

How to develop an effective marketing strategy for your care home

An effective marketing strategy will help support your overarching goal of boosting the commercials within your care home by increasing occupancy and helping you to recruit and retain a great team of carers and ancillary staff. Ownacarehome marketing partner, [Sharp Minds Communications](#), set out their ten-step plan to help you create an effective marketing strategy, so your care home stands out in a crowded market.

1 – Know what you want your marketing strategy to achieve for your care home

Setting out with a [clear goal](#) in mind ensures you stay focused and allows you easily to evaluate the success of each campaign and your strategy as a whole. Make sure your goals are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results orientated, Time-framed) and not vague or ambiguous.

For example, instead of saying you want more visitors to your care home website, think about why you want more visitors to the website? Is this the right goal in itself? If you decide that more visitors will help drive enquiries from both potential residents and staff, you might want to set the SMART goal of:

S: To increase visitors to your website **by 10%**

M: Using Google Analytics to measure the data

A: Based on industry research, 10% is a manageable increase for the timeframe

R: More visitors mean more awareness of my care home

T: Within the next 6 months

2 – Set your marketing budget

Marketing costs can easily spiral out of control and should be constrained by an agreed [budget](#). You want to keep a tight rein on your spending, however you may not gain the traction you need if you undershoot it. Marketing budgets have an element of present investment for future rewards but aren't an exact science. As a guide, two common formulas commonly used by marketers are:



Age of business

- 1-5 years: 12-20% of gross revenue
- 5+ years: 6-12% of gross revenue

Business ambitions

- Maintain market share: 5% of gross revenue
- Want to grow: 10% of gross revenue

3 – Know your care home competitors

Understanding your competition will give you valuable insights into your market share and what is working and what isn't. Analyse their [market position](#) and their marketing, looking beyond the headlines to see what sort of traction they're getting. As a minimum, you should be gathering the following information:

- What do they offer? The training for staff, interaction with the community, facilities within the home.
- Where do they sit in the local marketplace?
- How big are they? How many employees and directors?
- Which job openings do they have? Check LinkedIn, Glassdoor or Indeed to find out. You can also gauge the areas they want to expand by the roles advertised.
- Do they have any partners? Local communities, corporate partnerships, affiliates.
- What marketing are they doing? What can you learn from this, both the good and the bad?
 - How well does their website perform on searches for care homes in your local area? How are they achieving this? (NB: Make sure you do a clean search when you are checking out your competitors' Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) performance. You probably look at your own website regularly, which will skew the results; either search in a private tab or clear your search history.)
 - How strong is their brand recognition locally?
 - How much engagement do they get on social media? What are their most popular posts? What do people say about their care home on social media?
 - What coverage do they get in the local media? What sort of stories get picked up?

4 – Know who you are trying to reach with your marketing

This is an essential component to guide your messaging. Many sectors have more than one ideal client, and care homes are no exception: it's impossible to run a commercially successful care home without sufficient residents, but to look after your residents you need to win the



recruitment war as well. So as well as creating [avatars](#) for both new residents and their relatives, you also need to create one for your ideal carer. You need to add in as much information as you can about their background and lifestyle, so you have a complete picture of the people you are aiming your marketing at, their likes and interests and what things are important to them.

5 – Talk to your residents and employees

[Utilise surveys, reviews, social media and interviews](#) to find out why your staff work for you, and why your residents and their families choose your care home. Be prepared to learn from the answers you receive as they may be vital pieces of information. Don't forget to ask those that turned down your job offer or opted to go into a rival care home as it could help you understand why they made their decision, whether you can address their concerns and how you will need to communicate this in the future to improve your resident conversion rates/recruitment success.

6 – Know your targets' pleasure and pain

From your research in Step 5 you'll be able to identify why people want to work for you or use your care services (their pleasure) as well as what pushes them to make these decisions (their pain). With this information you have the insights you need to identify how you [reinforce their pleasure and take away their pain](#).

For example, your residents will no doubt come to you because they are no longer able to live independently safely or with a good quality of life – that's their pain that pushes them to purchase your service. But to convince them to choose your care home over others in your local area, you will need to demonstrate how coming to your care home will tick positives for them (their pleasure). It could be the range of activities you offer, the quality of your accommodation, your caring staff, or the flexibility to choose from a range of meal options.

7 – Know where to find your target audiences

You need to make sure you are directing your energy in the right place. This means finding out where your target audiences are physically and digitally; as care homes typically have three target avatars, you need to identify where all of them 'hang out' and what their influences are:

- What do they watch, read (print and online), listen to?
- Who do they follow?
- What research do they undertake before making important decisions?

These are the [channels](#) on which you can reach them.



8 – Identify your care home’s messaging strategy

This isn’t just **what** you say (your message), but also **how** you say it (your tone/voice). Your [messaging strategy](#) is a combination of all your work so far: your business goals, your ideal client avatars and how you address their pleasure and pain. For both recruitment and residents you need to work out the message you need to communicate and the tone you need to strike.

9 – Create the marketing plan for your care home

You’ve built the foundations and are now ready to create a [marketing plan](#) built on the steps above. Plan what you are going to do, on which channels and when. Your plan needs to allow for the fact that most people need multiple touch points before they make a decision, considering things such as:

- How often will you post on social media? How will you generate the content? How will you monitor responses? Who will be responsible for this?
- What local advertising or sponsorship will you undertake?
- Should you be running local media campaigns?
- Do you need printed materials for potential residents to take away when they visit? How will you create this to ensure it showcases your home in the best light?
- What is the customer journey through your website? Does it convert sufficiently? Does this need reviewing?

Ensure you have enough resource to deliver the plan and adapt it if needed.

10 – Review and refine your care home’s marketing plan

Marketing is how you communicate your brand values to the world, so by default it is an ongoing activity. This means it’s important to [review your strategy](#) regularly and refine it to ensure you optimise your Return on Investment. If something worked well you should probably stick with it, and change anything that isn’t delivering the results.

Creating a successful marketing strategy requires good planning, informed by your initial research.

You can find more of our [#SharpTips](#) marketing insights on the Sharp Minds [website](#).

To discuss your key marketing challenges, contact us at communications@sharpminds.agency or give us a call on 01892 570863.