



AN AGING SERVICES GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA

VARSITY®

— WINNING THE MATURE MARKET™ —

A HANDY SOCIAL MEDIA REFERENCE FOR THOSE PROVIDING SERVICES TO OLDER ADULTS

This guide provides tips that will help you grow the social media following of your community, health service or product marketed to seniors. It will help you take your engagement to the next level and put you on the path to success.



SOCIAL MEDIA ISN'T AN OPTION — IT'S A NECESSITY.

Every business is looking for ways to connect to its customers. In the aging services space, that means connecting with individuals seeking services, as well as those that may be making service decisions for them, such as spouses, children and extended families. The one place where all of these groups congregate is on social media.

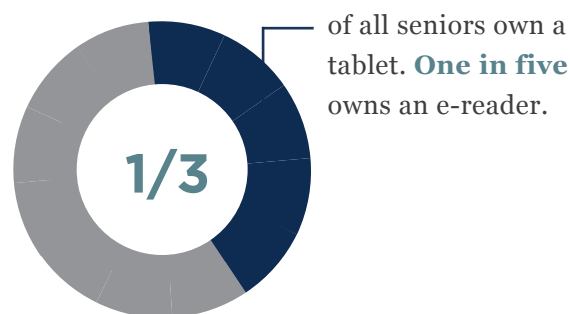
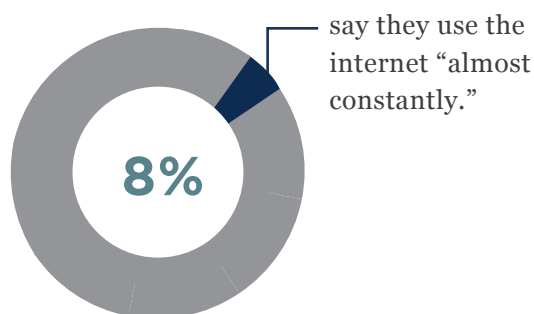
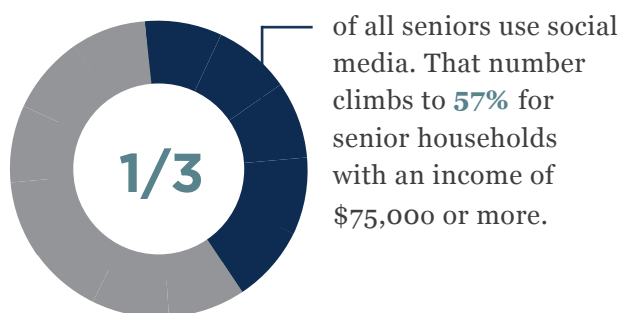
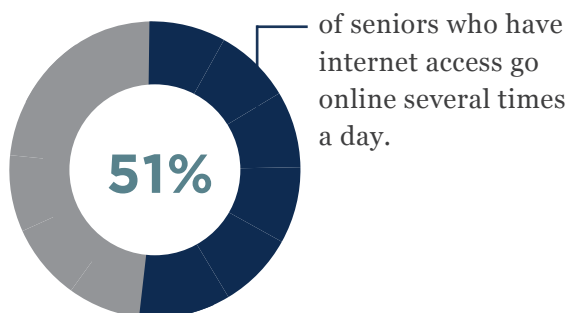
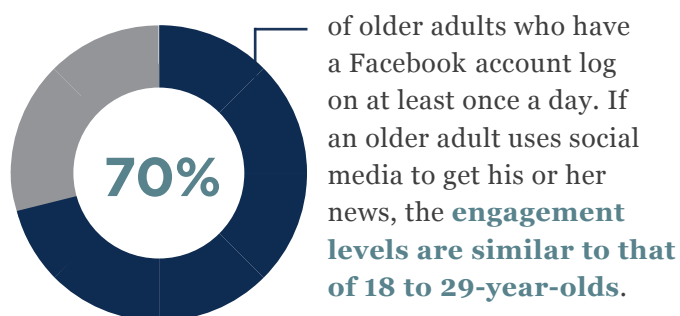
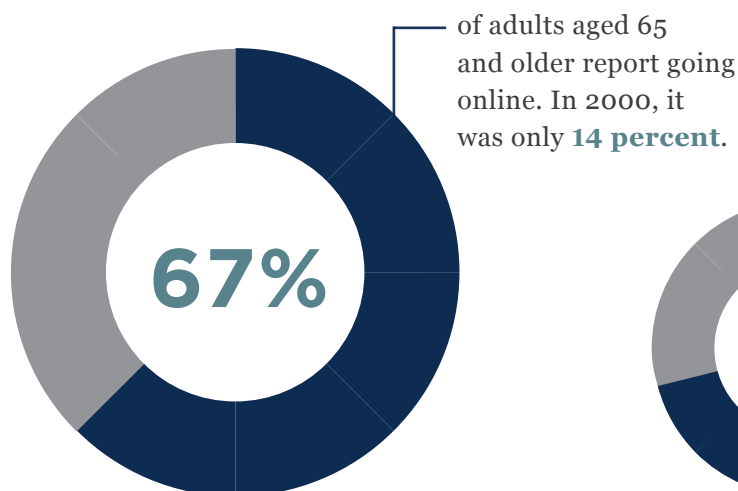
Right now, your potential residents and their families are browsing posts on Facebook, flipping through photos on Instagram and catching up on the day's tweets. Whether they are watching the big game, having a drink with friends or relaxing on a couch, they are all engaged with social media.

This doesn't just go for potential customers, either. Those to whom you are providing services are already on social media, talking about your organization, leaving reviews and acting as ambassadors for your brand. Are they saying good things? Do you even know what they are saying at all? That's why it is so very important to manage your organization's online reputation via social media.

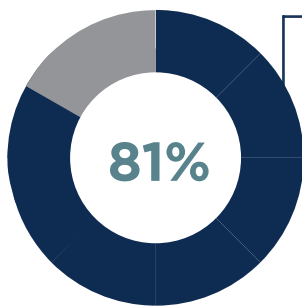
This guide will give you insider tips that are backed by quality data and real-world experience from individuals who specialize in managing social media for aging services businesses. It will help you build your follower and customer base and increase engagement.



STARTING WITH STATS



IS YOUR WEBSITE RESPONSIVE?



of seniors with a household income of \$75,000 or more have a smartphone. Smartphone browsers rely on responsive websites to format properly on their screens.

Responsive web design is essential to website development today. It aims to have webpages display appropriately on a range of devices with different screen sizes, shapes and capabilities. As an example, the screen on a laptop is much larger than the screen on a smartphone. A website developed with responsive design would adapt to these two different size screens to ensure that the site has a quality user experience, no matter the device. Find out if your website is responsive by visiting search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly.

If your website isn't responsive, you could be losing potential customers.



MANAGE YOUR RISK

Since 2012, there have been 47 documented incidents of senior abuse stemming from inappropriate social media posts.

In 2016, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) published a memorandum detailing expectations of social media use by senior services staff members. These guidelines cover employees, consultants, contractors, volunteers and other caregivers.

Common abuse situations are easy to spot on social media. Everyone knows overt physical, sexual and emotional abuse when they see it; however, many problematic social media posts stem from ignorance or lack of training. Take, for instance, the case of a granddaughter posting a photo of herself with her grandmother. The granddaughter was an employee of the community but was off-duty. She took a photo with her grandmother to celebrate recovery from a recent health issue. The grandmother was fully clothed, and no resident or family complaint was filed. However, another staff member saw the photo and reported it as a safety measure. The granddaughter was advised to remove the photo to protect the resident's right to privacy.

Monitoring social media feeds and messages should be a daily task for someone at every organization. They should know and understand the CMS guidelines and have a defined system for reporting potential issues.





PRO-TIP:

- » Have one staff member be the gatekeeper for all of your social media feeds. While everyone can submit photos and stories, a knowledgeable individual should review each post with a critical eye. Check other postings with hashtags of your community name, and click on the location to see any photos posted from your community. This will help to uncover any postings that violate HIPAA policies or that are not consistent with your brand image.

FACEBOOK

ELEVEN PERCENT OF FACEBOOK USERS ARE SENIORS. THAT'S 14.8 MILLION PEOPLE, GROWING AT A RATE OF 1,448 PERCENT PER YEAR.

Facebook is currently the best social media platform for reaching seniors, and it should be the first choice for organizations looking to develop a social media presence.

Remember: Facebook is not a direct marketing platform. It cannot sell apartments or cottages and is poorly designed for direct sales messages. Rather, it should be used to build an online community that engages current and future customers and their families. By nature, it is a passive advertising medium where leads occur — not from marketing efforts, but from digital word of mouth.

Facebook Feeds should be updated at least three times a week, with once a day being the optimal posting habit. We encourage a strong review of your Facebook insights to discover when the best posting times are and what demographics are most likely to engage with your content.

POSTING SUGGESTIONS:

- » Appropriate photos of people utilizing your service or campus
- » News about upcoming or recent events and activities
- » Videos of special events
- » Helpful articles about successful aging and life changes
- » Interactive questions that ask your followers to respond and engage

PRO-TIP:

- » Organizations should use Facebook Business Manager to manage and maintain their created accounts. This separates personal accounts from business accounts and offers additional features for advertising.



TWITTER

THIRTEEN PERCENT OF ADULTS OVER 50 ARE USING TWITTER. THIS FIGURE IS GOING TO INCREASE IN THE NEXT DECADE.

Twitter is best used to coordinate and engage with the media and other professionals. It is often a second choice for organizations looking to build their public relations presence and gain more traction with traditional media outlets.

Twitter can help you share news stories and connect with reporters, editors, producers and influencers. It's also an excellent source of industry news and a great way to connect with vendors.

If you're just using Twitter for connections, your posting can be sporadic. However, if you are interested in really building a Twitter following, we recommend one to two posts per day, with proper hashtags to allow for discovery. For reference, a hashtag is a word or phrase preceded by a hash or pound sign (#) and used to identify messages on a specific topic. Using hashtags will help interested persons find and engage with your content more easily.

TWEETING SUGGESTIONS:

- » Share important news or changes with your service
- » Take time to read and respond to tweets from peers or influencers
- » Utilize photos and relevant hashtags to increase interaction
- » Follow other local businesses and organizations so that you can keep abreast of what others are doing and find ways to tie your service to their happenings

PRO-TIP:

- » Twitter is a two-way street. You can't just post content and hope everyone comes to it. Take some time to follow people and organizations that matter to your business. Often, they will follow back, opening up the doors for further dialogue.



INSTAGRAM

ONLY 15 PERCENT OF ALL INSTAGRAM USERS ARE OVER THE AGE OF 50. RESEARCH SHOWS THAT SENIORS PREFER SEEING IMAGES INSTEAD OF WRITTEN STORIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

Instagram is a great platform for communities in densely populated areas or that have publicly available attractions. It is, at its core, a mobile-first visual social media platform. It relies entirely on pictures and video for content and is currently owned by Facebook.

Instagram is best used to connect with the wider public, with a user base that skews younger than Facebook. It is best applied as part of a holistic social media strategy that builds community in place of marketing. Additionally, it can be used to boost recruitment efforts that need to reach Millennial and Generation Z workers.

Organizations with Instagram accounts should aim for one to two posts a week, utilizing proper hashtags to enable discovery.

POSTING SUGGESTIONS:

- » Photos of places where your services are used (retirement communities, in homes, etc.)
- » Reposts from local community organizations
- » Videos of special events
- » Artistic images with overlaid quotes pertinent to your offerings
- » Infographics that provide insight on issues relating to your service

PRO-TIP:

- » Instagram provides an outlet to show the creativity of your organization. Use it to post pictures of people engaging with your products or services, as well as to highlight innovations.





TWENTY-ONE PERCENT OF LINKEDIN USERS ARE OVER THE AGE OF 65. THEY ARE USING THE SITE TO REMAIN CONNECTED WITH COLLEAGUES AND SELECTIVE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES.

LinkedIn is the premier social network for professionals. It is not a place to market your product, but it offers an excellent venue for recruitment of key staff members.

We recommend that brands secure a business page and complete the information required. This will offer potential employees another place to learn about your organization.

LinkedIn is great for sourcing individuals for hard-to-fill positions. For effective recruiting, we recommend including HR in your LinkedIn plans. Organizations should strive to create one LinkedIn post every month on a topic that would be of interest to professionals.

POSTING SUGGESTIONS:

- » Share your latest hires and promotions
- » Publish testimonials from current employees about why they love their job
- » Provide information on why the aging services industry is growing and is a great field in which to work

PRO-TIP:

- » LinkedIn offers its own platform for paid advertising. If you're struggling to find candidates to fill key positions, this could be part of the solution.



YOUTUBE

IN 2015, YOUTUBE HAD NEARLY 20,000,000 UNIQUE VISITORS OVER THE AGE OF 65. IF YOU INCLUDE THOSE 55+, THAT NUMBER SPIKES TO MORE THAN 45 MILLION PEOPLE.

YouTube is the world's premier video-based social media platform. Three hundred hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute, with over 30 million people visiting the website every day. Video content is the wave of the future, with an increasing number of seniors seeking out YouTube content that piques their interest. News, DIY tutorials and entertainment videos are the most sought-after ones.

Having a high-quality video to market your services or product can set you apart from your competition; however, it can be expensive for an organization to create a quality production. This is why we encourage businesses to produce more organic videos, using their phones or point-and-shoot cameras. This content can help populate your other social media streams as well. Remember: These videos aren't meant to take the place of professionally created media; rather, they provide an avenue for your organization to create an authentic connection with your users.

YouTube doesn't require a constant stream of new content. Producing one high-quality video per year, supplemented by several short organic clips, will put you on the right path.

POSTING SUGGESTIONS:

- » Service demonstrations or utilizations
- » Testimonials from customers and employees
- » Short clips of exciting events
- » Videotaped thoughts from the CEO or executive team

PRO-TIP:

- » Get a tripod for your phone or a point-and-shoot camera. By simply stabilizing your capture device, your video quality will increase.



Source: www.Digiday.com

BOOMERS ACCOUNT FOR 18% OF PINTEREST USERS. NEARLY HALF OF ALL WOMEN ONLINE USE THE SITE.

Pinterest is one of the newest social media networks on the block. Its user base is 79 percent female, with half of the total users being women, ages 35–54. However, just because the majority of users aren't in our target demographic doesn't mean that Pinterest can't have a place in social strategy for older adults.

Think of it this way — seniors come from an era when they would physically clip advertisements and articles out of newspapers. This action is strikingly similar to “pinning” on Pinterest.

This platform can also offer a creative way to show off products, especially living accommodations at retirement communities. “Home” and “arts & crafts” are very popular categories on the site, creating a natural link for marketers.

POSTING SUGGESTIONS:

- » Repin items showing your products
- » Create new pins that show off your service
- » Share ideas that directly relate to your service
- » If your service or community has been around for awhile, share historic photos and quotes

PRO-TIP:

- » Display your floor plans on Pinterest, and create boards that show the floor plan with a model home setup. This creates another way for potential senior living residents to engage with your product.



BLOGGING

Blogs, sometimes called “news feeds,” offer a system for communities to post content that they feel is relevant and that they would like to post on the web. There are many blogging platforms available, with the most common being Blogspot, WordPress and Drupal. Organizations desiring a blog should have it built into their website.

Blogs are the best place to share longer articles and pictures of events happening around communities. They can also be used to advertise for upcoming events. The challenge with a blog is that it takes time and energy to craft and develop content. It is an intensive medium for upkeep.

Successful blogs will have at least one new post every week, with additional posts being helpful. Posts should cover a wide variety of topics that are of interest to a broad demographic. Blogs are a great place to talk about innovative programs and to highlight community members.

POSTING SUGGESTIONS:

- » Monthly guest column from senior leadership
- » Testimonials from people using your product
- » Guest posts from influencers in your industry
- » Insights from employees lower in the organization, who have specific, interesting skill sets

PRO-TIP:

- » Think outside the box when looking for blog post content. You can invite special guests to contribute a post or highlight tertiary products that align with your offerings. Many businesses will participate in cross-promotion of blog posts and content, as it also benefits them.



**DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO PLAN AND EXECUTE A SOCIAL MEDIA
STRATEGY FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION?**

WE CAN HELP!

At Varsity, we provide fresh perspectives on the mature market. We pride ourselves in knowing and understanding the views of older adults. We've provided social media services to a broad spectrum of clients, including single-site communities, multi-site senior living organizations and health services brands.

We can offer a personalized social media playbook for your organization and can help you develop an engaging strategy.

FIND OUT HOW YOU'RE DOING ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

Email us at **WLangley@VarsityBranding.com**
or call **925.481.8904** for your free assessment.

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