

The Final Word.
R. Douglas Rowell



They say, the tongues of dying men,
Enforce attention, like deep harmony:
Where words are scarce, they are seldom spent in vain.

- **John of Gaunt**, Scene I , Richard II

1. What world problem are you concerned about?

As a parent, one of my greatest fears is I will leave this world without warning. It could be a fast moving disease, an errant vehicle, or any number of rapid demises. What would I want my family to know? If I were a journalist working something that made the wrong people angry, how would I be able to confront the world, post mortem? If I were a visionary device marketeer with a cult-like following, would I have one more thing?

2. Why is this problem important?

I propose a system where someone can store information to be released after their death, to ensure vital information lives on. It could be evidence on a criminal organization to keep yourself alive, a final thank you to your friends, or just the password to your e-mail accounts. Everyone dies, but that doesn't always have to be the final word.

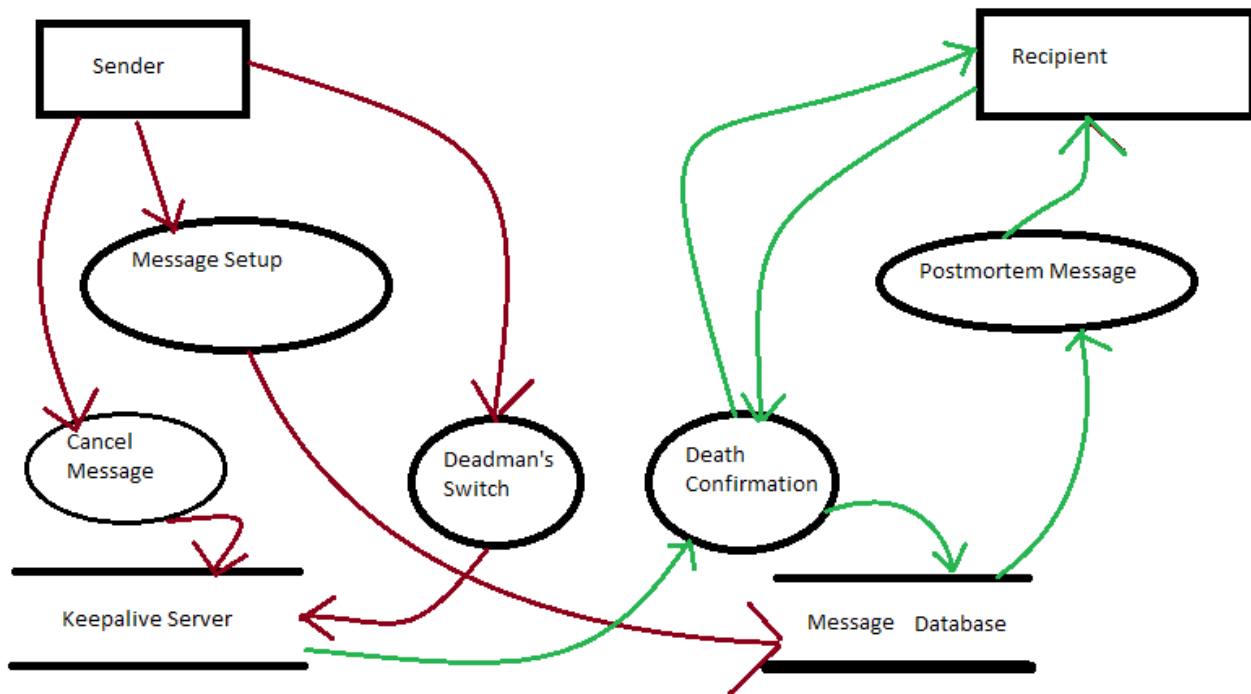
3. What aspect of this problem seems particularly important to you?

I want to leave behind thank yous to my friends, sage words to my son, and admonitions to those who've irked me, once I am gone. Rather than place all of my burden on one sole person, an impartial third-party such as the one created here, could carry forth a final message.

4. How could a new software system help to solve this aspect of the problem?

There are key aspects to this system: How would your death (or disappearance) be recognized by a system that doesn't know you, never met you, and doesn't read obituaries. Some kind of link to a phone number, be it cellphone, obscure Google voice account, or other, would provide a sufficient basis as a "deadman switch."

Who would this information go to? Who would confirm your absence? There is a high likelihood the same people could meet their fate at the same moment. A series of tiered contacts could address that.



5. Why do you think that this idea will make a big impact on the world?

This system could be used to take care of simple details that can persist past your death, like passwords for accounts, locations of safety deposit boxes, or copies of your will. It could also be used as an insurance policy to keep yourself alive, or at the very least to let the world know why you died. It could be damning video evidence of a brutal regime, the identity of criminals, or the threats of an abusive spouse.

6. What sources did you use in writing this Vision Statement?

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