"
- Why we resist change and how to adapt to it
- How to adapt not just to cope but to WIN
- The attitude of success
- How our perceptions can get in the way
- Unique aspects of four generations in the workplace
- 10 practical tips for being audacious

Credit: 1 - 1 1/2 hours

Who Should Attend: All funeral home employees

Available As: Keynote address; on-site seminar; webinar

Developing Leaders in Funeral Service

A “bad boss” is the number one reason why employees leave their jobs. This seminar is designed for funeral home leaders and anyone who wants to take that next step in developing their leadership qualities and skills and realizing their highest potential.

You Will Learn:

- How to influence others through vision, example and commitment
- How leading differs from just managing
- Core values that drive behavior
- Key characteristics of effective leaders
- Why some leaders succeed, and others fail
- Five levels on the ladder of leadership and characteristics of each level
- Best practices for engaging employees
- How to manage change
- Strategies for battling negativity and creating a positive work environment

Credit: 1 1/2 - 3 hours

Who Should Attend: All funeral home employees

Available As: On-site seminar; webinar



Testimonials

Angelique Simpson

“Angelique is a spectacular speaker, trainer and audience engager! This has been the most fruitful and engaging funeral service training I have EVER attended! SUPERB! ALL SUPERLATIVES! I truly cannot thank Matthews Aurora enough for investing in a trainer of this caliber. Angelique makes you think about our industry and how we all can elevate our performance to better serve families. This training is a MUST for every funeral home that wants to continue to be in business, thrive and show value.” – **Frances R. Bell, Frank R. Bell Funeral Home Inc.**



1-800-457-1111