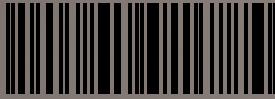


# FOUNDER

ISSUE 16 . VOL 2

MARCH 2024



3 5 4 6 8 9 5 0 1 8 7 8 4



## LOK CHUNG

FOUNDER AND  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
AT PEACE OF MIND  
FUNERAL SERVICES LTD

POWERED BY ASIA CEO COMMUNITY & GLOBAL CEO COMMUNITY

# WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START A FUNERAL BUSINESS IN HONG KONG?



# YOUR FUNERAL DIRECTOR

It was initially my family business. My father started his stonemason business 40 years ago and back in the day, the services were rather one dimensional and no integrated services for the families in need. Once their family member passed away, the deceased family has to look for different departments for the documentation, casket, attire, religious ceremony personnel, attires, cloths, etc all these little things at separate places and most importantly doing it all while they are suffering from losing their loved ones.

10 years ago, I saw the need from lots of families that they felt so lost that they did not know what to do and what to get in preparation for the funeral. They were exhausted from doing all this, it was time consuming and mentally drained during the tough times. Therefore, I decided to start a company that can help the deceased families from the get go, all the way through to their loved ones being buried or cremated. They were saved from having all the hassles in between since I would prepare all the materials, guide them through the whole process, made it as easy as I could for them. It ultimately turned out to be a great comfort for them and this is also why I named my company 'Peace of Mind'.



## HOW DO YOU ENSURE THAT YOUR FUNERAL SERVICES CATER TO THE CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY OF HONG KONG?

This is extremely important for a funeral director to fully understand all types of religions and cultural backgrounds as they have different practices and rituals in the ceremonies. As a professional funeral director, we must be sensitive to and knowledgeable about the diverse cultural and religious practices in Hong Kong. Our team members have to go through training sessions and classes to learn about the theory of their origins and cultural awareness.

Before starting the funeral process, I would take a consultative approach when working with families to understand their specific cultural and religious requirements and to create personalized plan. The plan is flexible and customizable with options that align with the diverse cultural and religious preferences. My team is highly adjustable with providing different religious texts, symbols and ceremonial tools that accommodate specific cultural and religious funeral rituals, such as prayer spaces, ceremonial offerings, and traditional music and attire.

My team also offers multilingual support to accommodate families and individuals who may have language barriers, ensuring that they fully understand and participate in the funeral processes. We would invite religious leaders and representatives of various faiths if needed in order to explain specific religious funeral rites and customs.

# WHAT SPECIFIC SERVICES DOES YOUR STARTUP OFFER TO CUSTOMERS IN THE FUNERAL INDUSTRY?



---

My startup provide a legitimate one-stop service, a complete and all-round funeral solution to the customers. Customers can truly arrange their funerals for their loved ones and themselves according to their likes and preferences. We also offer 'Pre-death Contract' that allows people to preplan their funeral arrangements while they are alive and in good health.

Since we wholesale headstone, ashes urns and our own team of funeral photographers, we can truly provide professional services and highest quality of products to our clients. We also specialize in organizing celebration of life, aftercare, memorabilia design and online funerals that cater for families who have relatives all over the world.

# How does your startup differentiate itself from traditional funeral services in Hong Kong?

Not only do we provide traditional funeral services but we also offer highly personalized and customizable funeral services that cater to the unique preferences and traditions of each family. We diversify our services with importing products from overseas, customizable memorial websites, digital platforms for sharing memories and condolences and organize unique memorial events to offer a fresh perspective on traditional funeral practices.

We are the only company in the funeral industry that works with multiple universities and institutions that offer death education and provide internship opportunities. We also get the community involved that we engage with the local community through partnerships with charities, environmental organizations cultural groups to give back and create a positive impact. In our company, we prioritize eco-friendly practices and sustainable options in all aspects of the funeral service, appealing to environmentally conscious consumers.



I think professionalize funeral industry is extremely important for deceased families to find peace of mind during tough times. I am grateful that I am the first and only funeral director certified by the World Funeral Organization and thus I totally embrace the funeral director culture and all of my team members have to do professional training before and during their careers.

I also emphasize on customer education, we provide clear and transparent pricing structures to build trust with customers and ensure they understand the costs associated with the services that we offered. It enhances the brand image and I believe we can stand out from traditional providers and appeal to a new generation of customers.

# What challenges have you encountered in establishing your startup in the funeral industry?

Throughout my 15-year career there have been many challenges especially when it comes to the older generation accepting the rather modern approach. Having graduated from Australia, I wanted to dig deeper into the culture yet make it in conjunction with the modern social atmosphere and I also saw the need to improve the professional standards in this industry. I tried to raise the awareness of it and looked for ways to improve the standards, yet I was described as high-profile-showboat and it took me 10 years to 'convince' them that this is how a standard should be.

I also challenge myself that how do I change the way that people typically think of this industry with an unhealthy image and the scary feeling towards dying. I wanted to

enhance the image of this industry that people would respect people who are in this line of work. This is very difficult to change how people feel about this industry because the industry has already been stereotyped with dishonesty and unclear information. I wasn't very welcome at whatever social events I went and that really fired me up that I was determined to change this situation.

When I first decided to start my own company, nobody thought I would make it and returned to my father's. I am a hardworking man with good adaptation skills that I really concentrated on what I do to make it happen. I am grateful for and humbled by all the doubts and difficulties, they have inspired me and pushed me going.





# **HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN A BALANCE BETWEEN RESPECTING CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND INCORPORATING MODERN APPROACHES IN YOUR FUNERAL SERVICES?**

One of my company's mottos is 'Diversity and Inclusion, Fusing of East and West, Tradition and Modern.' I always emphasize on the importance of respecting the cultural transitions while being able to incorporate the modern ideas.

My team members have to undertake training of different cultural traditions, funeral rites and religious rituals. Since each family has varied traditional practices, they have to understand their customs and beliefs to ensure the services we provide would align with their values and expectations. It also gives the families confidence to believe in what we do and hence the trust is established at the early stage of the handling process.

We also have to be flexible with what we do particularly with the families consisting of multiple generations, different religious beliefs and changing circumstances.

Having said that, the mentality is very important in this regard. My team members share the same values, bought into the system and these mindsets have become unbreakable for our corporate.



“ In what ways does your startup contribute to sustainable and environmentally friendly funeral practices?

I was amongst the first ones to witness the making of paper caskets at the early stage. Supporting the usage of paper caskets and scattering of ashes would benefit the society by reducing air pollution and land use. Last year, we were invited by the Food and Environmental Health Department to work with them on promoting Green Burials for the next 5 years.

We have also worked with different artists to upcycle the remaining materials from the funerals such as flowers and cloths. We encourage the families to use digital platforms for memorials instead of printed materials. Moreover, we had signed the Social Caring Pledge of Social Enterprise of Research Academy last year to ensure that we are not only a business, but we also care about the environment and are aiming to contribute to the society by applying ESG.

# HOW DO YOU ENSURE THAT YOUR FUNERAL SERVICES ARE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE TO A WIDE RANGE OF CUSTOMERS IN HONG KONG?

Since the funeral industry always had a bad name of improperly charged and overpriced, we offer numerous options to cater for the customers of different needs and backgrounds. There are a few things that we do to ensure our services are inclusive, meaningful and culturally sensitive while being affordable and accessible.

First, we offer different packages that cater to customers with varying budgets and requirements. Second, we provide clear information about our pricing structure and itemised lists of services included in each package. Third, we highlight cost-saving measures that we use, such as group buying or long-term planning. Lastly, only trained team members would be assigned to handle special cases and different ethical groups.

# WHAT TECHNOLOGY OR INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS HAVE YOU IMPLEMENTED IN YOUR FUNERAL BUSINESS TO ENHANCE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE?

In this technology-driven world, I started out with creating a Facebook page and Instagram handle at the very early stage. I founded Hong Kong Funeral Photography few years ago to provide live streaming services for funerals and memorial services, allowing remote attendees to participate in real-time. I have hired a team to design multimedia tributes that celebrate the life of the deceased, creating online memorial platforms such as digital guestbooks where they can share memories, photos and messages in honor of their loved ones, it can be accessed anytime and preserved online.

To enhance the personalized experiences and demonstrate empathy and support during challenging times, I offer virtual grief support services, counseling and a team to support families through the mourning process. I am also developing online tools that allow customers to plan and arrange funeral services and make arrangements from the comfort of their homes.

# **How do you handle sensitive and emotional situations while providing funeral services to grieving families?**

It wasn't a common practice for funeral service providers to offer counseling services while providing funeral services. I saw the need after I was told by a deceased family that, 'you walked with us on my mom's last journey, it has comforted our hearts.' It really inspired me to go further.

Handling sensitive and emotional situations while providing funeral services to grieving families is not easy, it requires empathy, compassion, patience, understanding while maintaining a professional demeanor. The way my funeral directors talk is essential to the grieving family too. My team is required to talk gently and politely throughout the whole coordinating process with caring manner and being sensitive without judgment.

To provide better services, I have sent our team to receive professional contingencies and counseling training. Two of our team members have become certified grief counseling professionals and customers can greatly benefit from it.

# **How do you build & maintain relationships with partners and suppliers in the funeral industry?**

Fostering strong trust, building mutually beneficial partnerships and maintaining long-term collaboration are 3 key terms to me when it comes to business partnerships.

Communication comes first with building trust. We all run our business and cannot afford low quality time consumption and therefore an open and effective communication to address issues and work on mutual goals can go a long way. Apart from having regular meetings to discuss ongoing projects

and explore new opportunities, I always invite my partners to annual dinner and special events. This is very important that my partners and I are on the same page, align with each other to achieve the same goal. I always honor my contracts and highly commit to the projects.

# CAN YOU SHARE ANY SUCCESS STORIES OR TESTIMONIALS FROM SATISFIED CUSTOMERS WHO HAVE USED YOUR FUNERAL SERVICES?

During Covid, it was extremely difficult for lots of families that they cannot get to one place to send off their loved ones. My team and I started live streaming and doing online funerals for families and friends who are overseas to mourn their loss and find peace even though they couldn't be there physically.

"The virtual attendance option offered by Peace of Mind Funeral Services allowed our relatives from overseas to participate in the funeral service, bringing our family closer during a challenging time. The innovative approach to honoring our loved one's memory was deeply appreciated."

"The compassionate and flexible funeral arrangements provided by Peace of Mind Funeral Services truly exceeded our expectations. Our family deeply appreciated the attention to detail and the respectful accommodation of our religious and cultural traditions. My mom is very satisfied and now my dad can rest in peace because of them."

"During our difficult time, the support and professionalism of Lok Chung & his team made all the difference. The personalized tribute and the seamless coordination of the funeral service reflected the utmost care and consideration for our family's needs. I highly recommend them to any of you who are in need of professional and caring funeral services."



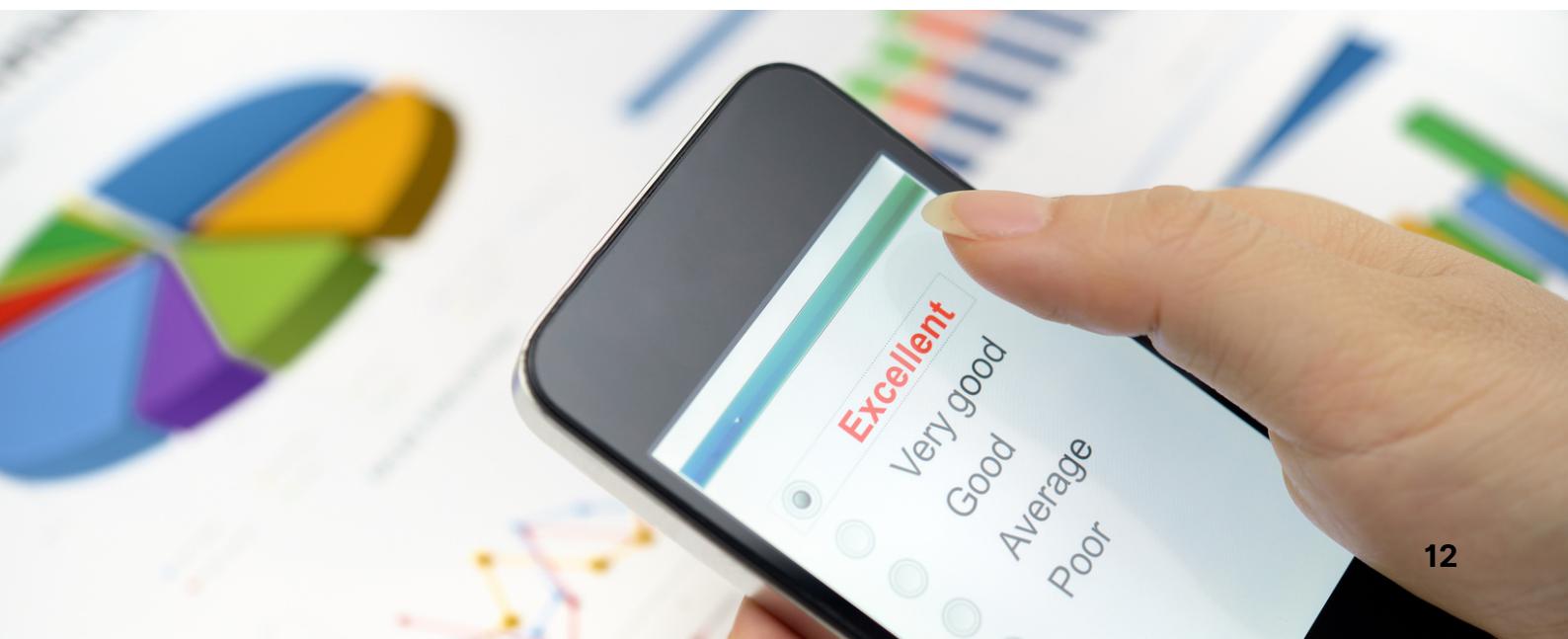
# How do you measure the success of your startup in the funeral industry? What metrics do you use?

## SUCCESS

- Apart from designing questionnaires and surveys, reading customer feedback and reviews, measuring the referral rate at which existing customers refer new customers can directly reflect our success and revenue growth. Tracking the growth of revenue over time allows me to assess financial success and sustainability.

## METRICS

- To better monitor the performance of my business, I also use Customer Lifetime Value to calculate the average value a customer brings to the business over their lifetime. Using CLV also helps examine business strategies' effectiveness, identify areas of improvement and assess potential development.

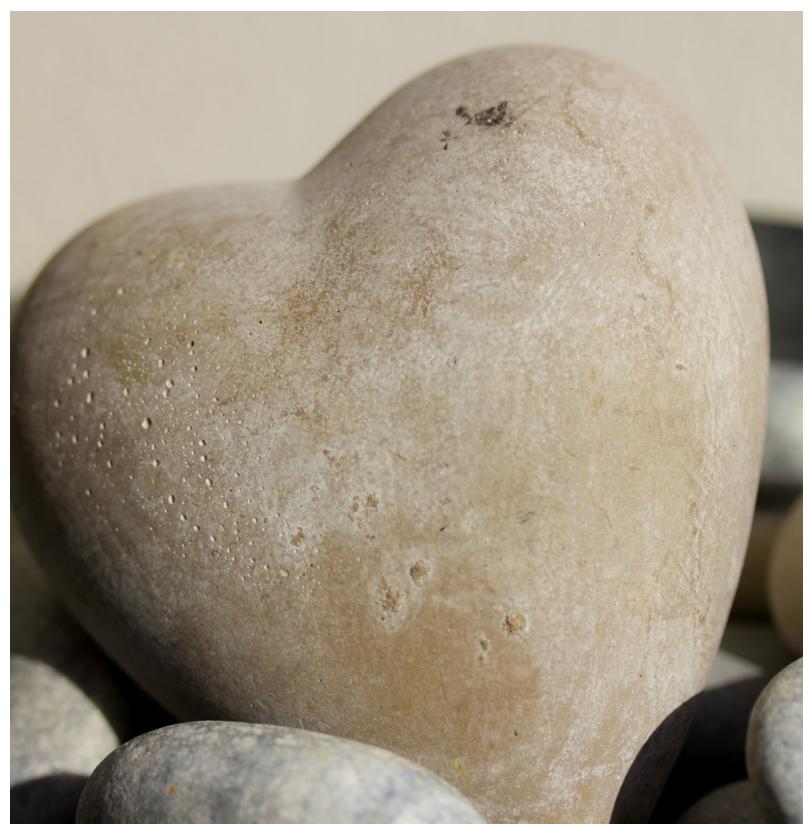


# What are your future plans and goals for your funeral business in Hong Kong? How do you envision its growth and impact in the coming years?

With the ageing population that projects about 2.74 million elderly persons aged 65 and over in 2046, the funeral business will only be growing and we need to equip ourselves to handle more cases.

That said, I aim at strengthening customer support services to provide empathetic and comprehensive assistance to families before, during, and after funeral arrangements. Along with integrating innovative technology to offer virtual solutions, interactive memorial platforms, and digital resources that facilitate personalized and convenient funeral experiences. I am looking into investing in the ongoing training and development of staff members to ensure they are well-equipped to provide culturally sensitive, dignified, and respectful funeral services. Professionalization will become what deceased families seek for when they needed services related to death over other factors in the future.

Apart from it, I am expanding my teams to accommodate the diverse and evolving needs of the population. I have been promoting pre-death contract for a while now and I'm hoping I can do more for the society to better prepare their funeral arrangements and settle their affairs while they are alive. Three of my short term goals are to solidify the foundation of building sustainability, diversifying the service range and improving the public education of death. In the meantime, I expect a 20% of business growth and humbly speaking, we are going to be one of the best in our industry.





# WHAT STRATEGIES DO YOU EMPLOY TO STAY UPDATED WITH THE LATEST TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENT S IN THE FUNERAL BUSINESS?

Externally, I employ PESTEL analysis to help me identify the issues, minimize my risks and decision making.

Internally, I use social media such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, etc. I have joined a few international funeral associations and keep myself updated with what is going on around the world regarding death and funeral.

I would attend industry and related events, such as conferences, seminars or exhibitions to learn about the latest trends and developments in the funeral business. This is a great opportunity to network with other professionals in the industry and gain insights into new products and services. I have also subscribed to some industry publications, trade journals and newsletters. It is a great way to receive regular updates, stay informed about the latest news and trends in the funeral business. Keep educating myself can help me stay sharp and on top of the industry.

# ASIA CEO COMMUNITY

ASIA CEO COMMUNITY IS A PROFESSIONAL NETWORK FOR BUSINESS LEADERS AND EXECUTIVES IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION. THE COMMUNITY PROVIDES A PLATFORM FOR MEMBERS TO CONNECT, NETWORK, AND EXCHANGE IDEAS AND INFORMATION ABOUT BUSINESS IN ASIA.

ASIA CEO COMMUNITY IS NOW ON LINKEDIN! COME & JOIN US



ASIA CEO COMMUNITY IS NOW ON FACEBOOK! COME & JOIN US



Maggie Au Yeung

Edited by