



Why your care home needs a website

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The jury is in and the answer is 'yes', you must have a website. Unanimous decision ... That's if you still want to be in business.

Many studies have consistently revealed that over 90 percent of considered purchase decisions — and selecting a care home of a loved one is a considered decision — are researched online first.

That's why you should now expect that by the time you get to talk to a potential client, they know more about you, than you know about them.

So why are purchasing decisions for care homes so different to regular consumer-like decisions?

Sales cycles are longer: The purchase cycle is usually an extended process, often lasting several months or longer. Marketing to care home prospects requires different actions, depending on what stage of the buying cycle your prospect is in.

Your products and services are more complex

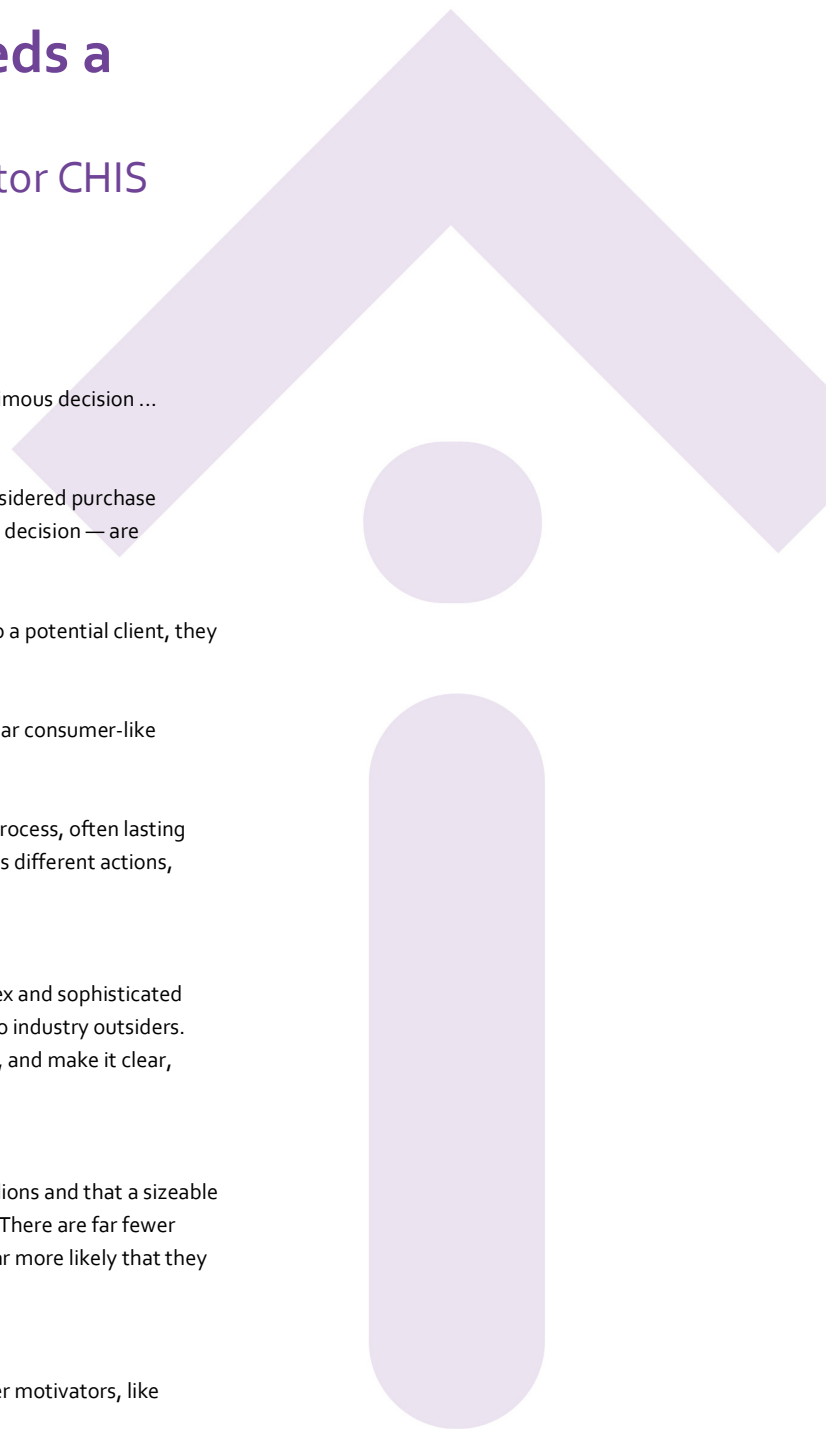
What a care home offers — your products and services — is a complex and sophisticated mix, with many of the benefits or detriments not easily recognised to industry outsiders. Your marketing needs to take the technical, the subtle, the intricate, and make it clear, understandable, and persuasive.

The marketplace is hard to identify

Consumer marketers know they can put their product in front of millions and that a sizeable percentage of that market are potential purchasers of that product. There are far fewer potential buyers for your offering — and they're harder to find. It's far more likely that they will find you online when they have the need.

Care home marketing must speak to the emotions

Care home prospects are generally not moved by the usual consumer motivators, like impulse or status, different individual emotional motivators apply.





For example, the fear of making the wrong decision, the level of confidence and compassion, the level of trust established with your team — all of these are very real emotional motivators.

Your brand is more important than you think

Your 'brand' is usually more important to your prospect than you think. Your brand is more than your logo, it's the sum total of everything they think about you ... or don't think about you. A website that builds a positive first impression reinforces the practical purchase criteria that drives you to the shortlist.

Your prospects research more than ever before

As I said in the introduction, nearly all considered purchasing decisions are now researched online. The risks and implications of making a poor decision are high for care home buyers. So, prospects conduct more research, seek more information, evaluate references, and research alternative solutions and providers.

More People are Involved in the decision process

Most care home decisions have multiple family members influencing the decision-making process. This means you need to identify and address the different information needs. Different family members can access a website from different perspectives and have their questions answered.

Your sales rely on personal interactions

Unlike sales to consumers, care home marketing doesn't happen through tightly controlled, highly crafted communications vehicles like television commercials or other mass media. One-to-one customer relationship building, through personal interaction, demands competent sales management and an educated, knowledgeable, trained staff whose words and actions are aligned with your organisation's objectives. Ensure your team knows and reads your website.

Get your messages aligned

Most people working within a consumer marketing company have little, if any, actual contact with the customer. In care homes, many people within the organisation have access to and interact with the customer. All of those people need to understand the brand, live the brand, and deliver the brand every day. Therefore, the care home marketer's first job is to market internally and align others in order to create brand ambassadors.

Third parties have a lot of influence

Care home purchasers often look to third party influencers for opinions, insight, consultation, or referrals. They take their job of researching seriously and are fearful of making the wrong decision. Engage with industry bodies and peer organisations to build your brand ready for when your prospects use information from these sources to support and help sell their purchase recommendations.

