

CHANCERY MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

This article takes a relatively novel perspective on social media. Social media in marketing could be a double-edged sword. Adaptation and digitization are key success factors for all industries to survive and grow in the pandemic. The article suggests that the quality and transparency of posts are important to increase conversion rates for potential customers and potential employees.

Senior Living Providers Set Strategies for a New Era of Social Media — Part I

It was the middle of the night and Priority Life Care CEO Severine Petras couldn't sleep. With a pandemic still fresh on her mind, she found herself in a deep-dive into her company's social media presence.

She would often notice an out-of-place detail, like a mask not being worn correctly or an awkward photobomb in the background and alert the rest of her team that the photo is "not social-media-ready." This was not an infrequent occurrence, so much so that she jokes she "gave everybody PTSD, slightly."

"I spend a lot of time scrubbing our social media," Petras said at the 2022 Senior Housing News Sales Summit in Arlington, Virginia. "Social media makes me a little nervous, personally."

Petras' apprehension regarding social media is shared by others in the industry. While social media can be a powerful tool if wielded correctly, it can also just as easily lead to a marketing misstep.

Juniper Communities Founder and CEO Lynne Katzmann fears that the advent of social media has negatively impacted the way the general public views senior living communities and made ageism worse, a trend she saw accelerating during the pandemic.

"Individual preferences reinforce the pattern of information one gets, so unless you seek it out, it is hard to get a balanced view. This reinforces one particular view on an issue. In our industry, the fears associated with Covid often lead to a barrage of negative comments on our industry and on older adults," Katzmann told Senior Housing News. "And that is reinforcing historical negative views of aging — hence, ageism."

While some senior living operators would prefer to stay off of the web entirely, the internet is here to stay. Whether or not operators like it, prospective residents and their families are doing their research by first turning to a community's social media presence on platforms like Facebook or Instagram. And prospects aren't the only ones checking out social media. Potential staff members are, too.

Social media not a 'standalone marketing story'

Navigating the current and future social media landscape requires senior living operators to be cautiously aggressive to drive sales and recruitment. For those that can do it, the ROI can be a differentiator. But doing so requires a holistic marketing plan.

"It should never be viewed as a standalone marketing strategy," Harbor Retirement Associates Corporate Director of Marketing and Communications Ginger Atwood told Senior Housing News.

When Atwood joined HRA in 2021, each of the Vero Beach, Florida-based company's communities had their own Facebook pages, managed by the communities themselves. Atwood estimates that about 15% of those communities used Facebook pages consistently.

In an effort to advance engagement and grow online reach, HRA partnered with its digital marketing agency to create an online portal where community representatives can upload images and content and send it to the corporate level.

After better organizing the company's social media strategy, HRA saw online community engagement increase from 15% to 85% within six months and "the quality of the posts dramatically improved," said Atwood. "Equally as important is that social media to website conversions increased 35%."

Harbor Retirement Associates operates a portfolio of 36 communities in 14 states. While they're all luxury communities, "the buyer persona is a little different from place to place," according to Atwood.

"How we speak to a prospect in Jasper, Alabama is different than how we speak to our prospects in Princeton, New Jersey," she said.

And while prospects are hopping from a Facebook page to a website, so are prospective staff members.

Bloomfield, New Jersey-based Juniper Communities found that prospective employees would find the company on Facebook, then jump to other websites like Indeed. But the company had little visibility on them beyond that point.

“As soon as that person bounced off Facebook to Indeed, we lost them. We lost the ability to track if they actually ever applied,” Katzmann told SHN.

So, Juniper changed its strategy. The company began using recruitment ads about a year ago, and has built a landing page with a simple form that employees can fill out. Juniper can also now track exactly how many Facebook users jumped from a Juniper advertisement to an online application, something they couldn’t do if the users went to another site like Indeed.

Senior living operators should break their online social media strategy into two segments: an organic side and a paid advertisement side, according to Chris Mohrman, VP of marketing with WelcomeHome, a senior living CRM software company.

“The paid side is a bit more straightforward... because you get to decide the message and the message is shared with a specific audience,” Mohrman told SHN. “With the organic side, I think there is an opportunity, but it gets a little more challenging.”

Still, the road to internet marketing success is littered in cautionary tales. In 2021, a Priority Life Care nursing director fell victim to an online harassment campaign that included a fake Facebook profile and spoofed messages containing racist and vulgar language.

Through the help of a private investigator and the police, Priority Life Care was able to clear the employee’s name. But by that time, the story had spread to several news publications. To Petras, the valuable lesson was that social media use requires careful thought and planning.

“You have to protect yourself, and you have to do the right thing for your employees and for your residents,” Petras said.

Original Article:

<https://seniorhousingnews.com/2023/01/12/tiktok-on-the-clock-how-senior-living-operators-set-social-media-strategies/>

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