

5 STRATEGIES TO BOOST YOUR RAL MARKETING

While there are plenty of seniors looking for assisted living facilities, the market has grown and there has been an increase in competition. Gone are the days where assisted living facilities were few and far between and there were waiting lists full of potential residents. The growth of this industry has led to more facilities opening every day, which isn't a bad thing. Healthy competition is vital for ensuring that successful RAL homes set and maintain high standards so that our seniors are well taken care of.

It is so important that we establish a marker of excellence in care now so that when the silver tsunami of baby boomers hits this nation full force, we are able to accommodate their needs with high quality assisted living homes.

There are inherent challenges to marketing any business and assisted living is no different. A majority of the people who get involved with assisted living generally do so with a desire to help take care of our elderly population. Many of these individuals do not have a background in marketing, digitally or otherwise. But this doesn't have to be a problem, as there are so many marketing resources online to help steer you in the direction of success.

So what does it take to effectively market your RAL home and stand out from the competition? It all starts with making the most of your online presence. The following five strategies will help you maximize your potential marketing strategies and expand your reach in your community.

I GET YOUR WEBSITE IN SHAPE

Your RAL website is the centerpiece of your online marketing campaign. Everything in your business should point to it and every digital network you are connected to should link back to it. A simple, streamlined website with a good balance of informative text, images, and video is necessary for the age of information. Families are looking for assisted living facilities that have the right amenities, competent staff and a caring environment for their loved ones to thrive. Your website has the potential to sell them on your business over someone else's before they even step foot inside your RAL home.

With the right content, your website can be a virtual guide for prospective residents and their families to explore the services you offer and the benefits they will reap from choosing your RAL home. From a logistics standpoint, your website should be simple, clean and informative. Choosing an assisted living home for a loved one is a significant and often emotional decision, the last thing someone wants to face is navigating a cluttered, broken or unorganized website that leaves them more frustrated than when they started.

If you don't have experience building or maintaining a website, fear not, there are countless individuals or companies who will do it for you, and nowadays it is relatively inexpensive. Many of us know someone who knows someone who could build a simple website for us for very little money, but when it comes to your business and your livelihood, it is worth hiring a professional who can build what you need and guarantee that it will be an asset to your business rather than a headache.

When you're developing from scratch or editing a current website, remember who your target market is...the children of aging parents. Make sure that you cater your site's content toward them and provide them all of the details and information that they need to make an informed decision. Be sure to include a frequently asked questions section that addresses topics like:

1. How much will it cost and what is included in the cost?
2. How do I know when it's the right time to move my parent into assisted living?
3. What is the transition process like and what assistance do you offer with it?
4. What is the environment like and what level of care can my parent expect to receive?

The bottom line is the more professional your website and the easier it is to navigate to relevant information, the better it will perform for you as a tool to enhance your business.

II SOCIAL MEDIA CAN BE YOUR FRIEND

Although it has lost some of its appeals due to politics and other divisive topics, the majority of people still get a significant portion of their news and information about the world through social media. Of course, the best kind of advertising is word of mouth, but social media can be the exact same thing, except in digital form.

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube can all be used to great effect in getting your business out there and building a reputation that will precede you. Although your website should be your primary means of presenting information about your business, these popular social media platforms can help spread your name farther and direct more people toward your site. There are plenty of people looking to buy what you provide, it's just a matter of getting your name in front of them.

It is a good idea to interact regularly with your contacts on these platforms, keeping your brand in front of as many people as possible. When you add a new blog post or video on your website, be sure to broadcast it to all those in your social media networks and if it involves helpful information or tips, ask them to pass it on to someone who might benefit from it.

When your beginning your journey in the digital frontier, don't forget to kick start your campaign. If you already have a running RAL home filled with happy residents, why not encourage the families of your residents to engage with your social media pages and write glowing reviews of the service you provide (obviously, you want to make sure that they are thoroughly satisfied with your business if you reach out to them for this).

Use social media to celebrate events at your RAL home, or to notify if you have planned open tour days for prospective residents. And whatever you chose to do with social media, always make sure it leads back to your main website.

III DEVELOP A BLOG TO HELP PEOPLE FIND YOU

One of the more effective ways to communicate information about your business and convert prospects into clients is through blogging. Create a page on your main website for writing articles about your business and anything that is tangentially related to it. Make your blog posts relevant and focus on topics that would benefit those who will visit your site.

Celebrate special events at your RAL home with a blog post, some pictures and maybe a video. Write blog posts for elements that highlight the community at your home and the activities in which your residents enjoy taking part. And when you are writing be sure to include keywords relevant to your business to help optimize your site's ranking in the most used search engines.

IV CREATE ENGAGING AND INFORMATIVE VIDEOS

This tip goes hand-in-hand with the first two tips, as any engaging videos you create will likely be shared on your website and your social media accounts. But it is worth mentioning on its own because marketing continues to change to meet the demands of an evolving consumer base. As more and more content turns digital and on-demand, the attention span of the general public is continually decreasing, and effective marketing strategies are following suit.

A short, but engaging intro video is a great opportunity to communicate your values and the services your home provides. A virtual tour or sit-down interviews with your residents can also be great video tools to help potential residents and their families get a better sense of what you have to provide. Be sure to highlight any unique elements in your home, enhanced amenities, or additional services that you provide that might set you apart from others in the market. Of course, there is a balance that needs to be struck in terms of selling your brand, while also giving an honest portrayal of what day-to-day living is like in your RAL home. If you decide to record interviews of your current residents, make a list of pertinent questions to ask that will shed light on the more appealing aspects of your home and how your staff care for the residents, and ask them to describe their favorite parts of living in your RAL home.

Again, don't spend time and money creating engaging video content only to forget to post these videos on your social media channels as well. Let the people know what you've got going on.

V USE TARGETED STRATEGIES LIKE AN EMAIL NEWSLETTER

Similar to writing your blog posts, consider developing a periodical newsletter to keep your network of contacts informed of what your assisted living business is doing. When people see you continually engaging your residents in healthy and stimulating activities, it reinforced that you and your staff truly care about your residents and that positivity will attract more potential clients to your business.

As you interact with people in your daily life as well as within the assisted living industry, remember to exchange contact info and build your database of emails. You aren't just looking for emails of people who are looking for assisted living, but anyone who might know someone who knows someone who is looking for assisted living. It's all about casting a wide net. You never know when a person might direct you to your next lead.

Once you have a healthy number of email contacts, send out a monthly newsletter with links to your website, latest blog posts, special event info, or anything else that would be good for your network of contacts to know about. Whether through text, image, or video, create content that would be valuable for your audience and bring them in on the conversation of residential assisted living. Eventually, everyone we know will interact with assisted living at some point, either needing a place for mom or dad or needing a place for ourselves one day. And you never know when that marketing connection you made will bear fruit, so just keep at it.

Do Good and Do Well, my friends.

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