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The Complete Data-Driven eBook:  
**The Qualified Lead  
Conundrum: Content  
Marketing for Senior Living**

**“They want to see our communities but never have any intention of putting their loved ones here even after using all of our resources and time.”**

Sound familiar?

This was a verbatim quote taken from data Big Buzz recently gathered from 191 marketing executives in senior living and care, and it aptly describes the issue faced by most. The study revealed untapped opportunities to motivate older adults to leave home in favor of a senior community. Economic trends indicate now is the time to proactively improve upon content marketing efforts to attract warm leads who are intentional about moving rather than investing organizational budget in large marketing and sales teams working hundreds of colder leads who will never move.

Our study showed that 95% of senior living marketers and executives believe content marketing is an integral part of their organization’s overall marketing approach. More than half of respondents said they invest 25-49% of their overall marketing budget in content marketing and another 24% indicated they invest more than half of the budget.

That’s a whole lot of content for seniors and their families. And it’s working.

Well over half of respondents said they get up to 25% of sales-qualified leads (SQLs) from content marketing. How can this percentage be increased? To thoroughly answer that question, we organized this text into three parts:



### **Part One: Definition and Importance**

We show how the industry defines content marketing, why senior living executives find it to be important and industrywide strengths in content marketing practices.



### **Part Two: Trends and Opportunities**

We share trends, or what the data shows most senior living executives are doing now in content marketing, plus top opportunities for using content to differentiate your communities and encourage move-ins.



### **Part Three: Problems and Solutions**

We give a quick rundown of problems in content marketing as flagged by survey respondents as well as the solutions you can apply now to correct course as needed.



# PART ONE: DEFINITION AND IMPORTANCE

## Definition

It's rare that any question in our studies gains 100% consensus from the respondent pool, but here's one. When we asked for a definition of content marketing, every one of your peers we surveyed agreed:

**Content marketing provides those served by a senior organization with the expertise, education and information to solve issues they face.**

They solve those issues on their own or come to their own realization they need your support. In our research on how the industry defines content marketing, four additional trends emerged:

### 1. Content Shares Insights

Those who took our survey largely defined content marketing as a system for sharing insights unique to that organization. One respondent said, "Content marketing is used to attract, engage and retain an audience." It's all about attraction over promotion.

A word here on the impact of content marketing on sales: 14% of survey respondents said content marketing strengthens sales efforts. Strong content marketing can provide warmer leads over time. However, direct selling in content marketing erodes trust and can have an adverse effect on sales.



### 2. Content Focuses on the Customer

Many respondents made the point that content marketing must be customer focused. Strong content shares knowledge that may not directly benefit the organization but benefits the older adult or family member served. Share customer-focused insights rather than organization-focused newsletters or articles. Think: Less about us, more about them.



### 3. Content Strengthens Trust

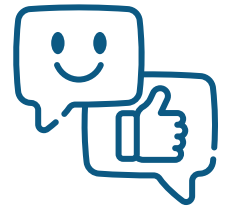
Several respondents pointed out that over time, content strengthens trust not only in the organization itself but in the industry overall. One respondent put it aptly: "Content marketing eliminates customers' misunderstanding of the industry and lets customers trust us." In content marketing efforts, consider publishing occasional thought leadership that dispels myths about senior living. This approach benefits the entire industry as well as the older adults in its service.



#### 4. Content Builds Relationships

By and large, the data showed senior living executives saw content marketing as an ideal way to amplify the brand, differentiate the offering and create a feeling of belonging that encourages an older adult to move away from their current home to a new one.

In the words of a respondent, "Great content does not explicitly promote a brand, but is intended to stimulate interest in its services." Before the prospect even makes direct contact, they develop an affinity for you. A long-term commitment to regularly published content builds the relationship and results in a steadier influx of warm leads.



### Importance

A deeper dive into the data shows why senior living executives believe content marketing is so important:

- 55%** of your peers say content marketing positions the organization as the expert in a particular area of senior care.
- 50%** say content marketing builds credibility with leads.
- 52%** use content marketing to provide staff with the knowledge and inspiration they need to do their jobs well.
- 42%** apply content marketing to help address complex industry-related questions or concerns a prospect may have.
- 38%** believe content marketing positions the organization's executives as thought leaders in senior living.
- 29%** use content marketing to nurture leads to become intentional about having a conversation.
- 28%** apply content marketing to amplify the organization's brand.
- 12%** see content marketing as valuable in boosting SEO with relevant search keywords.

Now, let's have a look at what our survey trends show is going well for the senior living industry in content marketing.

96%

**of respondents use content marketing to successfully support them in nurturing leads to speak with their team.**

Content marketing positions the organization as the expert and specialist in a particular area of senior care even before the first conversation.

96%

**of respondents use marketing automation systems to support their content marketing efforts.**

As staffing remains a challenge in senior living, marketing automation is paramount in increasing the efficacy of lean internal marketing teams.

## Automate Now with **ActiveDEMAND**

Big Buzz develops content marketing strategies and creates warm-lead-generating content assets for senior living organizations. For marketing automation services, we highly recommend [ActiveDEMAND](#).

94%

**of executives in senior living back content marketing efforts with survey data.**

Additionally, the research showed that 94% of executives in senior living back content marketing efforts with survey data, which is key to creating a constant drip of credible content.

Here is a breakdown of survey data types used in the industry:

- **71% use customer satisfaction survey data.**

Compelling testimonial quotes often arise from these surveys and, with documented consent, can be used across social media and content marketing efforts.

- **66% apply voice-of-the-customer (VOC) survey data.**

This data is typically used for differentiation and brand amplification. In content marketing, VOC survey data is best applied to defining overarching topics or headlines for the editorial calendar.

- **54% use programmatic survey data.**

This AI-driven process is ideal for creating longer data-driven content pieces like this eBook or industry whitepapers. For example, you might survey seniors in your area residing in senior communities, then publish the results. After analyzing data trends, you might share insights on how intentional they were about moving in with a senior care provider, what their biggest obstacles to moving were, what pain points they faced in staying home and how senior care eventually made life better. No one can convince your prospects to move like their peers can.



90%

**of respondents said that their organization's content marketing stands out as unique among competitors'**

Finally, 90% of respondents said their organization's content marketing stands out in the marketplace as unique to competitors', with 87% perceiving their content marketing efforts as above average and 86% believing their content marketing outcomes were above average.

That's a whole lot going right. But what can you do differently to attract a steady stream of move-in-ready leads to your properties? Read on to find out.



## PART 2: TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Now we illustrate the trends reflected by our study plus your top opportunities to use content to stand out from competitors and further engage people to pursue a new home with you.

### Target Audience

#### Trend

Let's start with the most prominent trend we would like to see bucked. Our data indicates that 78% of senior living marketing teams are going too broad with their target audience: 56% publish content for various target audiences by service subset such as independent living, assisted living or skilled nursing; another 22% address one broad target audience. Both sets miss the mark by aiming to reach too many differently minded people at once. *When you speak to everyone, you reach no one.*



#### Opportunity

Only 14% of our respondents identified marketing-qualified leads (MQLs) within their organization's database to create content just for that subset of people. Even fewer, 9%, identified sales-qualified leads (SQLs) within the organization's database to whom to address specific content. This is a huge opportunity. Sales teams that took an account-based approach to content marketing were the ones that made it onto [Sherpa's latest Best Sales Performers Report](#).

A second opportunity – and one upon which very few of your competitors are capitalizing – is for your organization to narrow its positioning and content marketing focus to just one service. Become known as the local expert in memory care, for example. This is not to say you wouldn't market other levels of care; rather, you would lead with one and let the rest follow. Lead with the care level at which your data shows people are most likely to enter your communities.

At the very least, [hone your target audience](#) to just one or two personas to which your content speaks. Doing so more readily invites the right folks to become intentional about moving in with you.



# Content Assets

## Trend

According to our study, 43% of senior living marketing teams are publishing whitepapers, 41% are regularly blogging and 38% are distributing eBooks or guides. The biggest trend is content assets: the data indicates that 93% of your peers make use of landing pages to convert readers/listeners/viewers into leads, *a best practice we recommend.*



## Opportunity

Only 27% of senior living marketing teams are publishing testimonial videos and just 26% are producing executive team videos. In January 2022, HubSpot reported that “86% of [small] businesses [in the U.S.] use video as a marketing tool.” This indicates the senior living industry is behind on the trend. If you are not already using video content, start by having an executive record a 30-second introductory video for each written piece published. Broaden video assets from there. Check out [Canva](#), a free tool you can use to quickly and easily create videos, social media posts and more.

Another largely untapped opportunity: only 19% of senior living marketing teams are developing data-driven articles. Take data-driven publishing a step further by backing it with VOC or programmatic survey data as described in the previous section.



## Make use of developing data-driven articles:

**“People are unsure of the total care and qualifications of our staff, so we provide the credentials necessary and the data that shows our reviews and ratings from other residents in our communities.”**



## Content Approach

### Trend

The data indicated that 49% of senior living marketing teams approach content marketing by sharing educational articles, 49% by sharing virtual tours and 46% by sharing entertaining stories. *Most respondents were sharing a combination of all three.*



### Opportunity

Just 44% of senior living marketing teams are sharing content developed specifically for a warm prospect, speaking directly to a particular pain point that is hindering them from touring or moving in with their organization. Again, this is a good opportunity to expand into account-based selling with hyper-targeted content marketing.

A second area of opportunity is sharing infographics, floorplan layouts and other visuals, which only 39% of your peers are doing now.

Finally, the sharing of creative campaigns will stand out as only 32% of your competitors are currently taking this approach.

## Distribution Channels

### Trend

Among our respondents, the most popular distribution channels for content marketing were social media at 65%, emails and blog posts at 54%, general website content at 52% and podcasts at 49%.



### Opportunity

Expand your reach by submitting your content to third-party media companies like [McKnight's Senior Living](#), local newspapers or community bulletins. Only 26% of your peers indicate they are doing this now, and it's a relatively inexpensive way to amplify your message.

## Publishing Frequency

### Trend

The study showed that the majority of your peers publish content marketing assets once or twice per week.



### Opportunity

Only 17% of our respondents publish less frequently than twice weekly. To stand out, consider publishing one longer data-driven piece per month, addressing all the most burning questions and desires your data shows are on the minds of the older adults you serve.

## Content Marketing Topics

### Trend

In our survey, we asked, “What are the top pain points you see from prospects?” The data revealed two trends:

1. Fears that directly impact the decision to move:
  - Distrust of the industry
  - Analysis paralysis (too much choice)
  - Financial constraints (don't see the value)
2. Additional fears that can impact an older adult's thought process about moving:
  - Concerns about living a meaningful life
  - Concerns about remaining a reliable family member (Am I safe? Am I connected? Am I useful or a burden?)
  - Challenges setting realistic goals with family



### Opportunity

Each of these topics would make a good piece of content. In your content, speak directly to the person's fears. Write or illustrate a few quick ways they might begin to address the issue and then how your organization would support in solving that issue. This builds value and trust in the prospect's mind. By the time they contact your team, they are much more move-in ready.



## PART THREE: PROBLEM AND SOLUTION

Here is a quick summary of problems our survey respondents identified in senior living content marketing, along with corresponding solutions you can implement on your own right now.

### ✘ Problem:

"We need to improve trust in our brand."

### ✔ Solution:

Brand is the singular value proposition that uniquely positions your organization in the marketplace, as shown by trends in differentiation from the perspective of your residents and families. If your brand needs bolstering before you can really nail content marketing, get differentiation direction from [The Dubious Data of Differentiation in the Senior Living Industry](#). If your brand is well built, improve trust in it by continuously creating content that amplifies the three differentiating traits for which your organization is best known.

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### ✘ Problem:

"We need to enhance the credibility of our content."

### ✔ Solution:

The most credible content supports consumers in solving issues on their own while also gently demonstrating when it's time to seek outside help. "Find the customer's real problem," suggested one survey respondent. Another suggested, "I would make it more educational and helpful." A third agreed with us that stronger content is "more data driven." Lastly, one person suggested pulling at the heartstrings: "Publish more interesting and touching articles." We agree on all counts.

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### ✘ Problem:

"We need to make improvements in establishing our direct relationship with customers."

### ✔ Solution:

One respondent suggested "targeted marketing for some customers." Yes. The foundation for account-based selling is identifying what is troubling one person in your sales funnel and sharing custom-made content to demonstrate how you might help. This concentrated effort is best applied to about a dozen prospects a month per community and is best delivered by the person with whom the older adult will sign the move-in agreement.

**✘ Problem:**

“We have too much staff involvement in content marketing.”

**✔ Solution:**

A couple of our survey respondents suggested AI-produced content as a possible solution, but we think it's too early to make good use of that technology in content marketing as it can be disjointed, impersonal and inauthentic. Instead, simplify your content marketing plan, get approval once annually or quarterly from the larger executive team then rely on a small group of people to develop and deliver content.

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**✘ Problem:**

“Low staff.”

**✔ Solution:**

Get outside help to execute your content marketing strategy. A steady investment in content marketing produces more qualified leads and more than pays for itself over time.

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**✘ Problem:**

“Identifying KPIs for content marketing,” or “Delivering results through content marketing.”

**✔ Solution:**

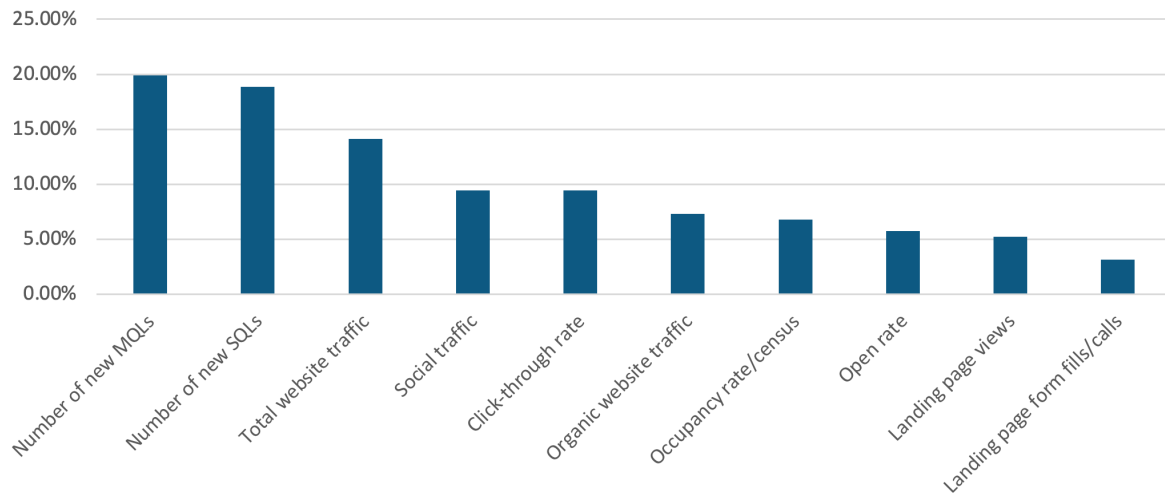
Align as a team on at least one lead measure, which indicates the likelihood of achieving your goal, and one lag measure, which determines if you have achieved that goal. For example, a lead measure might be “publish two new content assets monthly.” Our study specifies “Number of new MQLs” as the most popular lag measure in the industry, and our experience tells us it's a strong one to indicate overall success. Measure the results of your lead and lag measures each week on a scoreboard. Review this scoreboard monthly with your whole marketing team. Act on data quarterly by adjusting content efforts for stronger results.



## Too much staff involvement in content marketing?

**Simplify your content marketing plan, get approval once annually or quarterly from the larger executive team then rely on a small group of people to develop and deliver content.**

# Key Measures for Content Marketing Success



Data from our study indicated "Number of new MQLs" as the most popular lag measure for content marketing in the senior living industry.

## ✘ Problem:

"We need to be more consistent with publishing."

## ✔ Solution:

Pursue discipline over complexity. Publish one strong content asset each month rather than scrambling to write every week.

## ✘ Problem:

"Too many opinions from staff that aren't on task."

## ✔ Solution:

[One cohesive marketing plan](#) and [one clear content marketing strategy](#) can align the team.

## ✘ Problem:

"I can't find good material or inspiration."

## ✔ Solution:

Even with the richest data on hand, it can sometimes feel like you are writing the same story over and over. When you start getting sick of the message, the target audience is just noticing it. Stay the course. Kick up creativity by gathering the team for a [brainstorming session](#).

# IN CONCLUSION

What is your team doing well in content marketing? What can be improved? What is one suggestion from this eBook you can apply now that will make a difference?

**Yes, I want a complimentary strategy session with a Big Buzz nurture marketing expert today so I can get:**

- ✔ **Clarity on the root causes of current lead issues we face**
- ✔ **Research and industry intel that will help eradicate lead issues for good**
- ✔ **A clearer vision for reaching the organization's desired future state this year, 3 years from now and 5 years from now**
- ✔ **A free initial nurture marketing plan to invite warm leads to move in now**

**SCHEDULE MY FREE STRATEGY SESSION**

*Big Buzz is a marketing agency delivering a steady stream of move-in-ready leads to teams serving the senior living industry. For more than 15 years, Big Buzz has helped senior living marketing and sales teams nurture leads to increase occupancy, grow and scale. CEO Wendy O'Donovan Phillips is the author of the book [Flourish!: The Method Used by Aging Services Organizations for the Ultimate Marketing Results](#), has been published in McKnight's, has been a regular contributor to Forbes, and has been quoted in The Washington Post, ABC News and Chicago Tribune. The Big Buzz leadership team regularly lectures in front of audiences ranging from 25 to 3,000 attendees, including at Argentum and various LeadingAge chapters. Agency awards and accolades include recognition for excellence by the American Marketing Association, Gold Key Award Winner by the Business Marketing Association, HubSpot Academy Inbound Marketing Certification, and Top Advertising and Marketing Agency by Clutch. [www.bigbuzzinc.com](http://www.bigbuzzinc.com)*