

# CARING

The cover of the journal 'Caring' features a photograph of Congressman Jim McGovern, a caregiver, and an elderly woman. Congressman McGovern is seated on the left, wearing a dark suit and a red tie, and is holding the hand of the elderly woman. The caregiver is standing in the center, wearing a brown sweater and khaki pants, and is looking at the woman. The elderly woman is seated on the right, wearing a white top and a black and white polka-dot skirt, and is looking at the Congressman. The background is a simple indoor setting with a vase of yellow flowers and a framed picture on the wall.

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*A Tribute to  
Congressman Jim McGovern  
Advocate of Home Care & Hospice*

**Home Care's Role in Prevention & Wellness**

# Make the Agency Web Site a Resource and Watch the Hits Increase

By Merrily Orsini



Finding cost-effective, creative marketing tactics must be a high priority for home care agencies in 2009 in order to gain clients and keep an agency humming along smoothly. To keep costs down and meet ever-tightening budgets in a downturned economy, it is likely that many more families will believe they can manage the care of their loved ones at home. As these families search for assistance with this endeavor, the time is ripe to proactively promote your services, build a positive image in your community, and give helpful information to both current and potential clients, patients, and referral sources.

One way to achieve these valuable goals is through monthly themed communication. Choose a subject each month that is a common problem faced by your target populations—seniors aging in the home, pediatric ventilator patients, recuperating seniors, or those with specific chronic or acute illnesses. Then build an informational campaign around the themes using your Web site and other electronic marketing as cost-effective tools with far reaching and impressive impact. By providing information, your target audience will most likely find immediately useful, you will be drawing people to your agency's

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Web site and, almost as importantly, strengthening an image of professionalism, industry knowledge, and helpfulness within your community, and for those who live or work afar, but have loved ones in your service territory.

Fall prevention is an excellent example of a themed topic that would be very relevant to a large portion of an agency's target audience—anyone searching for helpful information for a frail person choosing to recuperate or simply stay at home. Here are six cost-effective ways to build a communications campaign around this topic:

**Write and distribute a press release** – Compile a list of helpful tips for fall reduction and prevention, and create a press release based on these pointers. Email or fax the release to appropri-

ate contacts at your local newspapers. Additionally, make sure to post the press release on your Web site for visitors to read.

**Post statistics and factoids on your Web site** – AARP, CDC, and university studies are just a few of the places you can find free statistics and factoids on the Web about fall prevention. It's as easy as Googling "fall prevention," and a plethora of useful information arrives at your fingertips. Sprinkle statistics on fall prevention throughout your Web site. This will serve to capture a visitor's attention and easily reflect your monthly focus. Link these statistics back to your posted tips/tools and make it easy for a visitor to walk away with a useful experience and helpful information. They will likely return in coming months to see what new informational nuggets the site has to offer.

**Post a useful product list** – Along with tips and tools, another valuable resource for clients is a useful product list. For fall prevention, list products that will help people walk more steadily, products to reduce falls in the home, etc. If you are listing local resources, make sure to let them know you are listing their products on your site. Ask if in return they will list your agency on

their Web site. Post this vendor/product list on your Web site for all to see. Don't forget to archive all the information on your Web site when the monthly topic changes. After a few months of archived material, a great resource center will be housed on your Web site.

**Online promotion** – Using the agency Web site as a sales tool is always a number one recommendation. Why not try an online promotion? For instance, offer a free in-home consultation for fall prevention assessment on your Web site. When choosing a promotion, make certain it is something valuable enough that potential clients and/or referral sources will want to use the offer, but not so valuable that it soaks up a lot of time and/or resources to fulfill the promotion. When changing monthly topics, also change the offering, and be sure to take note of which promotions work better than others so successful offerings can be repeated.

**E-Newsletter** – Proactively promote material that is compiled for the monthly theme (statistics, useful products, press releases, and tips/tools) in an e-Newsletter. Since not every one of your potential or current clients and referral sources will make it to the agency Web site each month, the content can be repurposed in the form of an e-Newsletter to a subscriber database. Don't forget to add in a section for the online promotions! Most e-Newsletter templates have a spot designated for coupons or promotions.

**Email marketing** – If you don't want to or don't have the resources to create a professional e-Newsletter, make sure to at least send out an email including links to the various monthly themed components on your Web site, such as the tips/tools, product list and your online promotion.

By choosing and implementing target audience-relevant monthly topics such as fall prevention, your agency will not only

be showcasing itself as a hub of helpful resources to your client base, but also to potential clients and referral sources. The increased visibility of your agency from press releases, Web links, and e-Newsletters will result in calls for services and traffic driven to your agency Web site. By posting fresh content on your site each month, visitors without an immediate care need will return often enough that eventually a call for services will be in order and your agency will have already laid the foundation of trust needed to win the client.

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**About the Author:** *Merrily Orsini, MSSW, is managing director of corecubed, an integrated marketing communications company that specializes in home care and home health industries. Merrily has been active in internet marketing since 1990. She is an 18-year veteran of the private duty industry and currently serves on the Advisory Board of the Private Duty Homecare Association of America. She was recently elected to the NAHC Board of Directors.*