Home Care Business Marketing Online: A Step-By-Step Guide

More Home Care Leads + More Home Care Sales = A Successful Home Care Business

By Valerie VanBooven RN BSN, Co-Owner, LTC Expert Publications

www.LTCSocialMark.com

888-404-1513

Valerie@ltcep.com

Copyright 2012 LTC Expert Publications, All Rights Reserved

Contents

Chapter 1: Understanding Online Marketing in 2012 and Beyond – for the Home Care Agency ...... 2
Chapter 2: A Website Designed for Lead Capture ................................................................. 3
Chapter 3: A website that is search engine optimized for the service area of the home care agency.5
Chapter 4: The Content Plan.................................................................................................. 6
Chapter 5: Social Media- What’s Mandatory, What’s Optional ........................................ 7
Chapter 6: A Relevant Backlinking Strategy That Makes Google HAPPY.............................. 8
Chapter 7: Budget ................................................................................................................ 11
Chapter 8: Using Google Pay-Per-Click and Buying Leads ................................................. 12
Chapter 9: Home Care Leads Case Study ............................................................................. 13
Chapter 10: Summary ......................................................................................................... 16
Chapter 1: Understanding Online Marketing in 2012 and Beyond – for the Home Care Agency

Marketing a home care business has become increasingly complicated over the years, especially when it comes to deciding how, when, where, and what to do with regard to online marketing.

Some home care agencies today will tell you that 50% of their leads now come from internet marketing. The real trick is knowing how to do it right, or paying someone else to do it right for you.

The options for online marketing are endless, but the real bottom line is that a home care agency should only engage in marketing practices online (and offline for that matter) that result in quality leads.

The elements necessary for optimum online marketing include but are not limited to the following:

1. A website that is designed for lead capture.
2. A website that is search engine optimized for the service area of the home care agency.
3. A content plan that includes blogging, video, and social media engagement.
4. A back-linking strategy that is relevant, and done to Google’s liking.
5. A budget that can sustain a minimum of 6 months of organic work for 1st page results. (To show up on the first page of Google for all keyword phrases)
6. Depending on the metro area served, a budget for a highly optimized Google Pay-Per-Click campaign.

In this e-book, we will address all 6 of these areas.
Chapter 2: A Website Designed for Lead Capture

Having a pretty website seems like the most logical choice for a home care agency, but the reality is that a little bit of pretty with a LOT of lead capture design is what really works.

After all, there is no need to spend $10K on a pretty website that no one understands or gets lost in when trying to figure out how to contact a human being.

Here are the simple differences between a website that works for you and one that does nothing at all.

1. A website that works has the call to action placement perfect. (note the arrows)
2. All calls and forms are tracked, analyzed and reported. (note the yellow highlighted areas)

3. The website is on the first page of Google for your local area: (note yellow highlight)
Chapter 3: A website that is search engine optimized for the service area of the home care agency.

What does SEO or search engine optimization mean?

According to Wikipedia: Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving the visibility of a website or a web page in search engines' "natural," or un-paid ("organic" or "algorithmic"), search results. In general, the earlier (or higher ranked on the search results page), and more frequently a site appears in the search results list, the more visitors it will receive from the search engine's users. SEO may target different kinds of search, including image search, local search, video search, academic search, news search and industry-specific vertical search engines.

As an Internet marketing strategy, SEO considers how search engines work, what people search for, the actual search terms or keywords typed into search engines and which search engines are preferred by their targeted audience. Optimizing a website may involve editing its content and HTML and associated coding to both increase its relevance to specific keywords and to remove barriers to the indexing activities of search engines. Promoting a site to increase the number of backlinks, or inbound links, is another SEO tactic.

The acronym "SEOs" can refer to "search engine optimizers," a term adopted by an industry of consultants who carry out optimization projects on behalf of clients, and by employees who perform SEO services in-house. Search engine optimizers may offer SEO as a stand-alone service or as a part of a broader marketing campaign. Because effective SEO may require changes to the HTML source code of a site and site content, SEO tactics may be incorporated into website development and design. The term "search engine friendly" may be used to describe website designs, menus, content management systems, images, videos, shopping carts, and other elements that have been optimized for the purpose of search engine exposure.

Any website designed for lead capture, should also be designed with the proper SEO. This means that if the service area for the home care agency is St. Louis, MO, their website should have text, titles, meta data, and content that are all relevant to St. Louis MO. There is no point in trying to optimize for Kansas City MO, if that’s not in the service area of the home care agency.

The other part of search engine optimization comes with the addition of regular fresh content. All content added to the site should also reflect the service area of the home care agency.
Chapter 4: The Content Plan

Content and relevancy are ultimately the King and Queen of Google’s world, and let’s face it, Google rules right now, so whatever they want, they get.

Every website created for a home care agency should also include a content plan. Without a blog, without video, without social media, the website will stagnate and fall off the map, or simply never get there at all.

TIP: IN 2012 NEVER CREATE A WEBSITE THAT DOES NOT INCLUDE A BLOG AND RSS FEED.

The content plan includes:

1. **How many blog posts per week does the website need to get to page 1 of Google for the local market place?** We recommend anywhere from 1-4 depending on the size of the market. A website in Chicago, IL will need a lot more work and content than the website in West Winnemucca, Nevada.

2. **How many video blogs per month does the website need to be successful?**

3. **What about photos, social media and other considerations?** It’s all important, and the more competitive the local market, the more content needed.
Chapter 5: Social Media- What’s Mandatory, What’s Optional

Engaging in social media will ultimately grow the home care agencies fan base, and keep the community involved in their offline and online activities.

A firm belief in the power of social media is not only important, but stands to make a significant difference in the revenue of the agency.

The problem is that often social media activities and the business that results from those actions are not directly measurable, and therefore the perceived value is low.

From experience however, those home care agencies that are directly connected to social media, engage in social media, and enjoy social media, do benefit significantly from that activity.

Here are the social media items that are mandatory for a successful home care agency:

1. LinkedIn.com – a best bet for engaging with other professionals, business owners, and referral partners in the local area. LinkedIn can be a tremendous asset for local business.
2. Facebook.com – having a business page that is up-to-date, full of pictures, blog posts from the website, local community events, awards, achievements, and notes- these are the winners.
3. Pinterest.com – Pinterest is the new kid on the block, but can be extremely successful for home care agencies when used properly. This is quickly becoming a must have for everyone.
4. YouTube.com – Video is, and will continue to be, one of the best online sources of information for families and even seniors. Well done (but not expensively done) videos that are educational and have the right calls to action are imperative.
5. Google Places/Google Plus/Google Local/Google Plus Pages for Business – Google changes with every passing day. Google Places has merged with Google Plus and Google Local and Google Plus Pages for Business. The complications are unending. The reality is that any local business who wants to thrive needs to have an excellent online presence in their marketplace, so learning how to play Google’s game, and win, is super important.

Optional Accounts, but Still Important:

1. Twitter.com – Making Twitter optional seems like an odd recommendation, but for a home care agency it is optional at this stage of the game. We would still recommend it, but we don’t spend a large amount of time on it each week. If we were making recommendations to a club, restaurant, or other business, Twitter would probably be on the mandatory list.
2. Squidoo.com – Nice to have, nice to engage with, but not mandatory.
3. StumbleUpon, Digg, and others – good to know, good to have, not mandatory for overall success.
Chapter 6: A Relevant Backlinking Strategy That Makes Google HAPPY.
Keep the Google Monster happy, and reap the rewards. Make it mad, and find yourself on page 3.

I mentioned that content and relevancy are the King and Queen in Google’s world, and that’s the truth. Google wants great content that people will read and enjoy or learn from. Google wants other websites to tell them that your website is pretty darn cool, so that it knows to give you a better page rank and better visibility online.

Give Google what it wants.

Backlinks Definition: What Are Backlinks? What Is An Internal or External Backlink?
By Bud Gallant

“Backlinks Definition
A backlink is just a link back to your site. In fact, if people called them "link backs" or just "links", we’d probably have a better idea of what is being discussed. A link just means that a site is embedding the url (address) into one of it’s pages, so that readers can click through from that site to yours.

Example: Site A links to Site B. We’d call that Site B having a backlink from Site A.

Now, if it weren’t for a few other factors, we could probably leave it at that. Unfortunately, it gets a bit more complex, and you’re going to want to get a basic understanding of the different types of backlinks before you start working with them to avoid common pitfalls. Knowing this information can save you a lot of time and energy, so it’s well worth looking at a bit more in depth.

Internal and External Backlinks
Backlinks are often described as either “internal backlinks” or “external backlinks”. The difference between the two is that an internal backlink is a link from one part of a specific domain (website) to another part of that same site.

An external backlink is a link that comes from a separate website. Generally when people are talking about how to get backlinks, they are speaking about external backlinks.

What Are Backlinks For?
Backlinks are valued for two reasons. They transfer visitors from one page to another, and they transfer influence called PageRank. Visitors are transferred when they click a link on one page of a site and are taken to another.
Influence is transferred through a system often likened to voting, but "transfer" is probably not the right word to use, as it leads to a common misconception:

A page on a site will never lose or leak PageRank to another. In other words, you have a certain amount of votes based on your own PageRank, when you cast those votes, your own PageRank is not lowered or affected by it.

PageRank is used by search engines to determine the importance of a particular page of a site (not the entire site). Backlinks are sought after largely because they can raise the PageRank of the page being linked to, which results in increased rankings by the search engines for that page. This makes it more likely that the page will be found by users on Google or other search engines.

The more backlinks a page on your site has, the higher that page will rank in the search engines and the more traffic you will receive from user's searching for terms or phrases that are contained within it.

**Dofollow and Nofollow**

To further complicate things, backlinks can also be "dofollow" or "nofollow". This was created to provide the ability to link without passing on "votes".

Let's say you wanted to write a blog post about a company or site you were highly critical of, and you included a link for your visitors, you'd actually be promoting this site by "voting" and boosting it's PageRank. **Nofollow** provides an option to create a link for your visitors to click, but not make an endorsement of the destination. What were initially just called backlinks then began to be referred to as "dofollow backlinks".

**Nofollow** is an attribute placed on the link in html (the stuff "under the hood" when it comes to websites, that you normally do not see). If you know how to work with html yourself, you can add this attribute onto your links. But don't worry if you don't, because in most cases this isn't something you need to worry about.

If you're wondering what this has to do with you, it's important for the following reason: In their pursuit of backlinks, people often do not take into account that most blogs and even many profiles they sign up with to add links to, make these links nofollow automatically.

In other words, not being able to distinguish nofollow from dofollow links can have you spending time trying to promote your site in places where it won't gain any PageRank. There's some debate about the value of nofollow backlinks, but what we do know is that Google claims they are not used in any way to calculate PageRank, unlike their dofollow cousins.

When discussing backlinks as a way to increase ranking in the search engines and traffic, generally, people are referring to external dofollow backlinks."
Relevancy with Regard to Backlinks.

During the last Penguin Update (Google Algorithm Change), the concept of relevancy became even more clear.

In other words, getting backlinks from sites that are relevant in content to the home care agency website is super important.

Home Care Agency A getting a website backlink from Doug’s Doggie Groomers is probably not very relevant, and Google knows this.

However, is Home Care Agency A gets a backlink from AlzheimersCareToday.com or LessCaregiverStress.com or MySeniorService.com, that’s a vote in the right direction. All relevant.

Work with a company who can ultimately give you the relevant dofollow backlinks you need.
Chapter 7: Budget

The choices an agency has to make are often based on time, skill level, and budget.

Most home care agency owners are busy running their business and simply do not have the time to commit to content, backlinking and web issues.

In the case of home care, it’s never recommended to hire a college student or young person to manage these tasks, they simply do not have the life experience or full knowledge of SEO and content provisioning to make the right decisions for the website.

Another option might be to hire a service to manage all of these tasks for the home care agency.

Recommendation:

Home care is a much different type of business than roofing, plumbing, chiropractors, restaurants etc, and while the local SEO company might make big promises, they usually do not fully understand the needs of the consumer when it comes to elder care. Don’t get burned by hiring an SEO agency that does NOT specialize in elder care, home care, or assisted living. Generalists just don’t get it.

How much and for how long?

For an extremely competitive market like Dallas, Chicago, New York- the cost is always going to be higher because it’s harder and takes an enormous amount of work to get a new website to page 1 of Google. It also takes an enormous amount of work to KEEP a website on the first page of Google.

**Budget: $500-$1200 per month depending on the level of content provisioning for a minimum of 6 months.**

In a smaller market like Springfield, IL, Independence, MO, Lexington, KY the cost will be lower.

**Budget: $350-$900 per month for a minimum of 6 months.**
Chapter 8: Using Google Pay-Per-Click and Buying Leads

Home care agency owners often find Google Pay-Per-Click to be expensive and not very productive. The problem is that they have typically relied on managing a campaign on their own with little or no knowledge of how Google Pay Per Click really works, or they have hired a “generalist” like ReachLocal or Yodel who do not understand the elder care market.

Google PPC (Pay Per Click) is not about throwing up an add, a few keywords, and a budget and hoping it works to generate leads. Without a plan, it gets very expensive very quickly and can become a drain on the budget.

Google Pay Per Click requires the following considerations for lead generation success:

1. The website that the ad points to must be designed for lead capture, if it’s not your campaign will fail.
2. The ad itself must be designed to detract job seekers, and attract adult children of aging parents.
3. The keywords used need to be very specific to Google PPC. Some of the keywords that would seem commonplace for a campaign like this are actually not the right keywords to use. They generate too many job seekers, and waste budget dollars.
4. Negative keywords need to be used to detract job seekers.
5. Territories need to be very specific for a home care agency.
6. Budget needs to be determined up front. Without the right budget, running a PPC campaign might be lost cause to begin with.
7. A really good PPC campaign does not work as well as one that is combined with an organic content campaign. The two together are the best way to dominate the competition in your local area.
8. It’s always best to have the same company run your organic campaign and your PPC campaign at the same time. Very few companies offer this, and very few understand the elder care market enough to help the agency owner see real results.
9. Budgets for adequate PPC range from $300 per month to $1200 per month, depending on the competitive nature of the area, and more.

Buying Home Care Leads:

Success with purchasing leads from organizations like Service Magic and ElderCareLink vary greatly. Some agencies will have excellent results, while others will not.

Remember that when purchasing these leads, they are NOT generally exclusive to one home care agency, but are spread out over 3-4 home care agencies and possibly 3-4 assisted living facilities, depending on the information supplied by the consumer.
The best advice is to invest in generating leads from a campaign designed exclusively for one home care agency.

Chapter 9: Home Care Leads Case Study

Case Study:

Question: How much does it REALLY cost to generate quality home care or assisted living leads?

Answers:

The cost for generating REAL quality leads depends on the following factors:

1. Your home care agency or assisted living’s current location. For example, are you in a big metro area (ie Chicago), or a small rural town (ie Independence, MO)? The amount of money you will need to spend acquiring home care leads depends on how challenging it is to get you to the first page of Google in the NATURAL results.
2. If you are in a large metropolitan area with tons of competition you might consider supplementing your natural / organic search engine efforts with some Pay-Per-Click advertising.
3. You must have a home care lead or assisted living lead generating website. This kind of website might not be the artistic mecca of the universe of websites, but that’s ok, it should be a lead generating website….after all pretty doesn’t make you money, lead producing websites make you money.
4. You need content content content content. Content= blog posts, videos, and more blog posts and videos.
5. You need social media: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Squidoo, to name a few.

Let’s look at the numbers.

Situation A:

Home Care Agency A is using Yodel or ReachLocal or YellowPages or SuperPages or one of their many competitors to do the following:

1. Put up a landing page that is designed to attract leads.
2. There is no content or natural / organic content added like blog posts. This is a standalone landing page.
3. There is no social media involvement.
4. Home Care Agency A puts $600-$900 per month in a bucket to pay for Pay-Per-Click leads in their local area.
5. All phone calls through the website are tracked.
6. All forms filled out on the website are tracked.
7. Home Care Agency A can log in and review the recordings of the phone calls and analytics (some portion of them) at any time.
8. Home Care Agency A sees that they have had 25 calls this month! YAY!
9. Home Care Agency A sees that of those 25 calls, 23 of them were employment inquiries. 2 calls were real leads. Boo.
This means that in one month Home Care Agency A spent $300 minimum per lead.

P.S. By the way, if Home Care Agency A leaves this program, they cannot take their website with them (landing page), and they will never see the list of keywords that were used to generate their 2 leads. P.P.S. The company they were using to generate their 2 leads did not mention that Google discounts the Pay Per Click cost- and so although Home Care Agency A paid full price for clicks, the company they used got a discount on the back end and made money off of Home Care Agency A’s clicks.

Situation B:

Home Care Agency B is using a company (LTCEP) that specializes in online marketing and lead generation in the elder care and senior service markets. They hire LTCEP who does the following:

1. LTCEP puts up a full website with a landing page that is designed to attract leads.
2. There is weekly content or natural / organic content added like blog posts and videos.
3. Home Care Agency B pays $600 per month for content, SEO, social media etc.
4. Home Care Agency B spends $300 per month on clicks (paid directly to Google Adwords).
5. All phone calls through the website are tracked.
6. All forms filled out on the website are tracked.
7. Home Care Agency B can log in and review the recordings of the phone calls and all analytics at any time.
8. Home Care Agency B sees that they have had 41 calls this month! YAY!
9. Home Care Agency B sees that they have had 10 forms filled out this month. Yay!
10. Home Care Agency B sees that of those 41 calls, 31 of them were employment inquiries. 10 calls were real leads. YAY!
11. Home Care Agency B sees that of those 10 forms filled out, 5 of them were real leads. YAY!

This means that in one month Home Care Agency B spent $60.00 per lead.

P.S. By the way, if Home Care Agency A leaves this program, they can take their website with them and keep the content and their natural search engine results! P.P.S. LTCEP does not get click discounts or kickbacks.

Who is the real winner here? Home Care Agency B of course.

No matter how many calls a lead gen company says they can generate for you, take note of how many are real leads vs employment calls. PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR ROI! One of the most frustrating and differentiating aspects of home care and assisted living internet marketing is the fact that people looking for jobs can WASTE CLICKS and WASTE PHONE TIME. Having a structured plan designed to re-direct employment seekers, keep them off your phones and off your forms is super important.

This is one of many issues that come up when Home Care and Assisted Living organizations use an online lead gen company or website developer who does not understand the elder care and senior service market.

But wait, what about those $18-$30 leads that you can buy from places like Eldercarelink, or Service Magic? Ask yourself this real question- dig deep.... Those are shared leads, meaning that you may be one of 3-4 other service providers who are receiving that lead.
1. How many have you closed?

2. How much did you spend to find the one that really worked out well?

Do the math— you will be surprised at how much you really have to spend to get to the real stuff. (Hint: It’s way more than $100 per lead on average).

Buyer beware, but more importantly, CALCULATE YOUR ROI.
Chapter 10: Summary

The elements necessary for optimum online marketing include but are not limited to the following:

1. A website that is designed for lead capture.
2. A website that is search engine optimized for the service area of the home care agency.
3. A content plan that includes blogging, video, and social media engagement.
4. A back-linking strategy that is relevant, and done to Google’s liking.
5. A budget that can sustain a minimum of 6 months of organic work for 1st page results. (To show up on the first page of Google for all keyword phrases)
6. Depending on the metro area served, a budget for a highly optimized Google Pay-Per-Click campaign.

Best advice: Find an agency to outsource all of these activities to who understands the elder care market, who works ONLY in the elder care market, and who is not a generalist.

Next steps:

Contact Valerie VanBooven RN BSN or George Novoson,

Owners, LTC Expert Publications

888-404-1513

http://www.LTCSocialMark.com

http://www.MySeniorService.com

http://www.TheLTCExpert.com