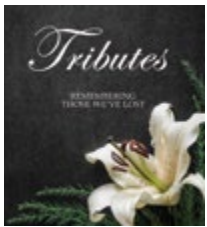


10 Best Practices for Tributes Special Sections



1. Price Tributes listings thoughtfully

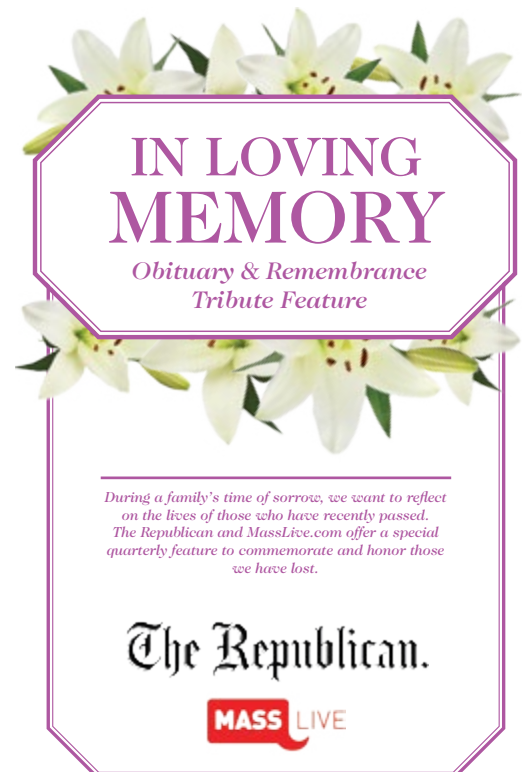
Since Tributes is a forced buy tied to a rate increase, pricing strategy and communication is important to get right the first time. The average price is typically \$30 with some markets as low as \$25 and some as high as \$80. A rule of thumb is that if you have recently had a rate increase, you may want to plan Tributes for 9 to 12 months out. Conversely, markets that have not had a recent rate increase can start right away.

2. Communicate early and often with funeral homes

Since funeral homes are your partners in obituaries, a lot of early communication with the funeral directors paves the way for a successful launch. Send a letter that outlines the new program and tells how it adds value. **See example here.** You can also add a visual of the section and send flip-books or bring in examples of a Tributes special section from another newspaper. NOTE: Be sure to set the proper expectation. If you send a broadsheet example, but you are planning a TAB, mention that. Same thing with color and black and white—highlight any major differences with examples sent. It's also a good idea to personally call or visit the funeral directors in your area to let them know the following benefits:

- Additional acknowledgement honoring those the community has lost
- Additional exposure in the directory and with the names of the deceased they have served
- Extended shelf-life with ever-green content
- High pass-along value with family and friends
- Overruns delivered to their office, which creates opportunities for additional communication with families who are their customers

Remember, you only need to do this once, but you only have one shot at a successful launch!



3. Choose the right frequency

In general, a higher frequency is better because families are more connected to the publication the closer it is to a death. “That way they don’t have to wait so long” one publisher noted.

On the other hand, the section should have enough heft to feel important. Set a minimum number of pages first—a good standard to go by is a minimum of six broadsheet pages or 12 pages if you are publishing tabloid-size sections. As long as that minimum is met, a publisher can run biannually, quarterly or monthly. Even very small markets are running two or three times a year.



4. Collect the required data in the original obituary

The data fields you collect for the initial obituary affect which information flows into the individual listings in the Tributes sections. The most common fields are first name, last name, age, city, state, life span, and funeral home name. Non-AdPortal users need to ensure that these fields of data are present in their front-end order-taking system.

5. Include relevant content that deepens significance

While the program is turnkey, adding a few relevant items of content is easy to do and deepens significance for families and for funeral homes. Remember, you are starting a new tradition of honoring those who the community has recently lost that month, quarter or year.

First, an introduction from the publisher should explain the importance of the section to the community. Second, include a few “editorial” obituaries that coincide with the dates covered by the Tributes section. Third, you can add a funeral home directory in the back of the section. **See example here.**

There are other content and native advertising opportunities, such as articles about grieving, hospice, and other appropriate topics. **See additional tips on adding content and layout design here.**

6. Plan advertising options that create urgency

Some newspapers are making significant additional revenue from adding advertising positions into their templates—and are selling of them!

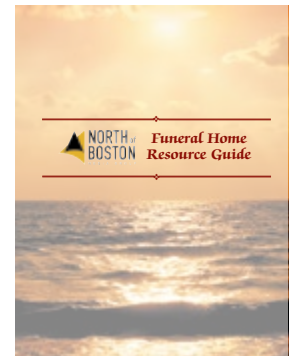
For these sections, dispense with the per inch rate and use modular sizes that look clean and can easily be placed in the template. Choose a limited number to add urgency and let them sell out. You can always add more in the next issue.

Traditional advertising categories are funeral homes and florists, but some newspapers have created native ads for programs where estate planners, hospice programs and grief counselors can weigh in on issues.

7. Promote your Tributes special section in brochures and online

Remember to add Tributes to all materials that promote the original obituary, such as your obituary section of the website.

One best practice is to put an image of the printed Tributes section in a brochure that recaps death notice deadlines and options, and make it available for funeral homes to hand out to families. Also, be sure to add Tributes special section to your e-paper workflow—you will get lots of social sharing!



8. Educate your inbound sales teams

In addition to funeral homes placing orders, a small percentage of families still call in their obituaries, so make sure your inbound callers inform them all of the benefits of Tributes—especially if they are paying for a longer notice. The special section is an important extra.

9. Proofread. Proofread. Proofread.

Avoid getting the uncomfortable phone call from a loved one about a misspelled name on an obituary. Whomever proofs the original obituary should take care that the last name is in the last name field from the start, so that when the obituaries are flowed alphabetically by last name into Tributes, everything is already in the right place.

10. Print enough overruns

Families are asking for multiple copies of these special sections, so make sure you have them on hand in the office. One best practice is to leave overruns at funeral homes. They can use the copies to show to incoming families. They can also reach out to loved ones of the deceased featured in Tributes, adding another opportunity for funeral home staff to communicate with their customers. About 2,000 per section is a good number to have on hand.

BONUS: Share your success!

Please send a hard copy and/or digital links to iPublish Media. We'd love to feature your work in our best practices to help newspapers across the country maximize this community program.

