THE COMPLETE
DIGITAL
MARKETING
CHECKLIST

FOR
SENIOR LIVING
COMMUNITIES

SENIOR LIVING DIGITAL

Brandon Clay
Chief Marketing Strategist

Your digital guide to getting more prospective residents, visits, and move-ins at your senior living community

The Complete Digital Marketing Checklist for Senior Living Communities
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By Brandon Clay
Chief Marketing Strategist
Senior Living Digital

w: SeniorLivingDigital.com
e: contact@seniorlivingdigital.com

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INTRODUCTION

Senior Living Marketing is Complicated in a Digital Age

Senior living community marketing in the digital age is a combination of industry experience, basic marketing principles, and digital savvy. Your community will fail to gain sufficient move-ins without one or all of these assets.

This checklist aims to give owners, directors, and marketing managers a senior living community a digital marketing strategy. We reveal basic marketing principles and up-to-date digital strategies to help your community interact with more prospective residents and increase community occupancy.

Through Senior Living Digital and previously though Search Traffic Pro, we've helped over 90+ small and medium businesses, including senior living communities, achieve success online. Our combined decades of experience and partnering with over 6 marketing agencies have given us a wealth of experience in digital marketing, especially for senior living communities.

We hope this checklist proves helpful in your community's marketing efforts!

Brandon Clay
Chief Marketing Strategist

1. KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

"If you don't drive your business, you will be driven out of business."
– B.C. Forbes, founder of Forbes Magazine.

Business strategy is not an option in senior living.

Knowing your community, understanding your market, and having a strategy to succeed are critical elements of any successful senior living community. You must understand both your community and your market to take your community to the next level.

It all starts with evaluating your root business model.

✔️ **Define your core offering.**
Ex. Memory care, assisted living, adult day care

✔️ **Establish your unique selling proposition (USP).**
Ex. Why should residents choose your community vs. competing communities.

✔️ **Pinpoint core reasons why future residents why chose your community.**

✔️ **Create a well-defined marketing and sales funnel.**
ex. How do prospective residents interact with your community before they move in.

2. UNDERSTAND YOUR LOCAL SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITY MARKET

"There is only one boss. The customer. And he can fire everybody in the company from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else."
– Sam Walton, Founder of Walmart

After you understand the purpose of your community, drill down on your market. Market analysis is a crucial part of a senior living community success.

Why?

You won't know how to reach a future resident unless you understand something about prospective residents. In addition, you should know who's competing with you for those prospective residents.

✔️ Describe your ideal residents, aka buyer personas.
✔️ Craft your message to speak to your ideal residents.
✔️ Name your primary competitors.
✔️ Speak to your competitive advantages in your messaging.
✔️ Determine where your future residents shop for senior living communities.
✔️ Outline strategies on how to connect with future residents on each relevant platform.
✔️ Determine your community visibility in the search engines for organic and paid advertising.
✔️ Identify the core keywords in search for Google, Bing, and Yahoo.

3. GET A MARKETING-FOCUSED, UPDATED WEBSITE FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

"Websites never sleep."
– Tony Powell, Designer

Websites and digital profiles are your community's only full-time sales representatives. If a decision maker stumbles across your website and is not impressed, you just lost a move-in.

It's your website's fault.

However, answer all of your prospective resident's basic questions on each of your online profiles – especially your website – and you have a shot at a new resident.

It's that critical.

- ✔ Make your site painfully obvious (in the first 3-5 seconds) what you do, who you are, where you're located.
- ✔ Highlight the unique selling proposition (USP) of your community.
- ✔ Design your website to meet the needs of your future residents – NOT your own.
- ✔ Create a website that accurately and positively represents your community.
- ✔ Build website on a content management system (CMS) like WordPress.
- ✔ Incorporate an updated and professional logo.
- ✔ Merge sales funnel conversions into the site design.
  Ex. Since phone calls are so important, ensure your phone number is always visible.
- ✔ Include contact information including a phone number and physical location.
- ✔ Infuse your website with 3rd party validation including testimonials & trust badges.
- ✔ Highlight compelling testimonials with pictures whenever possible.
- ✔ Update your website every 2-3 years with adjustments between launches.

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4. OPTIMIZE FOR ORGANIC SEARCH TRAFFIC (SEO)

"80% use search engines to find local product and service information."
– Lauren Kaye at Brafton Inc (2014)

Organic search engine optimization is critical to senior living communities' digital marketing.

If there are problems, your website will be ignored (or possibly even penalized) by Google, Bing, and Yahoo. And websites with no search traffic die.

You don't want that to happen to your community website.

✔ Identify core natural search engine optimization principles. These include title tags, meta description tags, and relevant keywords on each page.
✔ Incorporate principles into site development.
✔ Conform your website to Google Search Console & Webmasters Guidelines.
✔ Avoid black hat SEO practices like link buying and keyword stuffing.
✔ Optimize your site load time to under 3 seconds.
✔ Secure site with an SSL certificate.
✔ Add structured data to each page.
✔ Monitor site daily for virus and malware attacks.

5. PUBLISH GREAT CONTENT

"Content is where I expect much of the real money will be made on the Internet, just as it was in broadcasting."
– Bill Gates, Founder of Microsoft (1996)

After you put in the plumbing, finish the house.

That finished house is the content about your community. Create great blog posts, outstanding videos, excellent infographics, happy photos of community members and more.

- ✔ Create content incorporating your community's core keywords.
- ✔ Include descriptive, keyword-focused title tags on each page.
- ✔ Add a compelling meta description tag to encourage prospective residents to click.
- ✔ Write for human readers, not search engines.
- ✔ Incorporate relevant, professional images and photography.
- ✔ Write a great 'about' page that highlights your USP.
- ✔ Include contact information including a physical address and business hours.
- ✔ Only use readable fonts for most web users.
- ✔ Make zooming easy for older readers.
- ✔ Do NOT use more than 3 fonts on your website.
- ✔ Remove distracting content like music, splash pages, or other obsolete design elements.
- ✔ Answer your community visitors' most common questions.
- ✔ Add relevant, quality content to your site weekly or monthly – the more quality posts, the better.
- ✔ Produce quality explainer videos to highlight your community's unique place in the market.
- ✔ Create an email marketing program complete with email capture, quality content, and consistent publishing.

6. DISTRIBUTE CONTENT ON MAJOR LOCAL & SOCIAL PLATFORMS

"If a tree falls in a forest and it isn't posted on Facebook, did it really happen?"
– Unknown

Once you have awesome content, make sure people see it.

It's no longer just about your website. Other platforms are now just as important as websites – especially for senior living communities.

- ✔ Connect your blog to an RSS feed.
- ✔ Grow a natural set of authority backlinks.
- ✔ Ensure your content is optimized for local search engines.
- ✔ Build relevant profiles in social media including Yelp, Google+, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, etc.
- ✔ Ensure consistent branding across all social media platforms.
- ✔ Publish relevant, platform-targeted content to each social media community profile.
- ✔ Conform your social marketing to the terms and conditions of each platform.
- ✔ Solicit legitimate reviews on the most important review sites for your community. ex. Yelp, Google+, APlaceForMom.com, SeniorLiving.com, Alzheimers.net, etc.

7. USE GOOD WEB ANALYTICS

"You can't manage what you can't measure"
– Peter Drucker, PhD, Management Consultant

Web analytics is the science of seeing what happens online.

It covers everything from traffic sources, mobile usage, geographic data, conversion tracking, and more info than you'll ever use. Despite the complex nature of analytics, there are some vital elements every community owner should understand.

✔ Install web analytics tracking snippet on every page of your community's website. We recommend using Google Analytics (GA).
✔ Fix any data collection issues as they arise. Because they do.
✔ Setup at least two primary analytics views: Raw & Filtered.
✔ Isolate key, trackable goals that contribute to your community's business goals.
✔ Implement GA goal tracking for those important goals.
✔ Enact phone tracking to monitor calls when phone leads.
✔ Learn your top converting traffic sources.
✔ Invest more resources in your top converting traffic sources.
✔ Optimize your most visited pages on your site.
✔ Make analytics-driven community decisions to optimize your current website traffic.

8. ADVERTISE

"Nothing except the mint can make money without advertising."
— Lord Thomas Macaulay, 19th Century British Politician

Digital advertising is a modern marvel.

Contrasted with its print and television predecessors, online advertising boasts the benefit of near-simultaneous reporting. It can be used to test a new offer or grow sales for a proven product all at a measurable cost per action.

Not to mention the benefits of digital brand building.

- ✔ List your property on A Place for Mom, the largest senior living referral service.
- ✔ Advertise on search engines, aka PPC or SEM advertising. ex. Google AdWords & BingAds.
- ✔ Utilize proven PPC techniques like geographic targeting where customers can buy from you.
- ✔ Identify your target cost per lead (CPL).
- ✔ Create a Facebook ad campaign using relevant demographic targeting.
- ✔ Utilize remarketing campaigns to further improve lead conversions.
- ✔ Expand advertising on relevant websites to test new channels.

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9. OPTIMIZE YOUR COMMUNITY WEBSITE FOR USABILITY

"Don't make me think"
           – Steve Krug, web usability author

The web continues to evolve as users become more sophisticated.

Whoever passed as a great developer in 1999 would be fired for the same work today. Things are different and continue to get more complex and simple at the same time. The complexity relates to the underlying code. The simplicity relates to site usability.

Think Apple.

✔ Implement intuitive navigation.
✔ Condense primary navigation to essential links.
✔ Incorporate appropriate whitespace.
✔ Implement critical content above the fold for all devices.
✔ Employ consistent colors and design across the site.
✔ Conduct user testing and design changes to optimize user experience for key tasks.
✔ Remove any unnecessary elements on your website.
✔ Design your website for mobile first, then for other devices.
✔ Ensure your website looks good on all devices.
✔ Design website navigation to show prospective residents the information they want.
✔ Test your website usability.
✔ Then test again.

# 10. OPTIMIZE YOUR COMMUNITY WEBSITE FOR LEADS

"Where there is friction there is opportunity. Either you solve it for your customers today or a competitor will do it tomorrow"
— Bryan Eisenberg, web analytics pioneer

The web continues to evolve as users become more sophisticated.

Whoever passed as a great developer in 1999 would be fired for the same work today. Things are different and continue to get more complex and simple at the same time. The complexity relates to the underlying code. The simplicity relates to site usability.

Think Apple.

A
20%

B
80%
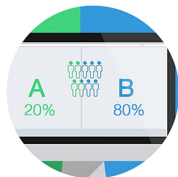
✔ Review site design so it incorporates marketing funnel-driven calls to action for goals.
✔ Ensure primary call to action is on every page of your website.
✔ Instill a sense of urgency – ex. Summer Move-In Special.
✔ Revise lead forms and sales process to be as short as possible.
✔ Hypothesize how to improve conversions on your website and landing page.
✔ Test your conversion hypotheses with tools like Optimizely or LeadPages.

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WRAPPING UP

This checklist should prove helpful to any marketing manager, CMO, or community owner looking to improve their occupancy through online channels.

If we missed anything, I would love to hear from you. We will make updates to future versions of this checklist as prospective resident behavior changes.

Please email me at **brandon@seniorlivingdigital.com** so we can make the next version even better.

All the best!
Brandon

Brandon Clay
Chief Marketing Strategist
Senior Living Digital

w: SeniorLivingDigital.com
e: contact@seniorlivingdigital.com
p: 512.669.1446

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brandon Clay specializes in digital marketing for senior living communities.

Brandon worked in online and offline sales and marketing for nearly a decade at State Farm Insurance and Dell, Inc. In 2006, he shifted careers to focus on digital marketing and has worked with 6 different digital marketing agencies. He has experience with digital advertising, website development, copywriting, email marketing, content marketing, SEO, paid search (PPC/SEM), social media, digital & business strategy.

Brandon holds a Bachelors from the University of Texas at Austin and a Masters degree from Southern Seminary in Louisville, KY. He is a Google Partner and has been involved in online marketing since 2004.

When he's not optimizing websites and driving leads for senior living communities, he enjoys riding his mountain bike, hanging with his kids, taking in a movie with his wife, or podcasting about the markets.