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The cover of the journal 'Caring' features a photograph of a healthcare professional, likely a nurse or home health aide, assisting an elderly woman. The professional, wearing a dark blue scrub top and a lanyard, is leaning over the woman, who is seated in a wooden chair. The woman is wearing a white turtleneck sweater with floral embroidery and blue pants. She is holding a small, white, circular medical device on her abdomen. The background shows a window with blinds and a bookshelf with several books. The overall scene is set in a home environment, suggesting the focus of the journal is on home care.

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**Hospitals and
Home Health Care:
Dilemma or Opportunity?**

**Home Care
as the Key to
Chronic Disease
Management**

Facebook...for Business?

By Merrily Orsini



By now you have probably heard about Facebook in this series of *CARING* articles, via the media, or from friends and in your own use. Originally started for students, Facebook has evolved into one of the most powerful social media marketing tools out there today. In fact, an overall demographic shift is occurring where the fastest increasing user group is senior citizens. Today, more and more businesses are using Facebook as another tool in their online marketing suite. From fan pages to powerful applications, Facebook is a marketing outlet that every home care agency should look into using.

At first glance, you might wonder how Facebook can be utilized for a business in an effective way. As with any marketing strategy, the key to Facebook business success is really making it your own. Here is a quick primer in what components make up Facebook.

- **Facebook Pages** — Pages are created to give individuals and businesses their own profile on Facebook. For businesses, pages offer a chance to brand an identity on Facebook. Recently, Facebook has made some changes where businesses create a Fan page where those interested and following your brand can become “fans,” and when they do so, all their friends will see this. You can store photos, videos, and information about your agency on your fan page.
- **Groups** — Groups on Facebook are similar to pages, but are meant to be built around a group of people rather than an individual business or brand. Use the site’s Groups feature to network with your target audience. You can join existing groups or create one just for your business to amp up the buzz about your agency’s services.
- **Applications** — Facebook has a very powerful development process that offers software to help promote your business on Facebook. Applications give you full power to say or promote anything you want about your business, and use the social tie-ins provided by Facebook to do this.
- **Polls** — Facebook polls are great when looking to get a quick answer about a particular feature you’d like to implement, or just to find information and opinions from a specific demographic.

When creating a Facebook fan page for your agency, use the following ideas to attract fans and proactively market your agency.
- **Update Often.** The most effective Facebook fan pages are updated on a regular basis with new content. If there’s actually evidence (posts) that the page administrator (you) is visiting regularly and interacting with the community, fans will be more engaged.
- **It’s Not About You.** Facebook pages work best when they’re less about your agency and more about the fan. In other words, make your content and posts about what your potential customer would want to read or use.
- **Give Good Info.** Make sure when you set up your fan page, you complete as much information as you can. For instance, ignoring the questions asked when you create your agency’s profile could lose it a lot of potential business. List your business’s city, industry, neighborhood, and any other relevant information to let potential clients and referral sources know where they can find you.
- **Create a Badge.** Facebook describes its Badge feature as “a customizable way to share your Facebook information on other Web sites.” Create a badge for your agency to link your fans to your website, e-newsletter, or even your email signature.
- **Promote Events.** Instead of printing flyers and mailers, the next time you want to advertise an event such as a speaking engagement or community senior event, use the free Facebook Events application to get the word out.

- **Use the News Notes.** With the Facebook notes feature, you can share new services, agency or industry news, etc. It's also a great way to share blog posts (perhaps your agency has now started its own!) with your fan base.

There is much, much more to know about Facebook as a marketing tool, but my first recommendation is simply to begin. Create an individual page and begin using its features. Scope out other businesses and see what they are doing well and can emulate for your agency. And maybe become a fan of corecubed if you'd like to see how this all works!

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. Merrily has been active in Internet marketing since its inception. She is an 18-year veteran of the private duty industry, is Chair of the Private Duty Home Care Association, and is on the board of the National Association for Home Care and Hospice. Orsini is a frequent national speaker, and for further marketing tips, can be followed on her blog at www.MerrilyOrsini.com or on Twitter @MerrilyO.*