

ENLIGHTENED PERSPECTIVES On Senior Living Solutions

ARE YOU ANTI-SOCIAL MEDIA?

Do you Twitter? Are you LinkedIn? Is your Facebook page current? If you answered “yes” to any of those questions, then you are familiar with social media. If you answered “no,” you are not alone, since the vast majority of senior living and LTC companies are not currently using social media, according to Brian Geyser founder of CareNetworks.

Social media are online tools used to communicate and interact in new, inexpensive and powerful ways. Popular venues include email, blogs, YouTube, Skype (video feed), and your website. You do have one, right? Surprisingly, there are still a fair number of you who don't. There are literally thousands of social media outlets transforming viewers from content consumers to content producers.

Like many industry experts, Community Living Solutions believes social media will fundamentally change the way companies communicate with existing and prospective customers, and market and sell services. As we grapple with exactly what this means, we want to share what we're learning and help you harness the power of these increasingly influential tools to enhance relationships with residents and their adult children, your partners and referral sources.

Utilizing a listserv sponsored by AAHSA, we asked LTC providers nationwide which social media tools they use and what kind of results they get. Clearly, if used properly, social media can save time and money while generating revenue. Kimberly McGinnis, MFS, CASP, Director of Sales and Marketing, Carlyle Place in Macon, GA has a link to both FaceBook and Twitter embedded in her email signature. “We have only been on FaceBook for about six months and have had one sale that was greatly supported by it. A family member saw us and saw that a resident was on our FaceBook so she in turn emailed that resident for a reference and stayed in touch. He ended up inviting them to our community and they eventually signed up. That is totally free advertising!”

Imagine using social media to reach your residents' family members with invitations to special events, satisfaction surveys, legislative updates, your newsletter, a fundraising appeal, or photos of resident activities. “We spend about five minutes a week taking pictures with an iPhone and uploading them to FaceBook. It's a great way for people to see snapshots of life in our community and allows staff and out of town family members to see things they may not have been present for. It was very easy to set up the page,” maintains Stacy Adkins, from Carillon Assisted Living in Hillsborough, NC.

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CLS IN ACTION

Where is social media on your list of priorities?

As an industry thought-leader and sustainable business solutions provider focused on increasing our value to clients, Community Living Solutions recently surveyed providers throughout the region and asked, “What high priority organizational needs have you identified that you don't have time/expertise to address yourself or internal resources to assist you with?” Social media was one of 59 needs identified. The top three may surprise you. If you are interested in seeing what issues your peers are dealing with, email jfrantz@communitylivingsolutions.com for a complimentary copy of the survey results.

For more information, contact Community Living Solutions by phone at 920.969.9344 or by email at dschacht@communitylivingsolutions.com.

Enlightened Perspectives is an e-newsletter published by **Community Living Solutions, LLC**, a premiere provider of sustainable business solutions for senior living providers.

If you have a topic you'd like to suggest for an upcoming issue, or if you have questions about creating sustainable solutions for your community, please email Doug Schacht at dschacht@communitylivingsolutions.com or call Doug at 920.209.7510.

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Many senior living and LTC companies shy away from deploying social media, blogs, and online communities because of concerns surrounding HIPAA violations. As long as organizations take proper measure to ensure that Protected Health Information is kept private and secure, there's really nothing to fear. Policy and procedure guideline templates exist to minimize risk and maximize return. Click [here](#) to view one example: American Health Care Association.

Tips for Success. Another valid concern frequently expressed is time and internal resources necessary to maintain the various tools. Start small. It's important to clearly identify your target audience and determine which tools they are using. Incorporate a social media strategy into your existing marketing plan. Recruit an internal team with representatives from the various disciplines to offer insights on their areas of expertise. Appoint a team leader who is responsible for executing the strategy. This person is typically someone with a marketing or information technology background. Establish measurable goals and devote a specific amount of time each week to working toward them. Recognize that social media is only going to increase so any effort you expend is better than none.

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