



Caring's Chief Digital Officer Takes Your Questions!

By Wendy D'Alessandro

Jason Persinger is a digital marketing expert among the newest to join the Caring.com [management team](#), with insights to help you optimize your sales and marketing efforts using Caring's directory and referral services. He combines years of professional marketing experience with personal senior care experience to guide and support Caring.com partners. ([Caring.com](#) is a Senior Housing Forum Partner).

As Caring.com's new Chief Digital Officer, he's agreed to answer a few questions for Senior Housing Forum. He's also graciously offered to answer YOUR questions directly and privately via the "Ask Jason" link at the end of the article. It's not often you have direct access to a Chief Digital Officer, so take advantage of the opportunity!

SENIOR HOUSING FORUM: What's the best way to convert online leads to sales?

JASON: There are unfortunately some misconceptions in the industry about the value of online leads and how well they convert. We cover this topic repeatedly in [our Digital Marketing Academy](#) for that very reason.

First, look for ways to reduce "friction" in the lead and sales processes. Consumers -- particularly stressed out, overwhelmed and busy family caregivers -- can and often do become fatigued when asked for too much without enough buy-in for the services you have to offer to them. Whether you're managing leads through your own website or working with a [well-established, high ranking directory like Caring.com](#), you need to make sure that every lead flow and form on your website follows the same principles: How much friction is there on your website from when the consumer lands from a search engine to when they form-submit for more info?

For instance, on mobile devices, how well does your online lead submission form pre-populate information for the consumer vs. making them input every field? If your form requires their phone number and they're submitting from a mobile phone, you should code the form to auto prompt the phone number instead of forcing the user to switch to the numerical input screen. That creates a seamless and smooth experience that doesn't frustrate the consumer in trying to help themselves or their loved ones find a new place to live.

Once an online lead is generated, '[speed to lead](#)' is crucial for success. This means you have to have dedicated staff or a call center responding to those inbound leads within seconds and minutes, not hours and days. And you shouldn't give up too easily or quickly if you don't reach them on the first attempt.

Want more website lead gen tips? Check out the [blog post](#) by Orbit Media's Andy Crestodina.

SENIOR HOUSING FORUM: Our industry is about relationships, so it makes sense that even in the digital world, we have to make it personal. How can providers do that?

JASON: Your team should view every interaction as an exchange between your business and the family, and should build value in the consumer's eyes for the questions you're asking them to answer in your discovery process, or in moving them along in the selection process, to help them narrow down to your community. Continually put yourself in their shoes and convey your sales messaging in ways that expresses value to them and their family.

In some cases, they simply aren't going to respond to your immediate and frequent calls, and are going to need some valuable information from you via email first -- they may need to be further convinced that a phone call with you is worth their time. In other cases, one of your competitors may have reached them by phone first, and you may need to leave an excellent (brief) voicemail and give them a reason to call you back (such as a free white paper your community offers on a topic of relevance to them, or a link to your community's collection of great online reviews you've sent them via email after leaving your voicemail). You may need to continue a multi-channel follow up cadence over a couple of days or even a couple of weeks.

This process takes expediency, patience, and an acute ability to convey your community's true value propositions and competitive advantages succinctly. Do you come across as a 'salesperson' or do you come across as a senior living expert there to support their family in their time of need?

The "[Only 10 Minutes to Sell](#)" post by Sherpa's Alex Fisher offers additional proven tips.

SENIOR HOUSING FORUM: You make a good point about the senior care searchers finding senior living communities via online directories and search engines. What's new in 2019 with Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM)? Any tips you'd share with our audience for this area of digital marketing?

JASON: For SEO, where you're trying to rank high on the search results page where the consumers are most likely to click: Your webmasters or senior living community website marketers (whoever owns this at your organization) should make sure that you're being a good steward of your content. You should be creating both evergreen (long-lasting) information as well as timely information, and ensuring that your site structure is communicating what is what to Google and the other search engines. Gone are the days where tons of pages of thin content will garner a high position. Tons of website turnarounds over the last few years have had a big focus on content cleanup, mobile friendliness, and site/page speed. If you're not investing in these areas, Google (and other search engines) will leave you behind -- on page 3, 4, or 5 of search results that never really get visited and utilized by your target audience.

For SEM, where you're buying placements: Keep tabs on your competitors using tools like Semrush/Spyfu. These tools, along with others can help you do competitive landscape analysis. And in terms of your own Pay-Per-Click (PPCs) ads, make sure you're creating feedback loops for your data. Often, keyword negative lists aren't routinely revisited - kill keyword placements that don't match user intent, or that are failing to align well to your digital KPIs.

SENIOR HOUSING FORUM: What about social media? Should senior living communities have any digital marketing focus there for 2019?

JASON: If you're not starting to think about YouTube as a branding channel or potentially a consumer acquisition channel, you could find yourself left behind. 1 in 3 Baby Boomers looks to YouTube for information on products and services, [according to ThinkWithGoogle](#). One caveat I'd point out with that statistic though: their data is a bit skewed to active users of YouTube, or reflects survey responses from folks who've watched YouTube at least once a month. Nonetheless, it is widely known that [YouTube is the #2 search engine globally](#), that video is among the [most compelling social media content](#), and that [American Baby Boomers are definitely among the users](#) of this channel in attention-worthy volume.

Beyond YouTube: Online reviews are also tried and true for social media marketing for senior living communities. That should definitely be an area of social media that has the focus of your readers, as Denise pointed out for several reasons in the [Google vs. Caring Reviews](#) article. She also provides extensive info for senior living communities on [our industry blog](#) as well.



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