

Diploma in Funeral Directing

Revision

Module 5

Preparing for and
Managing and Conducting
The Funeral



Q. Occasionally funerals do not go to plan, briefly describe FIVE skills necessary for implementing a contingency plan and give an example of each. (5 marks)



1. Planning - Responsibilities in priority order
2. Organising - The funeral service team, clients and mourners
3. Assessing - Risks and opportunities to avoid



4. Critical Thinking- Identifying and evaluating solutions for feasibility prior to implementation
5. Delegating - Roles, responsibilities and levels of authority, as appropriate, to other team members where appropriate
6. Communicating, Negotiating and Reviewing - With clients, external contacts and team members.
7. Time management -



What is contingency planning?



What is a contingency plan?

Contingency planning is a "What if?" skill important in all types of planning activities.

The objective of contingency planning is not to identify and develop a plan for every possible contingency. That would be impossible and a waste of time. Rather, the objective is to think about major contingencies and possible responses. Few situations actually unfold according to the assumptions of a plan.



- Address all funeral related activities
- Identify risks (risk analysis)
- Prioritise risks
- Identify the triggers
- Manage the risks



To prompt your thinking and form the basis of your contingency plan, the following information aims to assist you:-

1. Consider events that possibly could occur pre and post funeral that would require a response?
2. What potential disasters might happen just before or during the funeral?
3. What is the worst case scenario of events for the situation?
4. What scenarios are possible for the situation?
5. What event would cause the greatest disruption, how can we avoid?
6. Who or what might impede implementation of the plan?



Funeral Directing Related Skills



Q. List TEN checks required prior to leaving the funeral premises on the day of the funeral.
(10 marks)



1. Ensure no last minute changes have been made to the arrangements
2. Are there any special instructions with regard to the route, 'No Parking' signs etc.
3. Jewellery – any to be removed and/or returned to the family (This is probably not the best time to return valuables)
4. Flowers – check main tributes have arrived
5. Identity check – correct deceased, coffin and coffin plate
6. Do all members of staff understand their roles including instructions with regard to destination, route, special instructions, place of return?



7. Are all the members of the team smart and clean – particularly hands and finger nails?
8. Are the vehicles being used clean throughout?
9. Has the officiant to be collected en route?
10. Is an urn or casket to be taken to the crematorium?
11. Are Cd's or service sheets to be taken?
12. Has special music been ordered for the Crematorium?
13. Are trestles, wheel bier, webs, a pall, grave struts or putlocks required?
14. Flowers that have arrived at the funeral home should be checked and listed
15. If donations have been requested, has a collection plate/box and suitable notices been placed in church or place of committal?

Q. You arrive at a cemetery and a family member says that the correct grave has not been prepared. Explain your steps from this point.
(10 marks)



Under no circumstance must the interment take place if there is any doubt, the proceedings must be halted until it is certain that the grave that is opened is the correct one.

Sometimes people are mistaken as to which grave is theirs and checks can be made very quickly as to whether or not the correct grave has been opened. The cemetery office will have all the records necessary for this to take place. If it is proven that the wrong grave has been opened, the funeral director has little choice other than to postpone the interment until such time as the correct grave is prepared, which may incur a delay of two or three days in a worst case scenario.

If the interment takes place before the error is discovered, then an exhumation order must be obtained before the coffin can be removed and re-interred.



Q. In the event that the funeral officiant does not arrive for the funeral, explain what actions you would take to ensure the funeral goes ahead as planned.
(5 marks)



If the Officiant does not arrive to conduct the funeral, telephone your office and request that they contact the Officiant and ascertain their whereabouts. If they cannot be contacted then the office can attempt to find someone of the same denomination, starting with the closest to the service venue, until they are able to arrange for someone to take the service without delay.

At all times the funeral director must keep in contact with their office and keep the family informed of progress.



If the service is to be held at the crematorium chapel, time is a major factor in deciding what to do. If the funeral is delayed in the hope the Officiant arrives, there may be little time for the actual service.

One solution may be that there is a Minister at the crematorium from the previous funeral or waiting for a funeral to be held later in the day, and with the agreement of the main mourners it may be an option for the funeral director to ask that minister to officiate, although a short meeting of the family and clergy would be needed prior to the service starting.



Another option may be that the family would agree to the funeral director conducting the service however you should be trained and prepared to carry out this function if required.



Q. You arrive at a cemetery and the grave has collapsed. Explain your steps from this point.
(10 marks)



A risk assessment on the grave on the morning of the funeral may well bring this problem to the funeral director's attention prior to the service, however a grave could collapse moments before the burial is to take place, depending of the severity of the collapse it is likely that it will not be possible for the interment to be carried out without the fallen debris being removed, this will delay the interment therefore the funeral director should assess the situation and decide what is the best action to take to minimise the inconvenience to the family and other mourners.



If the debris can be removed quickly and the gravedigger is immediately available, the mourners can be invited to view the floral tributes away from the grave while the grave is corrected, if the collapse is extensive and more time is required, the mourners will need to be given other options to occupy their time while the work is carried out.



Q. Describe what you would do in the event of a grave not being ready at the time of an interment?
(10 Marks)



In a situation where at the point of committal it is discovered that the grave where the interment is to take place is too small, there are a number of important matters to consider:

- This is not the time for 'blame'
- Do not try to squeeze the coffin into the grave knowing that it will not fit
- Is the gravedigger available to assist?
- Is it just that the grave boards are too close together?
- How much too small is the grave and can it be corrected quickly?
- How long will it take to enlarge the grave in order for the burial to continue?



If the error can be corrected quickly arrange for the flowers to be taken off the hearse and displayed away from the immediate area and invite the family to view them, so the gravedigger can discreetly adjust and ask the Officiant to remain with the family.

Then having given instructions to the staff and gravediggers the funeral director should return to be with the family.

As soon as the grave is re-dressed a bearer can then inform the funeral director that everything is ready for the interment to commence.



If the grave is going to take some time to correct, it may be best to suggest to the family that they either go for a drive, or go home for the period of time required for the grave to be enlarged or if the cemetery have a café, arrangements could be made for the mourners to receive refreshments there whilst waiting for the interment to take place.

How can the problem can be avoided?

The funeral director carry out a risk assessment on the grave on the morning of the funeral.

It is advisable to keep your family informed of the situation and that you have it under control, however be aware that the family have the right of complaint and could be due compensation.



Q. Identify what precautions can be put in place to ensure the health and safety of clients and mourners whilst travelling in your vehicles and helping as bearers?
(5 Marks)



- Use of seatbelts in the limousines
- Safe opening of vehicle doors
- Safe exit from the funeral vehicles
- Volunteer Pallbearers receive practice on lifting and carrying a coffin prior to the day of the funeral
- Clients and Mourners are made aware of their personal responsibility for their own health and safety
- Waiver – disclaimer documents are provided and signed



Q. Identify what precautions can be put in place to ensure the health and safety of clients and mourners by the graveside and/or wishing to assist with lowering the coffin?
(5 Marks)



It is the funeral director's role to guide mourners' to the grave and organise the lowering of the coffin.

This is not without risks and funeral directors should provide adequate controls to ensure the safety of mourners at the graveside in terms of where to stand, and instruction, should anyone wish to step forward to scatter earth on the coffin after lowering into the grave.



Q. Identify what precautions can be put in place to ensure the health and safety of clients upon entering the crematorium?
(5 Marks)



Crematorium representatives will normally greet Funeral Directors, Officiants and mourners and direct them into the chapel.

The crematorium representative becomes immediately responsible for the health and safety of mourners upon entering the crematorium.



Funeral Directors' must assume responsibility to ensure that the coffin is received on the catafalque in such a way as to facilitate a safe, and dignified lowering to the crematory area.

From this point onwards, safe transportation and further handling of the coffin becomes the responsibility of the Crematorium staff.



Q. How would you handle the breakdown of a funeral vehicle?
(5 Marks)



This is a situation that you cannot plan for and therefore calm but swift action will need to be taken.

Depending where the breakdown happens will determine the course of action you will need to take.



If the vehicle will not start in your garage and another car is available then take that, however if there is no other vehicle available, then one needs to be obtained without delay from your nearest funeral director or carriage master.

It is worth considering the checking of each vehicle first thing every day in order to reduce the risk of this happening



If the breakdown occurs on the funeral, firstly ensure the safety of the family and your own staff. Then telephone your office to arrange a replacement vehicle and appraise them of the situation and your location so that they can also telephone the service venue to inform them of the likely delay.

At all times keep the family calm and fully informed of the action you have taken.



FUNERAL SERVICE TEAM - LEADERSHIP

Giving instructions to other people in the funeral team is by no means an easy task.

To prepare carefully, you may need to think through the 5 W's

WHO ?

WHY ?

WHAT ?

WHERE ?

WHEN ?



WHO are you going to give the instruction to ?

WHAT is it that you want the person to do ?

WHY do you want the task done ?

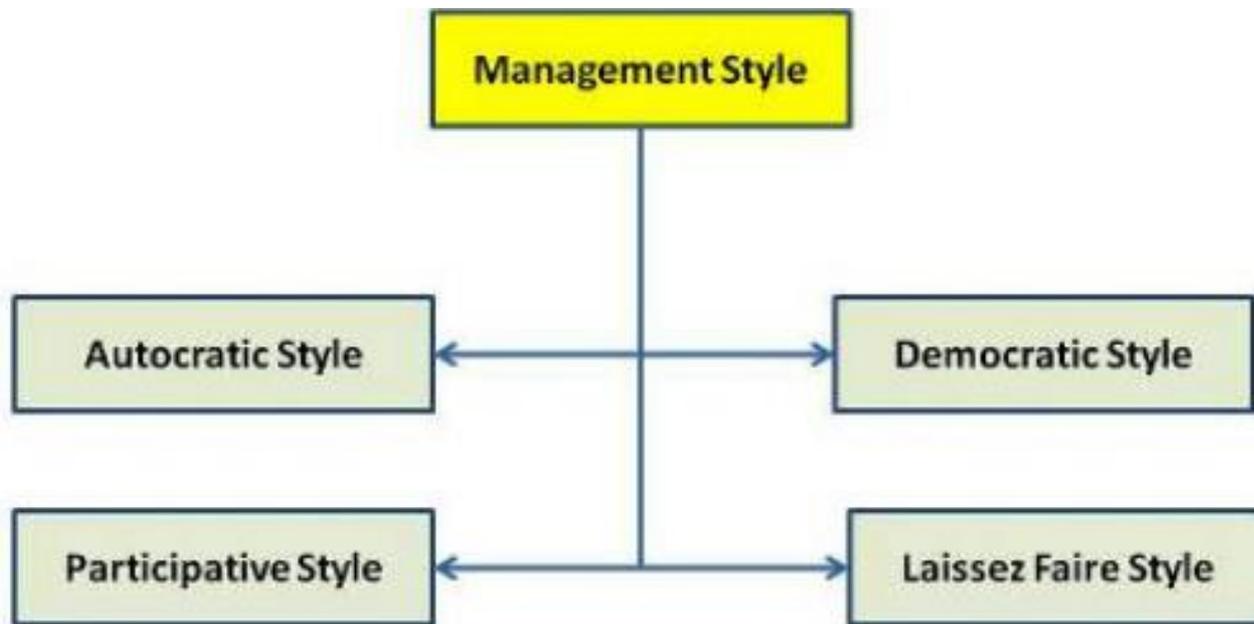
WHERE should the task be carried out ?

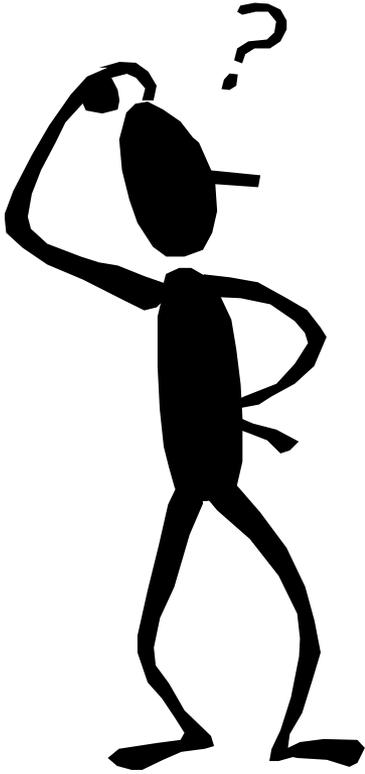
WHY when does the task need doing ?



One of the major factors, which will influence how people respond to you is your leadership style.

Consider your own style of management.





Leadership Styles

Autocratic
Democratic
Laissez-Faire
Participative



Next session

Wednesday 6th February

Revision Module 5

