



NORTH FLORIDA
WEALTH ADVISORS

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How to Manage the Digital Estate after Death

In our exploding digital world, it's essential to help family members plan for both their real-life and digital estates.

There are number of issues to address: Who's in charge when it comes to digital property? Who wants to approach the grieving about taking down the deceased's account? Do family members have the right to access their loved one's account after death? Would the individual who has passed want family members to access their content, or to have the account removed as soon as possible? Is it possible to commemorate the person by memorializing the accounts?

These issues can go well beyond the topic of just social media. It is important to consider all assets of the digital estate of the deceased such as email accounts, websites for online bill paying, retail accounts such as PayPal and photo sharing. These sites contain sensitive information both of a personal nature and financial data that could pose privacy concerns if left unattended.

Questions to Ask:

What social media platforms are used?

What are the passwords and security questions in use?

What would you like to happen to these accounts after death?

Next important step:

Document the Stated Goal. Consider sharing them with an attorney or "Digital Executor".

Use Technology. Look into the various client portals available to house important documents containing personal information and financial data.

Provide Legal Documentation. When individuals pass suddenly or if they haven't outlined their wishes for terminating a social media account, each of the major social media channels will typically request legal documentation in order to begin the closure process.

Deleting Digital Assets:

This is an evolving area where the policies pertaining to deleting digital assets for the deceased members are still forming. There are heartbreaking stories of people putting all their photos on Facebook, provide no one their password, and upon their passing all images were lost.

The following is a quick rundown of what is required from some of the most popular networking sites when accessing or discontinuing a social media account.

Facebook:

There are two options with Facebook in dealing with a deceased members account. **Memorializing a profile:** allows the account to be viewed but not edited (with the exception of a legacy contact allowed to make one final post). **Terminating an account:** allows an individual be to deactivate a profile by completing a Special Request for Deceased Person's Account (necessary to provide your relationship with the deceased as well as a death certificate, birth certificate or proof of authority for the family member handling the deactivation).

Linked In:

LinkedIn has two options to handle a deceased person's account. If you have the password for the individual you may follow LinkedIn's instructions to close the account. If you do not, there is a process to terminate the account, and that requires you to provide certain information about the deceased person. Any immediate family member, extended family member or non-family can accomplish either of these processes.

Twitter:

Twitter will work with the estate to remove an account. Any verified immediate family member of the deceased or a person authorized to act on behalf of the estate will need to fax copies of the death certificate and a government issued ID (Driver license, etc.) along with a signed, notarized statement and either a link to an online obituary or a copy of the obituary from a local paper.

YouTube:

YouTube is affiliated with Google so you must reference the policies on Google's site. Immediate family members and representatives can begin the process of closing the account of the deceased and requesting funds from the account.

Keep in mind, Social Media Accounts often change their policies, and it is important to revisit procedures even after you have had a conversation about terminating an account.

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