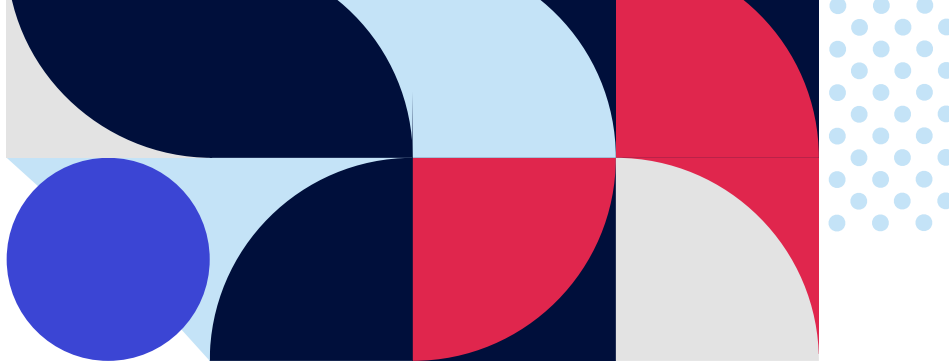




G5 MarTech Series | Part 2

# The Human Element of Senior Living Marketing





# Introduction

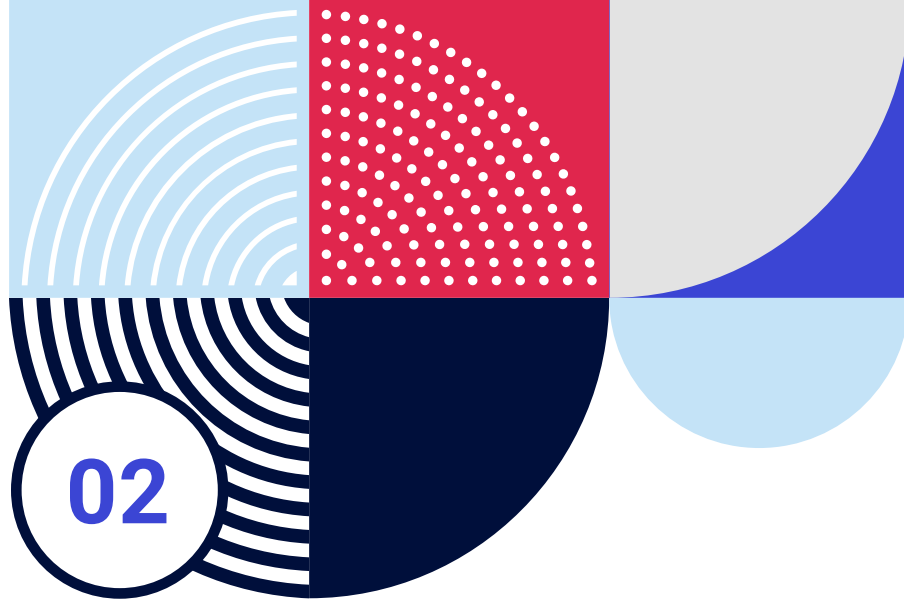
Welcome back to the G5 MarTech Series!

Personally and professionally, we're navigating new information, science, best-practices, restrictions, re-openings, and vaccination roll outs. This quantity of change demands agility. For athletes, agility is something they practice in drills. Perhaps you remember running lines in P.E.? Running as fast as you can in one direction, then pivoting and sprinting in the opposite direction. Exercises like this promote athletic agility.

Seniors and their loved ones have shouldered a heavy weight because of the health crisis. We know that when you're weighed down, it's hard to transition quickly. You might not be sprinting across the office — or even going into an office — in order to improve your marketing agility. But, with everything going on, your sales and marketing team learned to change tactics and align with the current environment.

The good news is, the agility your team developed over the last year will come in handy to keep up with digital marketing trends like aligning your online presence for voice search optimization, staying up-to-date on tried-and-true marketing tactics like your Google My Business listing, or anticipating changes in data privacy and the social media space.

Elevate your marketing agility to better serve your residents and future residents. Want to get more actionable insights out of this report? Check out our [Digital Trends Workbook](#).



# Digital Trends

With more of our lives — working, learning, and socializing — moved online, the bar for digital customer experience expectations got a little higher. Here are our top marketing takeaways to up your digital strategy game.



## Voice Search

Have you ever asked Siri for an updated score on a game you can no longer bear to watch? What about asking Alexa for a weather update, or to add paper towels to your shopping list? The good news is, you're not alone. According to [Google](#), 27% of the global online population is using voice search on mobile. Voice search is rising, as is smart speaker ownership, with [one-quarter of U.S. adults having a smart speaker in their home](#). As a result, according to [Salesforce](#), 34% of marketers are planning to increase the use of voice search technologies over the next year. Moreover, voice search is becoming increasingly important when you add COVID-19, a focus on cleanliness, and touchless experiences, into the mix. In fact, according to [Gartner](#), 32% of consumers are interested in hands-free technology that would limit touching or

contamination. A simple solution most of us have at our fingertips already: voice search.

Voice search isn't a simple translation or extension of traditional search practices, it radically changes how search engines understand and serve up information to users. Think of it this way, if you were searching for a specific brand of boots in your shoe size, you might type in, "Sorel boots women's size 8," which isn't exactly how you'd phrase this request if you actually walked into a brick and mortar shoe store. You'd probably ask the storekeeper something like, "Hey, I see you carry boots. Any chance you have some in a size 8?" Voice search bridges the gap between these two worlds semantically. It is optimized for a more conversational tone of voice. So, on voice search this same query might

sound like, "Hey Siri, where can I buy women's boots in my size?" Now, imagine that Sally Senior and her daughter Jody are looking for a senior living community. Jody voice searches, "Senior living in the Sellwood neighborhood of Portland, Oregon," while sitting together in the living room with her mother. Jody looks at the suggestions on Google Maps and a few photos on Google My Business listings. They aren't looking to tour that day, but want to take an afternoon drive to check out which community is the easiest drive from Jody's house. Staying near the neighborhood is important to both Sally and Jody for frequent visits from Jody and, of course, Sally's friends, who are living independently in their neighborhood. The added ease of being near known services like the bank and longtime hairdresser is also important to Sally.

## Breaking a Link in the Search Chain

Like Sally and Jody, one way seniors and the loved ones begin their senior living community research is through voice search. Perhaps you've heard about voice search over the past few years, but have yet to see a situation in which it feels important for your business. Maybe that's true, for now. But as search engine algorithms evolve and as more users adopt this new technology, the more critical it will become for businesses to pay attention. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and organic website traffic play the marketing long-game. To stay ahead of the competition, you must stay up-to-date with current and developing trends. Being on top of trends and changes ensures that when Google announces an algorithm update, your website is ready to stand out from the competition and be served up higher on a Search Engine Results Page (SERP).

If you find yourself thinking up-and-coming search trends might not be relevant to your business, we would ask you to reconsider. According to [Moz](#), 65% of searches start on smartphones, and 60% of searches then continue on desktop or laptop devices. So maybe your future resident began their research on their smartphone, where there is a greater tendency to use voice search. Once their interest is piqued, the prospective resident asks Siri to email or iMessage them the search results. Next, they pick up browsing on their desktop. Finally, they stumble across some YouTube videos of your community and watch those on their smart TV. They do all of this before filling out a form or reaching out to ask questions via a phone call. Customer journeys vary widely and aren't a simplified three-step process.

Moreover, by optimizing for voice search you're optimizing for how customers search, which is cross-device and multi-mode. It might be a little tempting to think, "But, I can see in my analytics that my website traffic predominantly occurs on a desktop computer." This may be true, but it fails to consider that their search might begin on a smart speaker or their smartphone. By choosing not to optimize for a multi-mode, multi-device searcher, you're breaking the search chain and taking your community off the decision table. Be ahead of search algorithm changes by adopting new and growing search modes to connect with more researching seniors and their adult children.

**65% of searches  
start on smart-  
phones, and  
60% of searches  
then continue on  
desktop or laptop  
devices.**

(Moz, 2020)





## Five Ways to Optimize for Voice Search

Here are a few ways to audit your website to make sure that you're ready to connect with seniors, wherever they're searching.



### 01 Conversational Keywords

Voice queries typically use a slightly different syntax than typed queries. Sometimes this change in syntax — how we arrange words or phrases in a query — can sound a little more conversational as they tend to be arranged like a question you'd ask someone you know. As such, it's important to use clear, simple language on your website. For example, it might seem fun to have a pirate and treasure map themed website with "X Marks the Spot" as a website navigation call-to-action, and include a list of clues to determine your community's address. Let's be real, this would be fun at a six-year-old's birthday party, but it won't signal to most website visitors — or search engines like Google — your community's address and how to get there easily. This example may seem far-fetched, and intentionally so. While it's no secret that marketers love to get creative, just make sure opaque phrases don't end up in your navigation or the headings of your webpages, as those will impact search terms and the user experience. It's important to make sure your website is focused on building trust with clear language.

## 02 Schema Markup

Search engines have a big job combing the entire internet. You can make their job easier by presenting your business information in a format that is easy for them to find and understand. Schema markup does just that. It's a type of code used to classify and give context to specific pieces of information on your website, such as business type, brand name, contact details, hours, and more. Think of it like highlighting specific words to tell Google, "Hey! This is the phone number!" or, "Here's the business logo!" Schema markup helps search engines categorize the information in order to provide more relevant results to users.

Few businesses and websites take advantage of schema markup, even though it is relatively simple to implement. Adding this extra attention to detail can help your community stand out from the competition. Does this feel a little too in-the-weeds? Rest assured, a best-in-class marketing partner will ensure that schema markup is included in your website code.

## 03 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the Win

Many voice searches are questions beginning with the words who, what, when, where, and why. As seniors and their families begin to search with a more conversational tone and use voice search to ask queries like, "What city parks are near \*your senior living community name\*?" or, "What is \*your community name\*'s pet policy?" You can easily optimize your website for voice search, by sharing answers to resident's most commonly asked questions in an FAQ-style format to connect them with the information they need. Begin each of these questions with the who, what, when, where, and why adverbs, as appropriate, to curate your content to a voice searcher's needs.



## 04 Mobile-Always

According to [Search Engine Land](#), 59% of voice search comes from mobile. This means true mobile-first optimization is not just a nice-to-have website feature, but a need-to-have in order to continue to reach researching seniors and their adult children.

According to data provided by G5's Premier Google Partnership, 59% of seniors and their families use mobile devices in their search, which is up 20% year-over-year in Q4 2020. This multi-mode, multi-device search habit crosses all searcher needs and demands a mobile-first website ethos.





## 05 Be Local

The good news is that many of the things that make your website optimized for voice search are also important in hyper-local search strategies. Location matters for prospects, so hone your hyper-local strategy and include specific neighborhood names and capitalize on zip codes for “near me” searches. This helps connect with seniors and their families who are more likely to be decision-ready and call your office, or schedule a tour.

Google has reported that a staggering [46% of all searches have local intent](#). According to [Chatmeter](#), 97% of consumers are using search to find local businesses and 41% of people use local search to find businesses every single week. In businesses that depend on a physical space, like senior living communities, a local approach to SEO is vital to connecting with researching seniors in your market — or who may be moving to your market.





## Google My Business (GMB) and Local SEO

GMB is Google's answer to a listing directory for local businesses, displaying their info on Google Maps and Google SERP for local queries. When you think about it, GMB is more than a simple directory listing like you'd find in a phone book. It's more dynamic and allows researching seniors and their adult children the opportunity to interact with your brand before they reach your website. GMB is a non-negotiable component of a local SEO strategy and it can make or break the success of your business.

Want some good news? A GMB listing is free, making it one of the highest-ROI marketing tools available to businesses. Of course, claiming, updating, and managing your GMB presence takes time and effort, but it's worth the investment. According to [Chatmeter](#), Google dominates online search, taking as much as 74% of the desktop search market share and over 90% of the mobile search market. This indicates that most seniors and their families turn to Google to find a senior living community. To compound this, GMB is the number one ranking signal for local results.

**“GMB is a perfect complement, not replacement, to your website. It can help searchers easily access commonly requested information.”**



Local Pack, also known as the Map Pack, is just a fancy way of describing the local results often found at the top of a SERP. Moreover, GMB allows seniors and their families to gain the information they need — website, name, address, and phone number — straight from the SERP. The more attention you give your GMB listing, including fully optimizing and engaging with users, the more likely your business will be to rank for relevant queries. By authorizing your free GMB listing and optimizing it for local SEO strategy, you're choosing to align your overall search strategy with voice search and other hyper-local search approaches.

There are a few GMB fields that disproportionately impact your SERP ranking, including your business name, business category, website link, and the review section. Let's look at these one-by-one to unpack the ins and outs of each.

Categories have a tremendous impact on your Local Pack ranking, which is pretty straightforward to implement. You can add one primary category and 10 subcategories to your listing. These categories directly influence what types of searches your GMB listing will rank for on a SERP. The primary category has the most influence, but the subcategories can make a difference particularly when the searcher is looking for specific secondary services offered by the business.



Currently, Google has around 4,000 categories and they keep adding and occasionally removing them. In 2020, businesses like restaurants and car dealerships had new categories added, and it is in your community's benefit to update your categories and include newly added categories that apply to your business. By monitoring changes to GMB business categories, you can make sure you're connecting with your niche — and maybe not so niche — customer needs.

Certainly, keyword-heavy business names sound clunky in non-Google-algorithm worlds, but business names that include keywords do tend to rank higher and get more SERP visibility than those without keywords. Don't worry, we know that you might not want to change your community names, and that's okay. It's good to be aware of the ranking factors, even if there isn't much you can do about them. As always, Google is smart, so don't try to trick the system, it won't behoove your business long term. Perhaps you're familiar with the term "keyword stuffing" or similarly, hashtag stuffing on social media? #yikes. Occasionally, things like this happen on GMB. Some businesses have started adding keywords to their business name on Google — when this isn't their brand name anywhere else. This goes against Google's rules, so don't do that. In fact, Google could suspend a GMB listing if the business name doesn't match the one shown in



## GMB

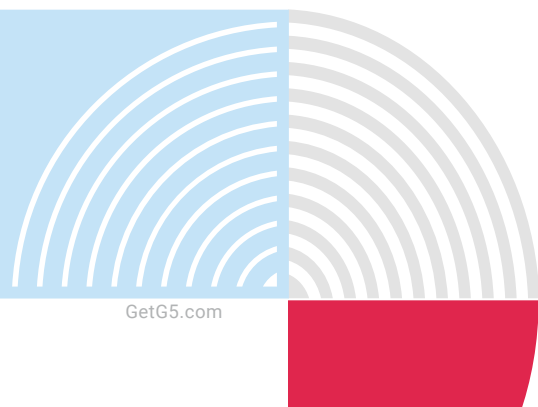
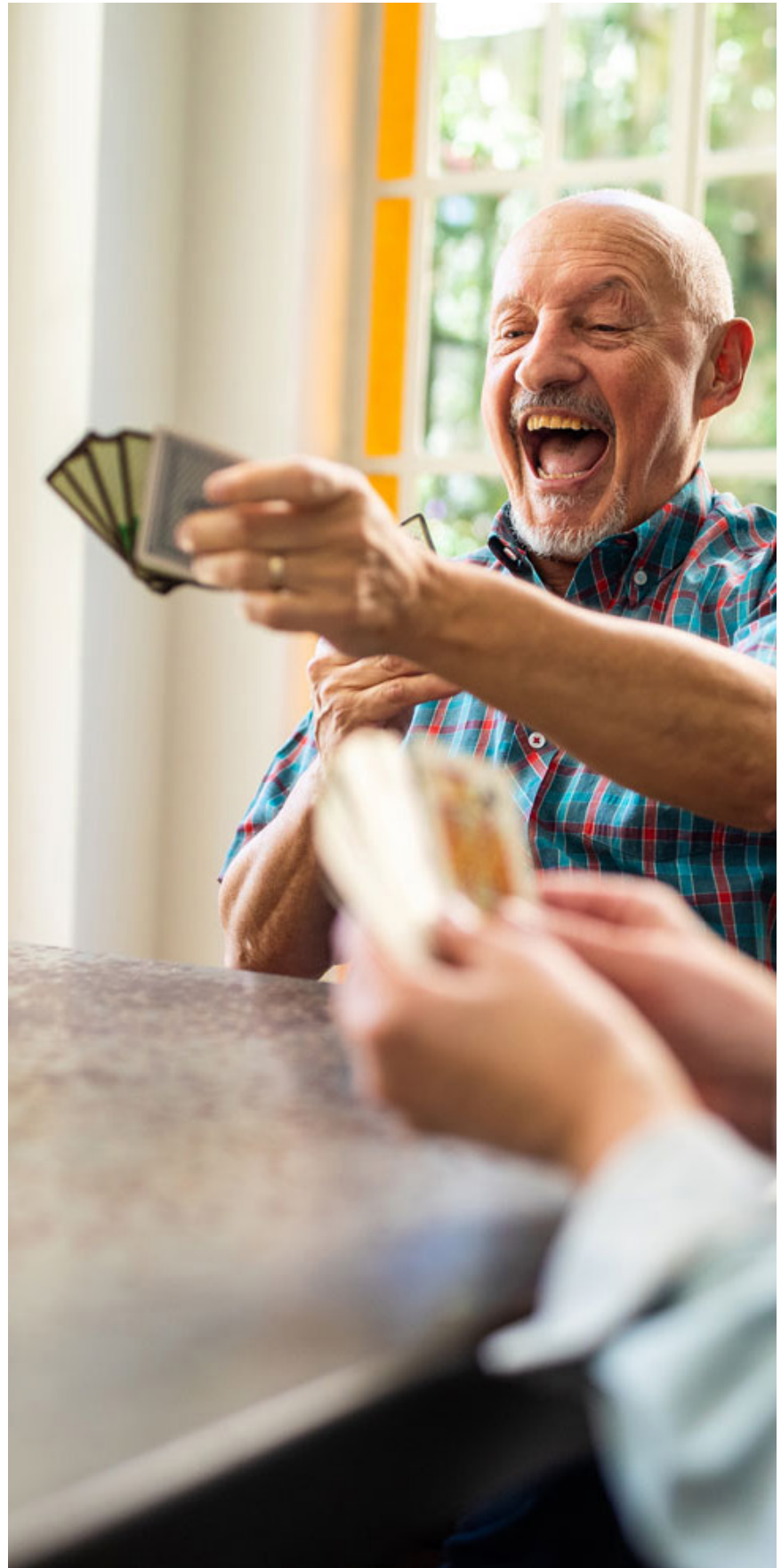
GMB is a vital component of acquiring higher quality leads. G5 GMB & Review Response helps to amplify your presence with an optimized GMB listing, drive more calls and website visits, answer prospect questions in Q&A, respond to reviews, and increase your local rankings on maps. In fact, based on G5 attribution data, roughly 20% of people call directly from GMB and 50% of people click through to the website. GMB and your website are better together at driving leads.





the listing. However, if a business's brand name on GMB and the brand name on their signage match, and that brand name includes a relevant ranking keyword...well, that's a bonus ranking factor for them.

Some folks have argued that GMB is the new homepage, and while there may be some truth to this, it's also an exaggeration. GMB is a perfect complement to your website, as it can help searchers easily access commonly requested information — hours of operation, phone number, and address — but it doesn't share your full story with researching seniors and their families. Believe it or not, on-page ranking signals (keywords in the title tag, inbound links, etc.) on the website that you link to from GMB will influence your GMB rankings. This is one reason why it's important to link to your location homepage from GMB. Doing so also creates a seamless user experience as searchers move down the funnel toward conversion.





## Six Steps to Get Started With GMB

Getting started with a new tool can be confusing, and feel a little overwhelming. Perhaps you're already a GMB pro and are just adding a new location to your portfolio, or simply ready to learn. Here are six steps to get your next GMB listing online, plus tips on staying up-to-date with ongoing GMB maintenance.



### 01 Claim Your Online Fame

It's yours, so first and foremost, claim and verify your GMB listing. To claim your GMB listing, your business needs to be physically open and receiving mail at the location. Once this is in place, you can begin the verification process. By choosing the mail option, Google will send you a postcard, which should reach you within a week. Don't edit any of your basic business information including name, address, or category, because this will likely delay your process. The postcard will have a code to use for online verification. There are other verification methods, but postcards are the most common.

### 02 Information Accuracy Is Key

You've claimed your listing, woohoo! Keep the momentum going and ensure your business information — branded name, address, phone number, hours, photos, and categories — matches what is displayed on your website. There is nothing more frustrating from a user's perspective than clicking to call a business from a GMB listing and having the wrong phone number. Or driving to the community's listed address, only to find yourself in the wrong location. Accurate information prevents future frustrating experiences for residents.

### 03 Branded > Generic

Some might argue that branded items aren't always better than the generic versions at the grocery store. But, GMB doesn't stand for Grocery Motivational Buying, and a branded Google My Business listing creates an authentic experience for seniors. For brand consistency, your GMB presence needs to feel like an extension of other branded efforts. So, even in this templated space, build your brand by including up-to-date professional photography, and up to 30-second video clips, like tours and testimonials, that will help to showcase your community. Above all, avoid stock images as Google will remove them from your listing. This wastes your time and fails to provide useful content to researching seniors.

## 04 Audit It

Set a regular reminder to monitor your GMB listing and make sure information is verified and accurate. While it is rare, and it is much harder than it was at one time, other people can edit your GMB listing. Keep track of who you've granted GMB access to, and remove access from individuals who no longer need login credentials.

## 05 Reply All

Did you know [79% of people trust reviews](#) just as much as they would a personal recommendation from a family member, friend, or close acquaintance? Whew, no pressure. At the same time, seniors and their families know your community is run by humans. They know mistakes happen, which is why it's critical to respond to every single review — negative, positive, and neutral. How you respond speaks to the character of your community and gives future residents insight into how you might solve their problems, like a mix-up in programming schedules, or a leaky faucet.

Make your responses empathetic and personable, and take the conversation offline when needed. By responding to all reviews, you can help solve the problems of your negative reviewers — and once they're satisfied, the reviewer may choose to remove the review. This is big news as it eliminates the review's impact on your ranking.

**“79% of people trust reviews as much as they would a personal recommendation from a family member, friend, or close acquaintance.”**

(BrightLocal, 2020)

## 06 Take It Offline

Review responses are critical, but it's also important to take the online customer feedback and apply it offline. Are there team members mentioned who provided an all-star experience? Celebrate their contribution and reward this kind of behavior. On the other hand, if there are negative reviews with a named staff member, talk with them to understand the situation and problem solve together for resolutions. By only responding to reviews and not taking action, you're ignoring the root of reviews, both good and bad. Examining the customer experience on and offline ensures your team is prepared to deliver on your brand's promise.







## Data Privacy

If you're in marketing, you likely have a nuanced understanding of how data is used between platforms. It is tricky to understand how customers feel about data privacy. On one hand, people might say that they value the privacy of their data and don't want marketers to have access to it. On the other, people might appreciate seeing ads for products or brands that match their interests. Data is the key to tailored online experiences. According to [Salesforce](#), only 27% of consumers completely understand how companies use their personal information, 63% of consumers feel companies aren't transparent about how their personal data is used, and 86% of consumers want more transparency over personal information usage. Technology companies have a responsibility to lead a culture of data transparency. And, being an early adopter in this latest data movement has benefits.

Legislation like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in Europe and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) in the United States provide a legislative North Star of where we are headed. The legislative solution to data privacy will be fragmented in the beginning, and there are still a lot of unknowns in terms of how these are applied on a day-to-day basis. But, one thing we do know, these will force changes in marketing practices. So, rather than making the necessary adjustments when forced to do so, it's smart to consider how to be proactive and approach data-driven marketing through a new lens of customer experience, data consent, minimum viable data, and transparency around how data is used. Here are four things to consider about data privacy.

### 01 Customer Experience

In our digital-everything-age, we've all experienced a targeted advertisement that didn't quite match up with our needs. Perhaps you recently purchased jewelry for a loved one, and it's meant to be a surprise. The last thing you want is a bunch of targeted jewelry ads on a shared device. Or, maybe you bought a baby shower gift for a friend, but don't have kids of your own, so those diaper ads aren't landing in the right place. Less extreme, but still missing the mark, maybe you bought new work-from-home athleisure wear yesterday, and now you're getting a million ads for different kinds of leggings or joggers, but they're too little, too late. Customers do tend to appreciate well-targeted ads, but targeted ads that miss the mark provide a poor customer experience and can turn customers away from thinking data sharing is beneficial.

## 02 Transparency

Did you know that [66% of consumers](#) say that company transparency is one of the most attractive qualities in a brand? Data transparency demands data consent. This could look like creating an individual user login, or a cookies consent pop-up. Your company likely has different systems and platforms, and it is essential that the data is connected, because it ensures uniform user data consent across your platforms and systems.

## 03 Claim It & Name It

There is a huge opportunity to make the first move in changing the narrative of how we talk about data. Rather than letting seniors and their families assume the worst, show the value in how your community uses data. It could be a list of things your community does and doesn't do. There is an opportunity to build brand affinity with your community, because of your values-based approach to data privacy. For example, Starbucks has

a catchy approach to cookies (not the kind you eat!) consent, while educating the user about why they use cookies. At Starbucks, they use cookies to remember login details, provide secure login, improve site functionality, and deliver personalized cookies. Their pop-up gives users the option for different cookie settings, from required cookies that are needed for core site functionality, to helpful cookies that allow them to analyze the site usage so they can measure and improve website performance, to advertising cookies that serve ads that are relevant to the user. Options like these are growing in popularity both with users and with early-adopters of navigating a new way of looking at data.

## 04 Compliance

Last, but certainly not least, businesses want to know that they're complying with these new regulations. Of course, navigating CCPA, GDPR, and future data legislation is nuanced and requires an in-depth understanding of your business. Therefore, it's critical to work with your legal counsel to understand what steps are necessary for your community.





## All Eyes on Social

Social media is a fluid, ever-changing environment. Here are three things to consider about your social media strategy.

### 01 New Paid Placements

Look out for new advertising placements. Instagram in particular had incredible momentum with Stories and their TikTok-style Reels in 2020. Marketing experts, like [Search Engine Journal](#), anticipate this to be an area of growth.

### 02 Be Adaptable

Keep up-to-date with platform changes. As platforms roll out new features it's important to stay current with these changes for a couple of reasons. First, social media algorithms are more likely to promote content in spaces they're presently developing. Additionally, your followers expect to hear from you in these new spaces. It might be a challenge logistically, but if your audience engages with you more on Stories and Reels, then put in the extra effort to create content for these features.

### 03 Socially Conscious Media

As social media becomes more of a space for activism of all kinds, it requires brands to engage in the conversation, or they risk becoming irrelevant. However, it's important to take a minute before responding and be earnest with your words. If your company's actions don't match the statements you're making, your promises will feel hollow and lack authenticity. Rather than simply saying that you believe in x, y, or z, share actions taken by your

company that show your followers you believe in it. This show-versus-tell strategy is the strongest tool in a storyteller's toolkit and it translates well in this digital space. For example, consumers appreciate green brands, and perhaps your independent living community recently installed new energy-efficient lighting into residents' apartments. Share information about this to demonstrate commitment to a cause through your actions.



## Consumer Obsessed

While we are admittedly still navigating a world of unknowns, the hyper-focus on the customer experience and understanding residents' needs is a timeless marketing lesson to revisit. The back-to-basics approach of mapping out resident journeys to understand their motivations and concerns is essential to developing a robust and successful marketing plan.





# Be Human:

## Senior Living Digital Trends



Digital marketing trends like voice search and online review response not only increase our marketing agility, they also connect with our squishy-emotion-filled-humanness.

Voice search is more conversational than other search modes. Our voice search queries sound like questions we would ask a friend. In contrast, for our traditional desktop searches, we translate our questions into keyword-jargon and type them into a search box. Regardless of how we search, either using a keyboard, touchscreen, or our voices, asking questions and seeking information serves to cultivate curiosity (which is good for our minds). Plus, if we find our questions are easily answered, we know we're not alone in wondering these things. In essence, we feel heard.

Feeling seen, heard, and like our opinions matter are basic psychological needs. Online review

responses, done right, help to fulfill this need in a digital space. Make customers feel like their voice matters — because it does — and respond to every review.

While it can be hard to hear criticism, honest critique provided by a customer, shines a light on areas of your business you might not always see. This day-to-day customer experience reality-check can help you identify and make improvements to your community's practices. Rest assured, seniors and their families know mistakes happen, and according to [GatherUp](#), 73% of customers are likely or extremely likely to continue doing business with a brand that resolves their complaints. How you handle a situation is often more important than the specifics of the situation itself and speaks to the very human ethos of your business and brand.

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