

Your Website: Growing It from Good to Great

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Your organization has probably had a website for many years. And, if your situation is like many others, your website is likely performing as designed, but with room for improvement . . . for stepping up from good to great.

If this is one of your goals for 2018, here are some ideas to consider.

The Foundation You Build On

First, there are the basic building blocks on which all successful websites depend. They are simple, but worth repeating here.

Clean, engaging design. Visual appeal – especially the first impression your site makes on visitors – is huge. Experts tell us you need to engage with your web visitors in the first 10 seconds of their visit. [[Jacob Nielsen, Nielsen Norman Group](#)] Just as you wouldn't greet in-person visitors with peeling paint and cracked windows where you provide services, your online presence also needs to be clean, modern, and attractive. In short, every successful website starts with an appealing look and feel.

Clear, direct navigation. Ease in finding what you're looking for at a website is a second essential. Accessing your content – service descriptions, coming events, resources, and so on – should be fast and easy. One or two clicks with as little guesswork as possible should allow users to find where something is situated within the site. For example, if your site offers a home safety checklist branded to your organization, will visitors, including those who are elderly or disabled, be able to find it quickly?

Content that's timely, relevant, trustworthy. Content creation and approval should be a continuous process that includes: ✓ topic research ✓ writing in the style web visitors expect – concise, direct, informal ✓ review and editing by a second pair of eyes for both substance and style – spelling, grammar, punctuation, layout, etc.

Writing that's appropriate for both your visitors and search engines. Writing web copy is always a matter of balancing what's right for your human visitors and what will catch the attention of search engines. Put your flesh and blood visitors first, and be mindful of Google and Bing when and where you can.

Your Next Steps

So, your web communications efforts are solid. Now what? Are there best practices that can help in taking your website to an even higher level of success? Here are four suggestions we think are important:

First, place your organization's value proposition at the center of all your efforts – your services, amenities, special events, staff, approach to senior care, and unique place in your community's senior care network. The qualities that make you a great fit for the caregivers and families you serve is the single most important piece of information in the collection of information that makes up your website. Revise, polish, and update it continually. Test it with families you've served. Ask your vendors and referral sources for their opinion. Is the picture you paint, the story you tell, as clear and engaging as it can be?

Second, feed the beast. A brown bear eats as much as 90 pounds of food a day. Think of your website as the brown bear in your digital marketing portfolio. Make sure you give it a generous supply of fresh, engaging content, including blog posts, checklists, fact sheets and other give-away items, current information on upcoming events, and useful resources.

Third, be sure your website integrates fully with the other digital marketing channels you've created, such as Facebook, subscriber email and Twitter. Crosslink so that each of these drives traffic to each of the others. Don't be shy about reusing your content across all you related platforms. Make sure your web address is featured on each and every offline communication piece.

Fourth, make generous use of calls to action on your site. Use attractive, high profile icons to draw visitors' attention and invite them to engage with you. Want to schedule a visit? Have an online form for that. Want more information? Create a form for that. Want to subscribe to our newsletter? Click here. When visitors engage in these ways, ask for only the key information you really need in order to start your relationship – typically, just the person's name and email address, and the reason that the person is connecting with you.

The Bottom Line

Cover the fundamentals and put a check mark by these four best practices, and we're confident you'll have a website that will stand above the crowd in ways that will delight not only you, but, more importantly, the families and referral sources you want to reach, inform, and motivate.