

Social media is your organization's open house happening online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Therein lies its power. Social media marketing packs vast reach, targeted advertising capabilities and deep analytics to track engagement and conversions. That's what makes social media marketing a strong strategy for building awareness of your senior living offerings, nurturing colder leads down the funnel and incentivizing warm leads to convert, or connect with your sales team.

In his article [Why you should be on social media](#) in RetirementLiving, Dr. Steven Rydin wrote, "According to the [Pew Research Center](#), a rapidly growing demographic group for social media use is people of age 65 and older."

We surveyed 100 marketing professionals in senior living to discover how social media marketing is used in the industry to attract older adults to communities, why it is important, common processes and best practices. We have overlayed with your peers' survey data a few of Big Buzz's tools and approaches to streamline social media marketing and bolster results.

Through the education provided in this publication, you will be able to:



Uncover 3 trends in how your peers in senior living define social media marketing



Access a simple 8-step social media marketing process for senior living



Learn the most engaging types of social media posts in senior living



Get photography best practices for social media in senior living



Understand how your organization compares to investment and return benchmarking for social media marketing in senior living

Let's dive in!



3 TRENDS IN HOW YOUR PEERS DEFINE SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Why is social media marketing important? In our research three trends emerged:



Social Media Marketing Broadens Brand Awareness

When we think of social media as an open house, we can see where it would boost awareness of your organization's offerings just by virtue of the volume of people it can reach. Our study revealed that your peers believe consistent social media marketing efforts can lead to:

- Increased overall brand awareness
- Stronger brand influence over competing solutions (including the prospect electing to stay home)
- Increased brand loyalty
- Higher visibility of the full continuum of care your organization may offer

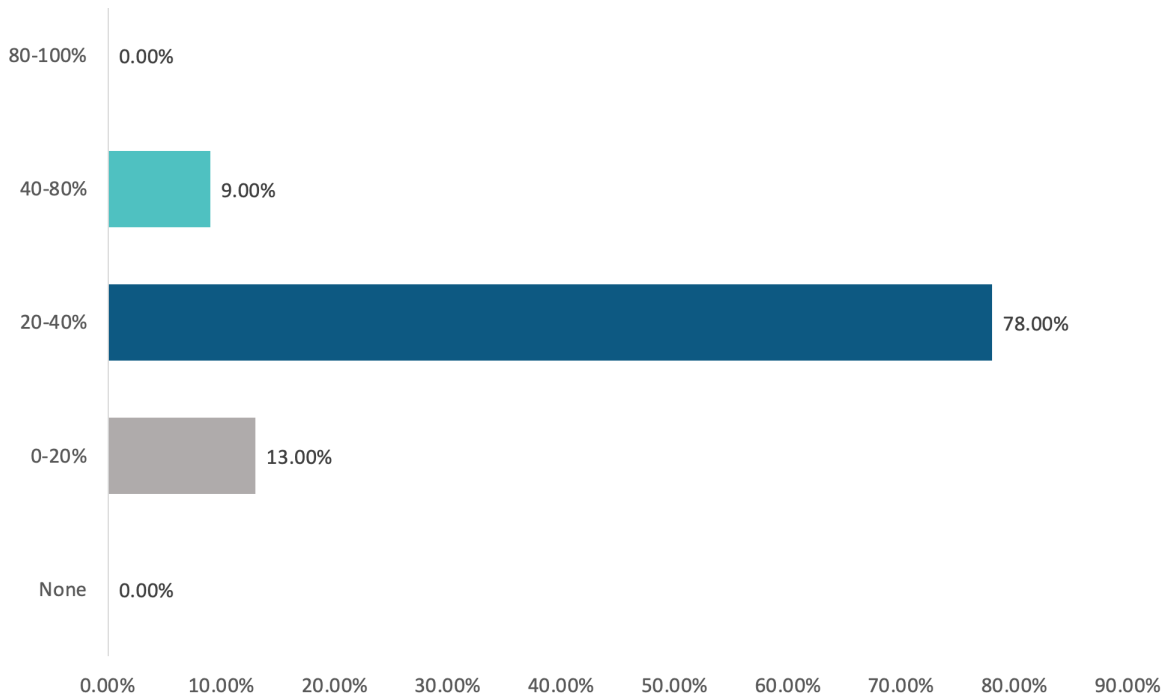
When asked what their organization most wanted to accomplish with social media marketing efforts, 32% answered, "Drive brand awareness," the highest majority of all possible answers. Sure, social media marketing increases brand awareness, but it can also increase sales and the value of the company. Read on to learn how to do all three.

Social Media Marketing Can Increase Sales, When Done Right

One survey respondent rightly pointed out, "With increased visibility [through social media marketing], your business will have more opportunities to convert." Yes, and people take action only when we ask them to take action. Your organization may have an opportunity to more consistently gain warmer sales-qualified leads (SQLs) from social media efforts by applying the 80/20 rule: 80% of posts should be educational and beneficial to followers without any commitment to your organization, and 20% of posts should be promotional – inviting followers to take action with your organization. Just as you would at a live event, you want to share 80% of the time in social conversations about topics that will benefit those in your audience and the rest of the time it's totally appropriate to invite folks to take the next step with you.

When we asked, "Approximately what percent of your posts are promotional?" 13% of survey respondents said 0-20% of posts and another 78% said 20-40% of posts. Another 9% of respondents said 40-80% of their social posts are promotional. This frequency is too high and may trigger followers to unfollow or disengage.

Approximately what percent of your posts are promotional?



As our study respondents rightly point out, this cadence of 20% promotional posting can have a four-tier effect:

1. Increase traffic to the website
2. Increase engagement with potential residents and family members
3. Increase sales opportunities
4. Increase occupancies and thereby revenue and profit

In the words of one survey respondent, "Our social media marketing helps us to promote better and further develop potential opportunities with residents and families who are following us." Too, consistent efforts can invite a regular flow of referrals from current residents and families.

When we asked what your peers hope to accomplish with social media marketing, the top three responses were communicating with prospects, driving website traffic and staying top of mind with prospects. Social media can indeed be a strong sales driver.

The Organization's Social Media is a Strong Corporate Asset

The long-term value of growing an organization's social media followership, engagement and conversions is the development of a strong corporate asset. Our study participants pointed out that by "creating the corporate image, you create long-term revenue," and that development of the social footprint is "conducive to the company's development." With growth by acquisition or merger so prominent in the industry, remember the social media outlay is just as valuable as leads in the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system or sales pipeline.

A Word on Listening

While all our survey respondents focused on engaging current and prospective residents and families, only one respondent mentioned social listening: “Social media listening” allows us to understand the market and find out customer needs.

Through social media channels, you can more readily hear the perspectives of those you serve and those you employ. This allows your organization to respond to issues in real time and uncover emerging market opportunities. To that end, it’s prudent to have at least two sets of eyes on all social media channels to ensure response to pertinent comments or posts from your audience.



THE SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING MANAGEMENT PROCESS MADE SIMPLE

Our study results paint a clear picture of processes your peers use to manage social media marketing. Here are the highlights.

How Often Should A Senior Living Organization Post on Social Media?

In her article [How Often to Publish on Social Media for Business?](#), Senior Social Product Manager for HubSpot Daria Marmer wrote, “Adam Mosseri, head of Instagram, offered more insight during Instagram’s 2021 Creator Weekend. He suggests [sharing a couple of in-feed posts per week](#) and a couple of stories per day. Hootsuite suggests posting on Instagram three to seven times per week. And remember: Don’t post more than once per day.”

The benchmark for social posting in the senior living industry is four to seven times weekly and only once daily, adjusting up and down depending upon business objectives and any gaps in reaching key measures of success. For example, for an organization that has high census across all locations, maintaining that status can take just four posts per week with one of those posts being promotional. For an organization seeking to boost census in one or more communities, it would be best to post seven times weekly with two of those posts being promotional.

How often do your peers post on social media?

39%

Said more than once per day.

If you are among them, consider ratcheting back to prevent unfollows and/or disengagement.

34%

Said 2-4 times per week.

26%

Said once daily.

What is a Good Process for Social Media Marketing in Senior Living?

Be sure to put the right people in charge of your organization's social media marketing. Our study revealed that 50% of senior living marketers and executives have multiple members of the marketing team responsible for posting on their social media accounts. This can work well if everyone is in lockstep on one process for doing so.

What is a simple 8-step approach to the social media marketing process?

Here is the process Big Buzz has tested and proven over 15 years of delivering social media marketing in the care industries:

Step 1:

Of all our survey respondents, 49% said they set goals pertaining to social media. A good tool for doing so is the Content Path shown below. Over time, all posts should follow a path that aligns with various points in the conversion process as well as high-level business objectives the organization seeks to reach. This path makes clear what types of posts should appear day by day as well as each post types' call to action and measure. Social posting without a Content Path is just more noise on the web. This path should also be used in planning for content marketing each month or quarter.



Step 2:

Complete research. Gather survey data and review past social media initiatives and analytics to determine what actions increase followership and engagements and which do not. In our study, 75% of respondents take this step.


Step 3:

Review brand standards. When asked, "How often does your organization consult a brand standards guide when creating social media posts?" 54% of our respondents said monthly and 41% said quarterly. Both are a good cadence for refreshing the mind on the organization's brand pillars when planning social posts. It is entirely appropriate to integrate brand messaging into posts in the Awareness area of the Conversion Process in the Content Path, [ensuring that it truly differentiates your organization.](#)

Step 4:

Create the social media calendar. Most our survey respondents said they develop a new calendar either quarterly or monthly. We recommend quarterly development for organizations posting about four times weekly and monthly development for those posting up to seven times weekly.

Here is a template for a quarterly social media calendar. When posts are calendared based upon business objective (Awareness, Consideration, Decision or Monitor) and brand positioning, differentiators and value proposition, all pillars of the organization can be addressed in regular posting. Social media calendaring is a great action on which multiple team members can collaborate. In fact, 66% of your peers said they ideate and align as a team on the overall social media marketing strategy.



	Positioning Statement (Awareness)	Differentiator #1 (Consideration)	Differentiator #2 (Consideration)	Differentiator #3 (Consideration)	Value Proposition (Decision)	Celebrations, Thanks (Monitor)
Week 1						
Week 2						
Week 3						
Week 4						
Week 5						
Week 6						
Week 7						
Week 8						
Week 9						
Week 10						
Week 11						
Week 12						

Step 5:

Create the social media posts. For each post, ensure the creation team includes an image or video with alt text to describe visuals for people who have trouble seeing them. Be sure every post includes attention-getting or educational text. Include relevant hashtags every time. In our research, we found only 51% of your peers include calls to action (CTAs) on all social posts. Recalling that people take action only when we call them to action, [it's imperative every post include a CTA](#) and link.

Step 6:

Distribute posts across intended channels. Are you posting adequately on the right social media outlets? Only a [strategic marketing plan](#) specific to your organization's enterprise goals and business objectives can answer that question. To prevent posting across too many channels, expending resources and leaking returns, be sure in Step 1 to have researched which social media outlets your target audience frequents most and focus time and budget there.

Step 7:

Analyze social media marketing results for a given period. While only 49% of survey respondents included data analysis in the social media process, it's a critical indicator of success or areas in need of improvement. There are a dozen or more data points that social media marketers will measure, but your team likely will gain a clear high-level picture by measuring and reporting on just four metrics month over month:

Reach	Engagement Rate	Click-through Rate (CTR)	Conversion Rate
How many followers?	How many reactions, comments and shares as a percentage of your audience?	How often did social followers click a link to consume more content from your organization?	How often did social content lead to a conversion like a download, form submission or call?

Step 8:

Optimize and evolve social media marketing efforts. In analyzing and reporting on results over time, your team will be in a good position to replicate more social media efforts that are paying off and improve or retire efforts that are not.



TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS THAT GET THE MOST ENGAGEMENT IN SENIOR LIVING

In our research, the post types that get the most engagement include those featuring the team, community engagement, events, short videos like Reels, celebrations, families, care, press mentions and questionnaires. One often overlooked post type that garners high engagement and conversion is education such as downloadable resources or tools like cost calculators.

Additional post types that your peers favor include photos of pets, floor plans, menus as well as photos of food and dining and photos of residents with signed HIPAA consent form on file. As an aside, 58% of senior living marketers said they sometimes share photos of residents without signed HIPAA consent form on file. Better to err on the side of caution and get a signed consent form. It can even be completed as part of the move-in agreement process.

Across all social posts, use a variety of post types, based on the Content Path described above as well as post types that are known to garner attention, so long as they abide by your brand standards. At Big Buzz, we prefer to reference this [Ultimate List Of Blog Post Ideas](#). Here is a small sampling of the 75 different post types suggested:



Review Post

Review a product, event, or anything else you have access to while it's newsworthy.

For best results, be as honest as possible in your review.



Survey Post

Choose a newsworthy or trending topic and survey your audience about it using email, social media, or in-person event.

Then, pull the results together into a blog post.



News Post

Look to create content about events as they are happening.

For best results, be sure to add a perspective that your audience will find valuable or entertaining.



Trend Post

Some content creators are able to predict trends as they are happening.

If you're a trendspotter, create content on your blog that rides that trend as it becomes popular.



Issue Post

Choose issues that affect your audience and create content about them while they are timely and relevant.



Takeaways Post

For the takeaways post, you will react to an event, presentation, or experience and list out your top takeaways.

This should be done soon after the event to remain timely.



PHOTOGRAPHY BEST PRACTICES IN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING FOR SENIOR LIVING ORGANIZATIONS

When we asked your peers what kind of photography their organizations share on social media, 72% said both stock and original photography while 19% said only original photography and 9% said only stock photography. If budgets require use of stock, a blend of stock and original is best. In any event, live or online, authenticity is paramount. That means we must show photos of real people and happenings at our organizations just to be relatable.

Here is a checklist your team can use to stay in line with senior living industry standards:

Favor images of real people over stock images

Use only brand colors for solid backgrounds in images

Focus on tone-on-tone colors for solid background images

Keep images as clean and simple as possible

Have brand colors thread throughout feed for consistency

[Big Buzz podcast guest Tom Sanders](#) is the mastermind behind [Senior Stock Photos](#), a stock photography company that provides stock and original photos of seniors over the age of 55.



A sampling of Tom Sander's stock photography for senior living.



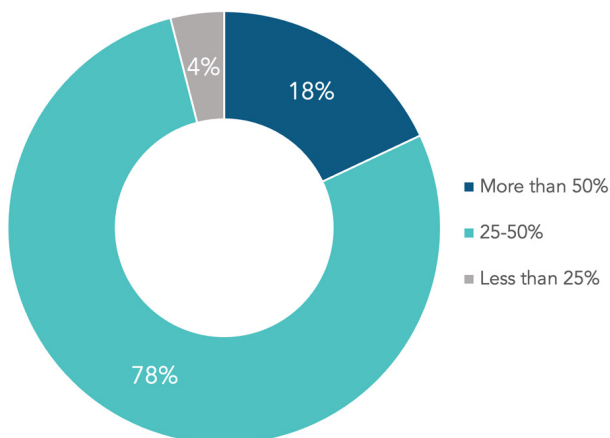
A sampling of Tom Sander's custom photography for senior living.



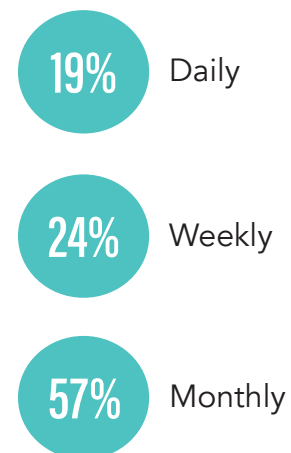
SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING INVESTMENT AND RETURN BENCHMARKING FOR THE SENIOR LIVING INDUSTRY

In closing, here is a snapshot of social media marketing benchmarking captured in our study so you can see how your organization's investments and returns compare:

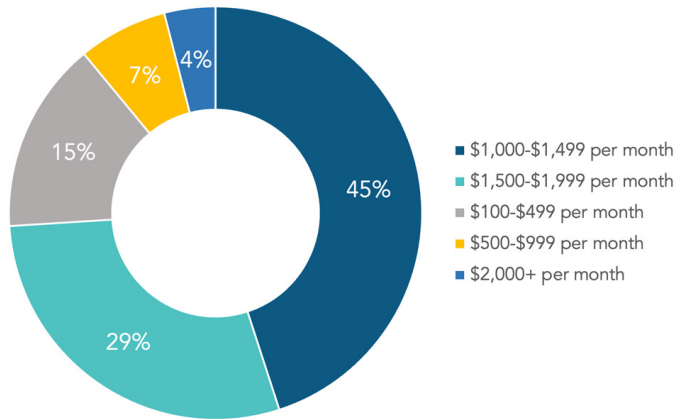
What percentage of your organization's marketing budget is allotted to social media marketing?



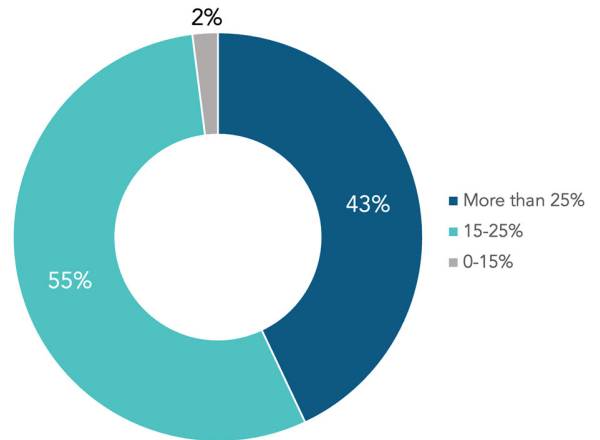
How often does your organization use paid social media advertising?



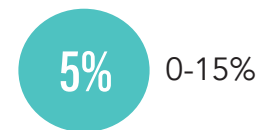
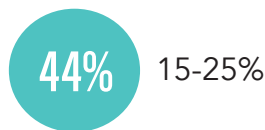
If your organization uses paid social media advertising, approximately what is your average ad buy?



What percentage of your marketing qualified leads (MQLs) would you say are generated from social media marketing?



What percentage of your sales qualified leads (SQLs) would you say are generated from social media marketing?



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, and Top Advertising and Marketing Agency by Clutch. www.bigbuzzinc.com

Yes, I want to connect with a Big Buzz marketing expert today so I can ensure all our social media marketing efforts:

- ✓ Include senior living industry social media marketing best practices to encourage higher engagement and conversions from followership to move-ins
- ✓ Closely follow organizational brand standards for maximum differentiation from competitors and for maximum production efficiency
- ✓ Are aligned upon and appropriately used by everyone on the team from corporate to location levels for maximum return on investment
- ✓ Are amplified across all the right social media channels for maximum reach and impact

[SCHEDULE MY FREE STRATEGY SESSION](#)

No charge, no obligation, no sales pitch. Promise.

4 ways you can work with Big Buzz now:

Consistently attract a steady stream of move-in-ready leads to all your communities by...	Achieve consistently higher results in one area of marketing, such as brand amplification, content marketing, social media marketing or marketing collateral efforts by...	Swiftly identify the one sales or marketing issue killing your organization the fastest, get to its root cause and eradicate it for good for stronger overall results by...	Immediately gauge at a low-risk price point how to achieve higher precision marketing results by...
Making Big Buzz, the experts in senior living marketing benchmarking, your full-service agency of record to oversee all marketing efforts.	Entrusting the development and full execution of one of these nurture marketing strategies to the senior living nurture marketing experts at Big Buzz.	Engaging Big Buzz to audit and suggest improvements to one area of your nurture marketing efforts, such as brand amplification, content marketing or social media marketing.	Handing off a single marketing project to Big Buzz.
Contact us for pricing	Cost: Starts at \$15,000 per nurture strategy	Cost: Starts at \$10,000 per audit	Cost: Starts at \$5,000 per project