

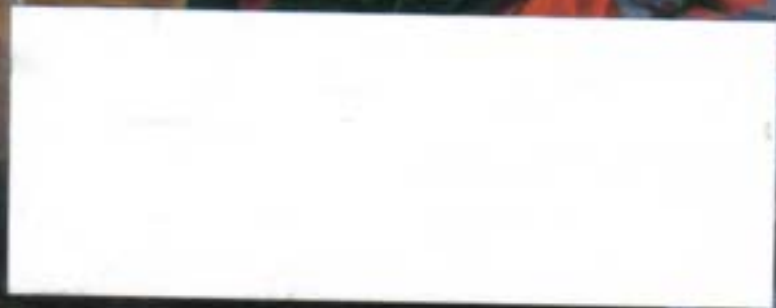
# CARING

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A Time to  
Celebrate  
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# Year End Ramp Up: Web Site Strategies for 2009

By Merrily Orsini



Unlike many businesses, agencies providing care experience very little, if any, year-end downtime. However, it is still important for the agency to evaluate where it has been and where it is headed for the New Year and beyond. A smart agency will use the remaining weeks of 2008 to set the stage for major success in 2009.

As always, the most important means of communication your agency has with the outside world is its Web site. Integrating a Web site into marketing activities is a great way to start planning for the new year. Follow these tips to take full advantage of year-end preparations:

## Take Stock

For the agency, most likely it has been an eventful year. Some goals were met; some were not. Priorities probably changed and some resources got shifted. As your agency grows, the Web site you built a year ago will require some tweaks. Get the best usage out of a Web site by making small changes with the biggest impact.

## Review Competitors

Now is not the time to let the competition outflank you. When was the last time your competition's Web sites were reviewed? There may be new features or

ideas that could be implemented on your own agency's site. It is key to know what the competition is doing in order to be successful in the new year.

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## Data Drivers

Data regarding the agency Web site's performance should drive the plan for success in the new year. If it is not already in place, install Google Analytics code on the Web site. If it has already been installed, review the year's trends and note which pages are receiving the most traffic so it is clear which pages need to be spruced up or expanded.

## SEO Improvements

Each page on a Web site should be written with the same variety of relevant keywords in the meta tags that are in the page text. Do an analysis of which words people are using to find your site on the Web. Google Analytics has a simple report that details just that, and by knowing exactly what people are searching for to find your agency, meta tags and keywords on the site can be tweaked to attract even more potential clients, patients, or referrals sources.

## Link Testing

Oftentimes, it is the simple things that matter most. Get them wrong, and a site's effectiveness drains considerably. Be sure to test every outbound link on the Web site on a regular basis. Nothing is more of a put off for a viewer than a series of dead links. This is especially relevant if the site contains a section of useful links or a resource page. The Internet is a constantly changing place, and chances are some of these sites have gone away.

## Refresh Resources

On the flip side, as some sites die, many new ones will appear. Seek out new local, regional, and/or national resources to list and link.

## Install New Features

Ever in a year-round business like a home care or home health agency, families are still more likely to make new plans at the start of the year. It is a natural time of assessment. Take this opportunity to add new features for the potential clients and referral sources that visit the site. Add a newsletter signup or put a calendar on the site if you host community events or give classes.

## Outreach

Remember, a basic marketing strategy is to reach out to other businesses and professionals that are synergistic. Ask them to place a reciprocal link on their Web site.

Most importantly, stay focused on objectives and set SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely – or the Orsini version: Strategic, Measurable, Accountable, Responsible, Timed). Be open to opportunities and follow the suggestions above, and you'll start the new year ahead of the pack with your Web site aimed directly at agency success for 2009.

*About the Author: Merrily Orsini, MSSW, is managing director of renowned, 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.*

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