10 Steps That Increase Senior Care Clients & Move-Ins

Here are 10 critical steps you can take to attract more prospects...and motivate them to choose your senior care community, facility, home or services. Some of these steps may sound simple, but do NOT make the mistake of underestimating the value of any of these marketing fundamentals.

Hopefully, you are already putting some of these basics into action. (This list is a reminder to build on those basics you already have in place.) Please remember, the better you execute these fundamentals, the more powerful they are. Also remember, each step is more effective when it’s implemented with commitment and passion.

#1 Establish A Strong Business Culture

You and your staff communicate your work ethic, motivation, commitment to serve through everyday actions and words. Make sure the message getting through to all is one of compassionate operations/systems, attention to detail and professional management. It is critical for an senior care and assisted living business culture to:

- Establish that you care about everyone you deal with. If a visitor, family member, referral source, vendor, or staff member does not think you really care about them, they will most likely assume you do not care for your residents, as well. (Toolbox - see Strategic Care - Marketing Tip #6.)

- Motivate your staff to provide superior, heart-felt care. First step, you should demonstrate that you care for them. And let them see you in action with residents, as well.

- Help people value your culture. Establish "caring" communication practices up and down the staff and management chart, as well as with residents, family members, referral sources and the community around you. E-mail, texting, your website and social networks can make this process much easier than in the past.

A strong business culture helps to build consumer trust - the more trust, the more move-ins.

Marketing Toolbox "search" words: culture, strategic care

#2 Someone Must Be Focused On Filling Your Facility

When providing care for seniors, distractions often downgrade marketing to a lower priority. Yes, operations must be done. Your residents need to be very well cared for.

However, no matter what size facility or business, if you want more clients or move-ins, marketing must also be a very high and continuous priority. Someone must create, implement and then continuously tweak a marketing program. Sub-contract services you do not have the time or expertise to do yourself. Oh, and don’t let up, even when you are full!

Marketing Toolbox "search" words: focus, marketing plan
#3 Use More Familiar Terms

Providers often use terms the inexperienced to senior care are unfamiliar with. This can make others feel uncomfortable...or inferior. Turn that "industry-speak" into communications that seniors, caregivers/adult children and referral sources can understand. Associate your features and services with their benefits. Avoid words like ambulatory and instead, maybe you might ask "does your Mom use a cane or need any assistance when walking?" It also helps to address common needs, feelings and emotions.

- The easiest way to effectively communicate is to tell "real" stories. Reality encourages you to explain with detail instead of rattling off industry terms. Most importantly, stories can turn a "show & tell" presentation into an emotional and memorable conversation.

Marketing Toolbox "search" words: story, value, storybook

#4 Increase The Value Of What You Do With Innovative Services

Provide Innovative Services. These can be specialty services, or even valuable things you do every day...and may take for granted.

- A key is to add value when communicating what you do. Everybody may have grab bars in the bathtub, but very few facilities have a 12-point a "Better Balance" program.

- You can borrow credibility from respected organizations and professionals by associating with them. For example, you can promote National Falls Prevention Awareness Day (FPAD) and ally with the National Council On Aging.

Marketing Toolbox "search" words: innovative, value

#5 Narrow Your Competition

Develop market niches. Small facilities and companies should all have a specific issue that defines the needs or wants of their residents. (Hearing-impaired, dementia, music lovers, etc.) Large organizations can offer "specialties" under their general umbrella, or have one specialty.

- You may already have a niche, but not valued it. (Maybe taken it for granted.) Look to see what residents have in common and what services you already tailor to their specific needs. Build on those, position as a package, and you can quickly develop a niche.

Note: Professionals who serve seniors have told me it is easier to remember facilities and to make referrals when the facility serves a niche.

Marketing Toolbox "search" words: niche, innovative, value
#6 **Increase The Power Of Your Efforts Through "Strategic Care"**

Everything you do should **communicate** that you care. This goes beyond caring for your residents or clients, which is a given. **It includes** caring for anyone you or your staff come in contact with. If a person feels you do not care for them personally, they will assume you do NOT care for the seniors in your care either.

It is important to demonstrate that you care when greeting a guest, advertising in the media, speaking with a resident and/or family member, participating in a community event, picking up supplies, paying a vendor, raising your fees…in everything you do.

People tend to take this concept lightly. Done well, this is quickly builds word-of-mouth marketing. It makes people want to **RAVE** about you, your staff and your services.

**Marketing Toolbox "search" words:** strategic care, rave

#7 **Create Alliances**

To build your referral base, get involved with your local community. Choose organizations and events where you can shine…even better, help others to shine. Focusing on others puts strategic care into action and encourages people to **want** to send you new clients and residents. For your own benefit, focus on something you really enjoy or have a passion for.

- Also, our websites include Support Services and Caregiver Tips pages that offer on-line opportunities to highlight the expertise of allies…and strengthen relationships.

**Marketing Toolbox "search" words:** alliance, calendar

#8 **Build A "Volunteer" Marketing Team**

Enlist your staff, family members, vendors and referral sources. In fact, they are the first people you have to sell to and you should have an **internal** marketing plan in action that informs them, motivates them and builds their loyalty.

- Teach the staff how to present (and value) your innovative services and marketing niche. Consistently give them **new** collateral materials that make it easy for them to brag about their work. (Regularly put new photos/videos in your website Activity Scrapbook so smart phone users on your staff become key members of your marketing team.)
- When you introduce staff members to others, make sure you include their value to residents, family members, your staff and/or yourself.

**Marketing Toolbox "search" words:** staff, team, introduction
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**#9 Keep-In-Touch & Follow-Up Consistently & Effectively**

Communication with your three key lists (inquiries, family/friends, and professionals who serve seniors) is critical...without being a nuisance. Create opportunities to provide evidence of what you do and demonstrate that you care. You can do this through:

- Community involvement.
- Sharing your expertise though mailings, e-mails, social networks and/or phone calls.
- Keeping referral sources informed about residents they previously referred to you.

This is an area where technology can really come into play. For example, it can be very easy to e-mail a referring source a photo of their patient (Resident Joyce) smiling while playing bingo. (Toolbox - see Content Rich Website - Marketing Tip #10.)

**Marketing Toolbox "search" words:** keep-in-touch, content marketing, Caregiver Tips

**#10 Create A Content Rich Website & Make It The Center Of Your Efforts**

This is a big one, and getting bigger by the minute. The selling process in senior care is changing and it is mandatory that you integrate your website into your selling process. You must now be able to say, "if you would like more information, go to www.MyWebsite.com."

- The solution, **turn your website into an "information hub"** that entices prospects, residents, family members, staff, vendors, and referral sources to come back over and over again, and drives visitors on your social network pages back to your website. That means it must be continually updated with new informative and emotional items...that include pictures and videos, Caregiver Tips and testimonial cards.

(See the graphic on the next page to see how integrated marketing flows through a website.)

**Marketing Toolbox "search" words:** content marketing, Caregiver Tips, Scrapbook

Pat yourself on the back for the items on this that list you are already doing well. (It’s good to smell the roses.) For the things that you would like to improve, prioritize them by time, ability and cost. You can’t do everything at once. Your plan of action should begin with small things you can implement quickly to build momentum.

**And be willing to make things happen by starting now!!!**
Your Integrated Marketing Plan

Various elements can make up a marketing plan. Pick 2 to start. With each one, look to match it with at least one partner. For example, a staff member can host/lead an activity (at the senior center) that targets your niche. This should be highlighted on your website - the center of all marketing efforts - with links placed on social media pages.