

## Death, Digitally

by Cole Imperi

If half of all Americans said they used a social networking site (they did, according to the Pew Research Center) and there were 2,465,936 deaths in America in 2010 (according to the CDC)—how many active social networking accounts were left behind?

Most, actually.

You see, it's much harder to die in a digital way these days. The deceased tend to live on, online, especially if no one left behind has passwords or answers to security questions. Another issue is that many social networking sites don't yet have deceased policies.

That said, new companies are popping up that cater to this 'digital death' niche and you might be surprised at some of the options that are out there. Take Dead Social, for example.

Dead Social is a newish start up that has gotten lots of attention by the likes of Forbes, the Huffington Post and the Wall Street Journal, to name a few. The essence of this service is that you create a free account and schedule

status updates to be sent after you die. You can choose who these messages get sent to (a Happy Birthday to your widow on her birthday via Facebook, perhaps?) and when. Just give your password to a friend or family member and after you pass on, they will log in and your updates will start to go out. Curious? Visit [deadsoci.al](http://deadsoci.al)

Have you ever thought about Facebook? With more than 500,000,000 users worldwide there are deaths every single day. Many of the accounts just linger on with that person's last status update becoming much like their last words. Facebook has a fairly straightforward process for handling deceased users' accounts. A friend or family member will simply visit this page: <http://goo.gl/l8QOb>, fill out the brief form and the account will be 'memorialized' shortly.

Twitter, another megalithic social network, has a protocol for dealing with deceased users too. You can take a look here <http://goo.gl/3msHk>.

So what's the moral of this story? It's a lot like another, less digital, story we hear with families we serve. People often make arrangements for their funeral expenses and have a will drawn up in advance of their death so as to make the process as easy for those left behind as possible. The same thing needs to happen with our digital lives, too. Do you want your Facebook profile to remain active after you die? Do you want your Twitter account deleted? Do you want someone to notify other members of a forum you visit that you have passed on? Who do you want to clean up your online presence after you go?

As the years go on, social network involvement will only become more and more common. If you work directly with families, you may want to look at the information in this article and turn it into an added benefit for the families you serve. Tell them how they can turn Grandpa's Facebook page into a memorialization account. You might be surprised at how grateful those families will be to be able to take care of those details.... without a password. 🙌

