

# FUNERAL

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## Business Advisor™

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CRAFT CASKETS™, the  
new PARADIGM  
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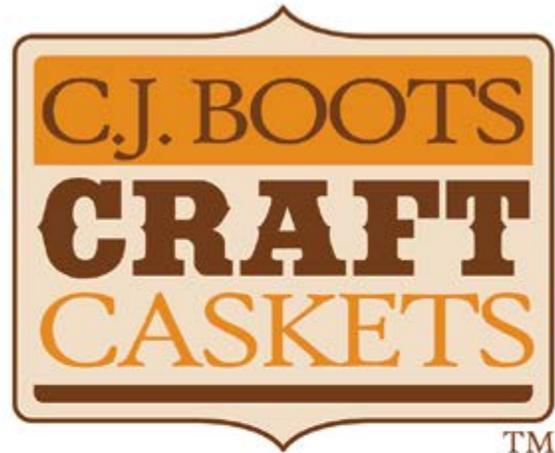


# FUNERAL BUSINESS ADVISOR

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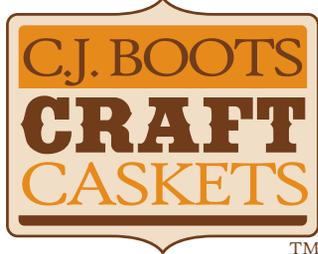
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By: Caitlin Doughty



# Craft Caskets, *the* new PARADIGM



I love to learn from people who are passionate about their business and funeral directors are a great study and an excellent textbook. Every time we set up a display at a trade show for a state or national funeral directors convention, the most common question asked by those who visited our booth is, "What do you have that's new or different?" A few years ago I began to look at my colleague's and their casket selections compared to ours and it hit me that basically everyone makes the same styles of caskets. Although there may be a shade difference in color or a variation of hardware, the only thing noticeably different was the name of the casket. Throw in an embroidered panel and now it's considered a "personalized" casket.

In 1999 when C.J. Boots Casket Company was created, I embraced the motto "Don't be afraid to go out on a limb, that's where the fruit is." It occurred to me that I needed to get back out on that limb, because there is much fruit out there, even more than I could imagine. In 2012 we built the first "Craft Casket", it was natural hickory with real hickory bark inlay, hickory logs for corners and lugs and Real Tree Camouflage interior. Although the casket was extremely unique we developed a way to manufacture this casket through our normal production process. We borrowed the term "Craft" from the craft beer industry and adopted "Craft Caskets" as our new casket line. The term "Craft" signifies "non-traditional traditional" caskets. The Funeral profession has talked for years about the importance of customization, meaning, a decal or head panel change with a specialized embroidery. "Craft Caskets" take customization to a whole different level. The Patriot, honoring Veterans, displays waving maple inlay in a walnut casket shell with 50 carved wooden maple stars on the exterior. Then there's the weathered look of old barn wood or the classy styling of the Sanctuary, a casket made of Cherry and White painted wainscoting. The Sanctuary design was inspired by some of today's popular church furniture. Most families want to purchase something meaningful that speaks personally to the life lived by their loved one, our Craft Casket Line gives you that opportunity. Craft Caskets are crafted in a fashion where they create a connection for anyone who attends the funeral knowing the life of the deceased. There are

now 18 different caskets offered in the Craft Casket Line by C.J. Boots Casket Company with more to come.

The response to the Craft Casket line from funeral directors and the families they serve has been overwhelmingly positive. Funeral directors are looking for something different in such a rapidly changing profession that may lead to their continued success. Funeral costs and cremation are up, yet merchandise sales and profits are down. This is not a good equation for a successful business model. Marketing and sales professionals tell us that consumers choose to spend less money on a purchase when they don't perceive adequate value. The ultimate question is how do you increase perceived value for your customers? The answer is really quite easy; you must have the ability to inflict the "Wow" factor into your products and services. I have seen it countless times where not only the family has been stung by the "Wow" factor but also the friends and community who attended services. I've had funeral directors tell me for months after a service people in the community will still mention the Craft Casket used at a particular funeral. When this happens, the funeral director is the hero, not his/her competition down the street. Recently my wife and I were introduced to a couple we met at a Christmas party. The couple mentioned a funeral they had attended in the spring where a Craft Casket had been used. They didn't know that the casket came from C.J. Boots Casket Company so I played along to learn more. They were both amazed at how fitting the casket was for the deceased and the life she lived. What's amazing to me is that they remembered the casket for many months after the funeral and talked about it like it happened yesterday. We are kidding ourselves if we think that products and services can't inflict "Wow" in the funeral profession.

Allow me to paint a picture for you. Everyday funeral directors meet with families to discuss funeral arrangements. After the initial arrangements are made the family either looks at a book, computer screen or walks into a selection room (Personally I am a huge fan of the selection room when it comes to consumers and value perception, especially concerning caskets. In my opinion, the selection room is the most valuable real

estate in the funeral home. What do you think would happen to the value of automobiles if they were sold only from a computer screen or out of a catalog? My guess is automobile sales would plummet. In the typical selection room the family has the standard fare of a few hardwoods and several metals differentiated by color and hardware because let's be honest, "gauge" has very little meaning to most people. When was the last time you bought a car or truck based on the gauge of metal?) The family selects a casket and proceeds with making final arrangements. However, what if you had the opportunity to provide a casket that was so unique to the family that it unquestionably eliminated the option of every other casket in the selection room. This is what the Craft Casket does for a family.

Kevin Brown is the owner of Hinsey-Brown Funeral Service in New Castle, Indiana. Kevin went out on a limb and placed a Craft Casket, the Rustic Hickory, on his floor. A family came into his selection room and immediately was inflicted with the "Wow" factor. The Rustic Hickory was exactly what they wanted. Kevin sent me a text the next day that said, "Thanks for making Hinsey-Brown look so good!" We receive numerous calls and emails from funeral directors and our distributors all over the country who share with us that a Craft Casket has made a huge difference with a family served. To that family, Kevin was able to go above and beyond their expectations. You can't beat free advertising when the people who come to the visitation stand around and talk about how great your funeral home is by providing a casket so personal to the deceased.

It's so easy to get in a rut offering the same merchandise all time. Craft Caskets help to create an experience for the family and the friends who come to the funeral home. I like to ask funeral directors when they call about caskets, are your family's settling for the status quo or are you providing merchandise and services that your competitor won't? Craft Caskets bring the opportunity for a much needed paradigm shift in casket merchandise. I don't think there's anything wrong with giving a reason for consumers to feel good about their purchases. What if you could increase revenues and possibly increase market share because people in the community talk about the "Wow" your funeral home provides in merchandise and services?

We work very hard at getting as much exposure as possible for the Craft Casket line. Craft Caskets are marketed through such avenues as social media, trade magazines, our website, catalogs and has been our focus at trade shows for the last 3 years. We've had several funeral homes call to ask about a Craft Casket that their family saw online and want to use it for a loved one. Craft Caskets have been shipped directly to funeral homes all over the country; in fact, due to increased demand we are expanding our distribution network so that Craft Caskets can be used for at-need services without waiting on delivery. Call your local distributor to ask about C.J. Boots Casket Company and our Craft Casket Line or visit our website at [www.cjboots.com](http://www.cjboots.com). **FBA**



"The best part of my job is creating new and innovative products."

-Chris J. Boots  
President / Craftsman

Handwritten signature of Chris J. Boots.





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