

# CARING®

The cover of the journal 'Caring' features a photograph of the United States Capitol building in Washington, D.C. The building's iconic white dome and neoclassical architecture are the central focus, set against a clear blue sky with light, wispy clouds. In the foreground, there are vibrant orange and yellow flowers, likely Canna lilies, with green leaves. To the left, a portion of a dark green evergreen tree is visible. The overall scene is bright and clear, suggesting a spring day.

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## Springtime in the Nation's Capital: Home Care and Hospice Advocates March on Capitol Hill



# 'Sticky Features' Build Your Home Care Facebook Brand

By Merrily Orsini



Watching new home care agencies come into the social media space is amazing. The interest and growth are phenomenal. Typically, the first foray into this medium is with a Facebook Fan Page, which I have alluded to in recent months. In previous articles I have offered a primer in the anatomy of a Facebook Fan Page; many, by now, have built one — but just building a fan page, in this case, does not mean the fans will come.

First, why would anyone want to use Facebook and learn how to build a fan base for home care? The ability to be found on the Internet when someone is seeking information about services is the #1 task for a home care agency's Internet marketing efforts. Being a player in social media is one way to help those seeking services or employment to find your agency. Building a fan base on Facebook takes consistent work, encouragement of interactivity, and "sticky" features which will provide perceived value to your (soon to be) fan base. So get on the social media bandwagon and learn about using "sticky" features to enhance your agency's Facebook presence.

**Make it Easy.** Social media is social networking. It provides a method to keep connected in an easy, concise format. Make it easy for potential fans (e.g., customers, clients, patients, and referral sources) to find you. Start integrating

links to your Facebook account (and any other social media accounts) into all communications.

**Adorn Your Website.** Place the universal Facebook icon with your fan page as the click-through link in a visible place on your website's home page. Even better, have it somewhere that is visible on *every* page on your site. Invite visitors to become fans and receive useful articles, information, etc. You can download free versions of the icon at [IconArchive.com](http://IconArchive.com). Enter "Facebook" in the search tab or get it directly at [www.iconarchive.com/show/web-2-icons-by-fasticon/FaceBook-icon.html](http://www.iconarchive.com/show/web-2-icons-by-fasticon/FaceBook-icon.html).

**Don't Forget Your Email Signature.** Think about how many people read emails from your agency daily. Your email signature is another area of prime real estate where you can promote your agency's fan page. Include the Facebook icon here as well! Hopefully by now you already are using the agency URL in your email address, and also extending your brand by having information in your email signature.

**Your e-Newsletter Works, Too.** For those of you who send out e-newsletters, be sure to promote your Facebook presence here as well by including a link to your fan page as one more way to build interest.

**Make it Interactive.** Engaging your fans is a way to find out what they want

and to have them spread the word about your agency to those who might need services. There's really no other social media format that does this better than Facebook. Interactivity makes your fan page appear alive and more enticing to others to become a fan.

## Here are some suggestions to engage your fans/potential fans:

**Ask Fans to Invite Friends.** This may seem overly simple, but it is the quickest way to increase your fan base. Ask your fans to invite their Facebook friends. There is a simple one-click link on your fan page for fans to "invite your friends." Many people new to Facebook don't know about this or understand what this means. It is up to you to ask!

**Engage Them with Polls.** There are several Facebook applications that allow the creation of short polls/surveys and then post them on your fan page. This is a great way to engage your fan base and get information to give you a better idea of your service touch points and specifics as to what your potential clients/fans/referral sources/patients might be looking for. Do a search for "Polls" on Facebook or go directly to [http://apps.facebook.com/opinionpolls/create\\_poll.php](http://apps.facebook.com/opinionpolls/create_poll.php) for more.

Some questions for a home care agency's poll might include:

What is the most challenging activity you as a caregiver currently face?

- What characteristics are most important to you in a caregiver coming into your home?
- Who do you trust for information on long-term care for your loved one?
- An in-home caregiver would help you the most with (provide some multiple choices that showcase your services).

**Offer More with Applications.** There are a plethora of applications developed by Facebook as well as outside entities. To see what's available you can go to the Facebook Application Directory. These applications are all free and offer a way to personalize and enhance your fan page. Think of what your fan base would be interested in. Recommendations for local senior activities? Install applications on your fan page and use them to provide interesting information or recommendations to your fan base. When logged into Facebook, click on the application link on the right hand side under the photo area, or go directly to the application directory at [www.facebook.com/?ref=home#!/?sk=apps](http://www.facebook.com/?ref=home#!/?sk=apps).

**Customize Your Landing Page.** When first developing your fan page, you have the choice of where your user lands. Most people choose the "Info" or "Wall" tab. Did you know, however, that you can create your own landing page? Have your web developer create a custom entry tab. To understand what I'm talking about, type "HP" in the Facebook search bar, and under "Pages," you'll see "HP" for Home. If you click this page, you aren't taken to a "wall" to write messages on but directed to where HP wants you to go: a customized, changeable tab. Type in other big brands and you will see that most of them have you enter into a custom tab. This is a great way to control what your potential fans see.

**Make it Interesting!** There are many ways to attract and keep interest. On

Facebook, the same as with the Internet, the key is to provide useful information and interesting visuals.

**Use Video.** Fan pages come packaged with the ability to post video. Think of items that interested potential referral sources might want to see. Or, take snippets of your caregivers, similar to mini-interviews. Ask them what makes working for your agency so different. Make it personal and post them on your fan page. Videos can give a feel of personal and direct contact with your agency and give insights into what your agency is — and why someone should come to you for care.

**Include Links.** The easiest and fastest way to give useful information to fans is via the classic link. Whenever you find an interesting news story, local resource or other tidbit of information, make sure to link to it. You will be building a virtual resource library via your fan page. Plus, spreading information that has targeted key words included boosts the search engine ranking for your agency.

All of this might seem foreign. Certainly, the interactivity of social media marketing is new to many. The world of marketing through social media, however, is opening up quickly with many, many opportunities. Through my talks with agencies and interaction at industry conferences, it has become apparent that social media marketing is taking a firm hold in the home care industry. Using Facebook effectively will help you build brand recognition, establish another touch point with potential and current clients, and further your image as the expert in your area on home care. Explore Facebook further, see what fits for your agency, and get creative!

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**About the Author:** *Merrily Orsini, MSSW, is managing director of corecubed, a marketing communications company that specializes in monthly marketing programs for the home care and home health industries. Orsini has been active in Internet marketing since its inception. She is an 18-year veteran of the private duty industry and chair of the Private Duty Home Care Association, and serves on the board of the National Association for Home Care & Hospice. Orsini is a frequent national speaker, and can be followed on her blog at [www.MerrilyOrsini.com](http://www.MerrilyOrsini.com) or on Twitter @MerrilyO.*

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