

**City of London Cemetery
Facilities Consultation and Research**

Proposal

Prepared for

Gary Burks MICCM(dip)
Superintendent & Registrar
City of London Cemetery & Crematorium
Aldersbrook Road
Manor Park, London
E12 5DQ

Prepared by:

Michael Mackman
BA (Hons.), MMRS, FCIM, Chartered Marketer

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Marketing Assistance Ltd, 5 Inworth Grange, Grange Road, Tiptree, Essex CO5 0QQ.

Phone: 01621 818555. Fax: 0870 134 1574. E-Mail: info@marketing-assistance.co.uk. Web: www.marketing-assistance.co.uk

Directors: M L Mackman K J Norman. Registered office: 8 The Colliers Heybridge Basin Essex CM9 4SE

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Introduction and Company Profile

Marketing Assistance Ltd was formed in 1993 by the merger of three specialist consultancies with complementary skills and experience.

The company offers the full range of marketing services to clients in both the public and private sectors. Our strap line – ‘we research, we plan, we implement’ – summarises our overall approach to the support we offer to clients: undertaking research programmes, analysing the data, interpreting the findings, helping clients develop strategies based on the findings of research.

We have considerable experience of conducting surveys, including public consultation, staff and satisfaction surveys for a wide range of organisations in both the public and private sector, working with clients to identify and measure those issues and subsequent actions which will help their organisations to develop and prosper.

We have completed a large number of projects across the UK and internationally. This includes a wide range of surveys for Local Authorities, schools and ‘not for profit’ organisations. We are always happy to provide references from existing and recent clients should these be required.

We adhere to the Market Research Society Code of Conduct and the Chartered Institute of Marketing’s Code of Practice as appropriate.

We have a well developed philosophy of working *with* rather than *for* clients.

All our projects are personally managed by a director. This includes all client meetings and day-to-day communication. This responsibility is never delegated.

Background

The City of London Cemetery & Crematorium is in East London at Manor Park, opposite Wanstead Flats. It was established in 1856 and covers some 200 acres and has Grade 1 listed status for its landscape.

Like all local authorities, the City of London is required to make savings and find new ways to produce income. The Cemetery service, like many other local authority services, is more and more reliant on its ability to produce income and this consultation exercise is an opportunity to identify opportunities for increasing revenue in a way which is acceptable to all users and potential users of the Cemetery and its facilities.

Following discussions with the Director of Open Spaces and the Superintendent and Registrar of the Cemetery on 14 March, and a visit to the Cemetery on 21 March, it is proposed that the consultation includes:

- establishment of a Friends organisation;
- development of the Guided Tours;
- development of the Newsletter;
- charging for vehicle access permits;
- enhancement of current facilities;
- establishing new facilities.

A detailed briefing document has been prepared by the Superintendent and Registrar, giving background details on the introduction of the vehicle access permits and this and other issues were discussed at a meeting on March 14th 2012 at the Guildhall.

Marketing Assistance Ltd has been invited to submit proposals for carrying out this programme of consultation. This document contains our considered proposals and recommendations and is divided in to five sections:

1. Objectives
2. Methodology
3. Deliverables
4. Costs and timings
5. Staffing

1. Objectives

Objective

Based on the briefing document and discussions, the objectives of this programme are seen as:

1. to examine the ability of current facilities and resources to produce more income;
2. to identify other facilities and resources which could be introduced;
3. to identify the most appropriate option for increasing income/decreasing expenditure

In addition, any findings and recommendations must protect the Cemetery & Crematorium
as a service to the public
as a Grade I listed landscape
as a business.

4. Methodology

We recommend a three stage programme for this project:

First qualitative stage -

Depth interviews with main stakeholders to explore key issues;

Second qualitative Stage -

Focus groups with existing visitors;

A quantitative stage -

Face to face interviews with visitors;

These are discussed in detail below.

We have included a recommended number of interviews for each stage based on our experience and perception of the robustness of data required. We are keenly aware of pressures on clients budgets and therefore, within the costings, we have included a range of options to allow City of London to select a programme which delivers a lower, but acceptable, statistical reliability and of course to fit available budget.

First qualitative stage

We propose carrying out a programme of in depth interviews with funeral directors and other agreed stakeholders.

We recommend carrying out 10 interviews. The purpose of these interviews will be to present, discuss and explore the key issues facing the Cemetery now and in the future.

The target list of respondents and a topic guide for the interviews will be developed in conjunction with City of London executives and this will cover the topics listed in the Introduction and address the objectives of the programme. We will require a list of potential respondents which is about three times the number of interviews required and assume that this will be readily available from City of London.

Whilst the topic guide will help to elicit responses to those issues highlighted by City of London the style of the interviews will also allow respondents to raise and discuss other relevant topics. In this way a picture will be developed of the current perceptions and attitudes held by those with a major interest in the future of the Cemetery.

The interviews would be conducted by phone, with appointments being booked with respondents to ensure that the timing is convenient for them. We would expect the interviews to last for about 30 minutes and this will be made clear at the time of recruitment. However, from experience interviews can often last much longer. Longer interviews are only conducted with the agreement of the respondents at the time, with the interviewer reminding the respondents of the elapsed time. This ensures that respondent only receive a positive experience from the interview.

Our experience of this style of research is that respondents' perceptions of clients are enhanced by their involvement and consultation. We also consistently find that, as long as the topic of the interview is relevant to respondents that they give freely of their time - and opinions.

Although respondents will be drawn from an agreed list the identity of respondents will not be revealed. This is in accordance with the market Research Society Code of Conduct, which guarantees respondents anonymity. This is explained to respondents and ensures that they feel free to express any and all relevant views and opinions.

A lower number of interviews could be conducted, but the pattern of responses and perceptions may not be as reliable.

The interviews will be carried out by Michael Mackman, Director. This will aid the development and design of the later stages of this programme.

A brief summary of the interviews will be prepared and we would expect to have a debriefing meeting with City of London Executives to discuss the findings.

Second qualitative Stage

We propose running focus groups, recruited from amongst current visitors to the cemetery. We would recruit respondents from amongst those who currently hold vehicle access permits as we see this as an easily identifiable database of users who have demonstrated a level of interest in the cemetery.

We recommend running two focus groups to ensure that a balanced view of the various issues is achieved. Whilst a single focus group can be informative a second has the benefit of being able to confirm or amend the findings in the first group and avoids the danger of minority views becoming dominant.

We propose screening potential respondents for their level of visits (weekly, monthly, etc.) and length of time they have been visiting with the aim of achieving a range of visitor frequency as well as duration.

Respondents would be recruited for a focus group lasting one hour. However, from experience a longer time is often acceptable to respondents because of their interest in the topic and up to 90 minutes should be planned for when arranging the facilities for the focus groups.

Each focus group would be of 10 respondents and we normally recruit 12 respondents expecting 10 to arrive. We recommend offering an incentive of £20 in the form of a shopping voucher. Whilst current incentive levels for focus groups can be in the £40 to £50 range, we believe that the nature of this research and the close connection of visitors to the cemetery would mean that the value of the incentive becomes a minor point and is seen as a positive gesture to cover petrol or other travel costs rather than as a reward for taking part. We have successfully run focus groups with this level of incentive in similar situations.

As with the depth interviews we would develop a topic guide in conjunction with City of London executives and this will cover the topics listed in the Introduction and address the objectives of the programme. It will also be influenced by the findings from the First Stage depth interviews.

Having visited the offices at the Cemetery we believe that suitable space could be created in which to hold the focus group. This will avoid extra costs of hiring another venue, for example at a local hotel. Light refreshments will need to be offered (tea, coffee, biscuits) and again we believe that this can be accommodated within the offices. If this cannot be achieved then appropriate extra costs will have to be budgeted for.

We propose running the focus groups in the early evening to avoid disruption to the operation of the office and we know that this is the most acceptable time of day for the majority of respondents.

Following the focus group a summary report on both qualitative stages will be prepared and we would expect to have a debriefing meeting with City of London Executives to discuss the findings. An essential element of this meeting is to discuss the findings to date. If there is a strong view already evident that a particular strategy should be adopted then the programme could be stopped at this point. However, if no clear outcome is evident then we would proceed with mapping out the questionnaire for the visitor interviews in the next stage of the process.

Quantitative stage

We propose carrying out face to face interviews with visitors at the cemetery.

We recommend carrying out 400 interviews in order to achieve a robust data set which will give a statistical reliability or confidence interval of $\pm 5\%$. Interviewing will be spread over 9 days to ensure that responses from both weekend and weekday visitors are obtained. Respondents will be sought from both vehicle access permit holders and those without permits. We will liaise with Cemetery staff to ensure that only visitors, rather than funeral attendees, are approached and agree an appropriate means of identifying and approaching potential respondents.

The questionnaire will be developed from the qualitative stages of this programme and agreed with City of London executives. We would expect the questionnaire to take no more than 10 minutes to complete

A lower number of interviews could be conducted. A sample of 100 interviews will give a confidence interval of $\pm 10\%$ which may be considered sufficiently robust. However, on key questions where a response to a proposed action is split in the proportion 58 : 42 there is no guarantee about which way the population as a whole would respond.

An approach may be to conduct two stages of interviewing, with a review of the data after 100 interviews to check on the quality of response, and to continue interviewing if the findings are not conclusive.

5. Deliverables

A brief summary report will be prepared at the conclusion of the depth interviews and a further summary report covering the whole of the qualitative stage will subsequently be prepared and presented. At the conclusion of the two qualitative stages we will present the reports at a debriefing meeting.

At the conclusion of the project a detailed descriptive report incorporating the previous summary reports will be prepared. This will include recommendations and an executive summary. A set of data tables analysing the results of the quantitative stage will also be produced.

All reports will be available in both printed and electronic format.

6. Costs and Timing

Costs

The range of costs for this programme is between £4,900 and £9,800

The costs for the recommended programme consisting of:

10 depth interviews

2 focus groups

400 visitor interviews

Including all recruitment, de-briefing, data analysis and reports will be **£ 9,800**

Alternative costs would be:

For the 'minimum' option consisting of:

5 depth interviews

1 focus group

100 visitor interviews

Including all recruitment, de-briefing, data analysis and reports will be **£ 4,900**

Other combinations of interviews are available and we will be pleased to provide a quote against a detailed specification.

The above costs include incentives and all travel, subsistence and communication costs but excludes VAT which will be charged at the current appropriate rate.

Terms: the standard terms of our industry are that on commissioning 50% of the agreed fee becomes immediately due. The balance will be invoice net 30 days on delivery of the final report.

Timing

From commissioning we would expect this programme to require about 13 weeks to complete. A detailed timetable will be agreed on commissioning.

7. Staffing

The project will be managed by Michael Mackman, Director. Michael will carry out the depth interviews and moderate the focus groups. This will give him a detailed insight into the programme which will be of benefit in producing the final report.

Michael Mackman BA (Hons), MMRS, FCIM, Chartered Marketer

Michael has a wide range of experience working in both national and international markets with such companies as the Myson Group, Foxboro, Budget Rent-a-Car and STC. He has also worked for two London based international market research consultancies at director level. Michael's clients include both public and private sector organisations. He specialises in market research and believes in taking a 'hands on' approach to projects, including analysis of data which then informs the preparation of the report and the development of recommendations.

Michael is a full member of the Market Research Society. He is also a past chairman of the Essex Branch of the Chartered Institute of Marketing and was elected a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing in recognition of his work on customer satisfaction and mystery shopping research.

He will be assisted by:

Tracey Ackland, Project Manager. Tracey manages the fieldwork elements of our projects, overseeing the recruitment for depth interviews and focus groups and managing the visitor interviewers.

Tracey has over 25 years of organising and managing projects. She has worked for Marketing Assistance for over eight years where she has managed a wide variety of marketing activities on behalf of clients.

She has responsibility for the management of the company's field force, liaising with our 12 Field Supervisors to oversee the activity of up to 1,000 interviewers nationally.