Looking for Increased Productivity? 

Look No Further Than Your Own Web Site.

By Merrily Orsini

Although it’s easy to see that the Internet is a tool used to promote business, it’s also important to know the many ways it can be used to increase the speed and accuracy of running a business. Yes, the “P” word “productivity” shouldn’t just be used to measure the effectiveness of your staff. Using the Internet to increase business productivity is what smart home care agencies are doing to save time and money. Harnessing the Internet and the power of your Web site to increase productivity is key to a successful business in today’s market.

There are several ways to leverage your Web site to benefit your agency. From more personalized and efficient customer communication, to improved data gathering tools and sales tactics, increasing the productivity of your Web site can save you time, allow communication with your customers and referral bases, and most likely contribute to an increase in business and revenue. Consider if your Web site is doing all it can for you by reviewing the following points.

Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

One thing that speeds up business processes is a Web site’s ability to be your agency’s first point of contact. It is a way for your agency to have a 24/7 presence so interested clients or referral sources may learn about your services at their convenience.

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- **Keep it current!** Because of the “always-on” connectivity, make certain your Web site has up-to-date and/or timely information in terms of contacts, service listings, testimonials, press releases, upcoming events, and/or price lists.

- **Be accessible.** Making certain your customers can reach you when they need you is very important. In many cases, adult children in other states are contacting your agency on behalf of their parents. Physicians’ offices, powers of attorney, and guardians might also want to find information after office hours or on holidays. Make it easy for them to contact you. Place contact links visibly on every page.

With the advent of voice-over Internet protocol (VoIP), using low-cost audio and video communications not only through Skype but also through other companies such as SightSpeed and OneBox is a great way for you to allow another avenue of contact for potential clients. Simply set up a “Call Us” button on your Services or Contact Us page.

**Drill Down of Information**

Your Web site serves as an initial point of contact for your agency. By placing the correct tools on the site, you can gather valuable data about site visitors quickly and easily as well as disseminate data to customers. A one-time implementation of the initial part of an intake process will save your agency hours in the sales process. Here are some ideas:

- **Beef up your contact form.** Use your Contact Us page as a potential
referral and inquiry information gathering tool. Create an online form with the questions normally asked in the first phone or in-person intake meeting. Instead of just providing a short form for contact information, develop another longer form that gathers critical data such as name, phone number, email, and mailing addresses of both the client and contact person, what services are of interest, timeline for starting services, where they heard about your agency, and any other important information. If the request is an emergency, have the email trigger a beeper or call for the on-call person to report it. Leads are now coming to you real time with the data you need to be effective.

**Post sales collateral.** Save staff time and money (and save a few trees in the environment at the same time) by making your sales collateral (company brochure, product material, etc) electronic. Cutting down on mailing and printing costs as well as process time allows you to spend scarce and valuable resources elsewhere. Post these downloadable electronic files at several places throughout your Web site in a universal format like Adobe PDF. (Note: Also provide a link to Adobe Reader if users need to download the program.) Tip: Name these files something that correlates with marketing, so the file name designates the content of the PDF. Example: AgencyA Physician Brochure.PDF.

**Offer sales presentations.** If you often present to referral sources with an educational PowerPoint presentation, consider providing it in digital format. Simply record your next presentation via a digital video camera or Webcam, then, post in on your site or use it in email outreach. This provides another personal touch point for potential customers and a way to significantly decrease time spent bringing in new clients.

To maximize the efficiency of your Web site, it helps to think of your site as a conversation between your agency and referral sources and potential clients. Think about not only what information you want to share about your agency, but what information the potential client may want to know, and also what data needs to be captured about a prospective client. Keep this in mind when building an agency Web site and you will not only have a site that sells, but also a site that increases your agency’s productivity in the long run!

**About the Author: Merrill Osint, MSSW, is managing director of Carecounsel, an integrated marketing communications company that specializes in home care and home health industries. Merrill has been active in Internet marketing since 1999. 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.**

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**HOSPICE INDUSTRY SURVEY**

The Yale School of Public Health is conducting a National Cancer Institute-funded study of the hospice industry. Hospices across the country will be selected at random to receive invitations to participate. If you receive an invitation, NAHC urges your participation in this important research.

The study will help us obtain a clear and representative picture of what is occurring in the hospice industry so that we can plan for the future accordingly.

If you have questions about the survey, please contact Dena Schulman-Green, the Project Director, at 203-737-1564 or dena.schulman-green@yale.edu.

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PPS Forecaster is a free new tool from Delta that helps homecare providers easily calculate their service and supply utilization, view profit / loss, and more. With PPS Forecaster, a homecare provider may evaluate data responses using a time in regards to changes in PPS reimbursement as well as evaluate the PPS reimbursement on a larger scale through the PPS analysis section of the tool. To find out more about this free, new tool, log on to www.deltahealthtech.com.