



Speak from Beyond the Grave?

It is said that a Will only “speaks at death.” In this digital age, there is a way that you can literally “speak at death,” if that is your wish.

In the past, I’ve written about digital assets and their protection on more than one occasion. I’ve suggested putting powers in your traditional estate planning documents which grant your fiduciaries appropriate powers to deal with your digital assets. These comments are a little different.

“If I Die” is the (amusingly optimistic) title of an application for Facebook. It lets you leave a message at your death. You can leave a video or text message. So, you could literally “speak” from the grave (<http://ifidie.net>). In the application, you pick several trusted “friends” on Facebook to be your “trustees.” If three trustees confirm that your death has occurred, your message is posted.

The service is similar to <http://legacylocker.com/>, <http://AssetLock.net>, and <http://DeathSwitch.com>, only in the Facebook-specific content. Each service works slightly differently, but they are very similar. Each has a free basic service and has more individuals who report and verify your death. DeathSwitch relies on verification by you. It checks back with you periodically to see if you are dead. The service sends you an email. If no return email is received within a period of time set by you or after a number of attempts (set by you), you are presumed dead. With all of the services, upon the assumption of death, your set of instructions is carried out. It might be to deliver your video to your beneficiaries. It might be to deliver passwords to your fiduciaries. Or it might be to remind your friends that they need to feed your pets. You could have one service provide a number to a fiduciary. Another service could specify that the number they are receiving is that of a numbered Swiss bank account. Yet another service could identify that bank and provide contact information. The only limitation is your imagination.

While this sort of service does not replace traditional estate planning documents like Wills, Trusts, and Powers of Attorney, they could relay important information to loved ones expeditiously.