

When Technology Changes Faster than the Work

by Eric D. Noren

OVER A LONG CAREER, there comes a point when the tools start changing faster than the habits that once made the work second nature. Funeral service is no exception. The change often shows up in small ways: hesitation around a new system, frustration with an unfamiliar workflow, or a steady preference for doing things the way they've always been done. These moments are easily treated as resistance. More often, they signal something entirely different—discomfort. They are signs that the work stayed familiar, but the tools have moved on.



Discomfort We Don't Talk About

Beneath the frustration is rarely a lack of ability or effort. It's discomfort. And that discomfort isn't really about technology at all. It's about relevance, confidence, and the uneasy feeling that the profession you've spent decades mastering is suddenly being measured by tools you didn't choose.

That feeling is rarely voiced. Instead, it gets labeled as stubbornness or reluctance to change. Many experienced funeral professionals hesitate for a far more human reason. Asking for help with unfamiliar tools late in a career can feel like standing exposed—especially when that help comes from someone half your age. Admitting confusion can feel like admitting decline. When technology is introduced without empathy, it doesn't just challenge workflows, it challenges identity.

Younger professionals, fluent in today's tools, sometimes mistake that fluency for professional superiority.

Comfort with software becomes shorthand for competence. Irritation turns into teasing, and offhand jokes follow. But fluency with tools has always been temporary. Every seasoned director was once the quickest study in the room. The work didn't change—the tools did.

This generational tension isn't unique to funeral service, but it cuts deeper here because the work depends so heavily on trust—between colleagues as much as with families. When mockery replaces patience, experience gets sidelined. Institutional knowledge slips away long before its time. Teams lose the opportunity to pair seasoned judgment with technical fluency—and that combination is where the real strength lies.

Forced adoption fails in this setting—mandates without context, training that assumes comfort, public correction that turns learning into embarrassment. Confidence doesn't grow under pressure, and comfort can't be rushed. Real progress can only begin when the stakes are lowered.

Low-Risk Ways to Re-Engage

For professionals who feel like technology has passed them by, re-engaging doesn't require becoming "technical." It requires finding low-risk ways to get oriented again—without an audience and without judgment. That might mean **using new tools as a reference** before relying on them as part of a workflow. Let a tool draft or summarize, even if you rewrite it entirely. The value isn't speed; it's familiarity.

Practicing privately also matters. Confidence builds faster when no one is watching. Choose the part of the day that consistently causes frustration and ask for help improving just that. Progress feels manageable when it is specific.

And when support is needed, **a guide usually works better than a class.** One patient colleague who

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understands both the tools and the work can do more in minutes than hours spent in formal training. The goal isn't mastery, it's comfort.

What Strong Teams Understand

Leaders and younger professionals shape this environment, whether they intend to or not. Fluency with today's tools is an asset, but it shouldn't become a measuring stick. The most effective teams recognize that experience and adaptability are not mutually exclusive; they reinforce each other when the environment allows it.

In funeral service, technology works best when it preserves judgment, restores confidence, and removes friction. Not when it signals who's ahead and who's behind.

Tools will keep changing as they always have. The

profession endures because the core of our work—care, judgment, presence, and trust—has not. Staying relevant doesn't mean chasing every new tool; It means staying effective, confident, and connected to the work itself.

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