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Living will software sales surge

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Sales of computer software to create living wills are surging amid the high-profile debate over Terri Schiavo, the severely brain-damaged Florida woman who died Thursday.

"We've never seen sales like this," said Clark Miller, a spokesman for Nolo.com Inc., the creator of Quicken WillMaker Plus 2005. "The living will has simply become a part of American consciousness in a way it hadn't been before."

WillMaker Plus sales rose 63 percent in the five days after March 18, when Schiavo's feeding tube was removed, compared to the prior five days. At Kansas City-based H&R Block Inc., spokesman Tom Linafelt said sales of the company's WILLPower program jumped 95 percent last week. Other software makers - including Carson, Calif.-based Cosmi Corp. and Socrates Media LLC - also reported spikes in sales.

Software industry analyst Chris Swenson of research firm NPD Group said he doesn't believe the spike was a result of the Schiavo case, but rather of the release cycle of titles in the legal software category.

Debra Speyer, a Philadelphia attorney who does estate planning, said software is fine, but she's receiving nearly 10 times as many calls from people who feel they need an adviser to more fully explain the document.

Living wills can be obtained cheaply or free from numerous sources and generally don't require an attorney.

Full Story [2].

Software

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