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Home Care Assistance News



WebSite Updates

Since we unveiled our website last month, we have continued to enhance its features and build the most intuitive online experience possible. We have done more than make a visitor's experience on our website natural, easy and informative.

We have also added helpful resources throughout the site. Additions include a new and improved comment section on our Home Care Blog and a section **"For Elder Professionals"** with useful and relevant information about our services. We hope that these new features will not only strengthen visitors' online experiences, but also generate business growth for all our franchise owners in North America.

Seniors and Blogging (continued):

- Use of the Internet by adults age 65 and older grew 47 percent between 2000 and 2004
- 3 percent of online seniors in the U.S. have created a blog, and 17 percent have read someone else's blog

How do you start a blog?

Starting a blog can seem overwhelming, but in truth, it's one of the simplest ways to join the online community. Follow these tips to ensure your blog is positioned for success.

1. Define Your Goals

Before you start a new blog, it's essential that you define your goals for it. Your blog has a greater chance of success if you know from the beginning what you hope to accomplish with it. Are you trying to establish yourself as an expert in your field? Are you trying to promote your business? Are you simply blogging for fun and to share your ideas and opinions? Your short and long term goals for your blog are dependent on the reason why you're starting your blog. Think ahead to what you'd like to gain from your blog in six months, one year and three years. Then design, write and market your blog to meet those goals.

2. Know Your Audience

Your blog's design and content should reflect the expectations of your audience. For example, if your intended audience is teenagers, the design and content would be quite different than a blog targeted to corporate professionals. Your audience will have inherent expectations for your blog. Don't confuse them but rather meet and exceed those expectations to gain reader loyalty.

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Music Therapy Can Help Reach People With Dementia

People familiar with Alzheimer's know this: The memory loss and other effects are retrograde. People lose memories, skills, and abilities in the opposite order from how they were acquired.

People familiar with language acquisition know this: Melodies and songs are easy to learn and aid language learning. We've all had the experience of busting out – word-for-word – to sing along with a song we haven't heard in 20 years. That's because music memory is processed across many parts of the brain and is thus preserved better than language memory alone.

Together, these facts point towards the effectiveness of music therapy for people with Alzheimer's. If songs are some of the first things we learn, they might also be some of the last things we remember.

Music therapy was established in 1950. It is designed to improve physical and emotional health through the use of music, either with listening, song writing, performing,

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Seniors and Blogging (continued):

3. Be Consistent

Your blog is a brand. Just like popular brands such as Coke or Nike, your blog represents a specific message and image to your audience, which is your brand. Your blog's design and content should consistently communicate your blog's overall brand image and message. Being consistent allows you to meet your audience's expectations and create a secure place for them to visit again and again. That consistency will be rewarded with reader loyalty.

4. Be Persistent

A busy blog is a useful blog. Blogs that are not updated frequently are perceived by their audiences as static web pages. The usefulness of blogs comes from their timeliness. While it's important not to publish meaningless posts else you may bore your audience, it's essential that you update your blog frequently. The best way to keep readers coming back is to always have something new (and meaningful) for them to see.

5. Be Inviting

One of the most unique aspects of blogging is its social impact. Therefore, it's essential that your blog welcomes readers and invites them to join a two-way conversation. Ask your readers to leave comments by posing questions, and then respond to comments from your readers. Doing so will show your readers that you value them, and it will keep the conversation going. Continue the conversation by leaving comments on other blogs inviting new readers to visit your blog for more lively discussions. Your blog's success is partially dependent on your readers' loyalties to it.

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Caregiver Spotlight



Margaret Gray

As a little girl, Margaret Gray lived next to an elderly lady and another elderly couple across the street. When her mother could not find her, she knew to look next door because Margaret was always visiting her older friends. Many meaningful moments were spent as a child at the kitchen table with her elderly neighbors-hearing about the old days and enjoying tea and cookies. Margaret said she has always loved to spend time and talk with older people. She relished those moments hearing stories about their lives. This joy has translated into a lifelong profession that feels more like a calling than a job. This love of seniors is one of the many reasons why Margaret Gray is Atlanta's choice for the caregiver spotlight.

Margaret has been in the care giving field for the past 20 years. She has taken much pleasure in helping Home Care Assistance clients stay independent, safe and happy.

Seniors and Blogging (continued):

Make sure they understand how much you appreciate them by involving them and recognizing them through meaningful two-way conversation.

6. Be Visible

Much of your blog's success relies on your efforts outside your blog. Those efforts include finding like-minded bloggers and commenting on their blogs, participating in social bookmarking through sites such as Digg and StumbleUpon, and joining social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn. Blogging is not a demonstration of, "if you build it, they will come." Instead, developing a successful blog requires hard work by creating compelling content on your blog as well as working outside of your blog to promote it and develop a community around it.

7. Take Risks

Beginner bloggers are often afraid of the new blogging tools and features available to them. Don't be afraid to take risks and try new things on your blog. From adding a new plug-in to holding your first blog contest, it's important that you keep your blog fresh by implementing changes that will enhance your blog.

Alternatively, don't fall prey to every new bell and whistle that becomes available for your blog. Instead, review each potential enhancement in terms of how it will help you reach your goals for your blog and how your audience will respond to it.

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Music Therapy (continued):

exploring lyrics or other activities related to music. It's most often used as part of stress management programs.

How It Can Be Used With Alzheimer's Patients

Since music therapy uses the brain's multi-layered processing of music, there is recent and intense interest in its applications with Alzheimer's. A study at the University of Iowa showed that simple activities like singing and moving to music decreased wandering and disruptive behaviors among people with Alzheimer's at nursing facilities.

True, certified music therapists are trained musicians who play instruments and sing and are trained to use music therapeutically. It's principles – that music relaxes people both physically and psychologically, can relieve pain, create emotional intimacy - however, can be used much less formally.

Using music to trigger memory and engagement in someone with Alzheimer's requires a bit of homework. Someone needs to find out either what the person's favorite songs were or, if that isn't possible, try out a variety of songs that were popular when they were young. Songs from people's teenage and young adult years tend to be particularly effective.

People may sing along, or even want to dance. Music has the power to work throughout the body, triggering muscle memory of anything from intricate dance steps to simple hand clapping or foot tapping in time with the rhythm.

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Seniors and Blogging (continued):

8. Ask for Help

Even the most experienced bloggers understand the blogosphere is an ever-changing place and no one knows everything there is to know about blogging. Most importantly, bloggers are part of a close-knit community, and the majority of bloggers understand that everyone is a beginner at some point. In fact, bloggers are some of the most approachable and helpful people you can find. Don't be afraid to reach out to fellow bloggers for help. Remember, the success of the blogosphere relies on networking, and most bloggers are always willing to expand their networks regardless of whether you're a beginner blogger or seasoned pro.

9. Keep Learning

It seems like everyday there are new tools available to bloggers. The Internet changes quickly, and the blogosphere is not an exception to that rule. As you develop your blog, take the time to research new tools and features, and keep an eye on the latest news from the blogosphere. You never know when a new tool will roll out that can make your life easier or enhance your readers' experiences on your blog.

10. Be Yourself

Remember, your blog is an extension of you and your brand, and your loyal readers will keep coming back to hear what you have to say. Inject your personality into your blog and adapt a consistent tone for your posts. Determine whether your blog and brand will be more effective with a corporate tone, a youthful tone or a snarky tone. Then stay consistent with that tone in all your blog communications.

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Music Therapy (continued):

Music therapy's ability to reach the body was shown in a study from the American Society of Neurorehabilitation that compared two groups of stroke victims one of which was given traditional physical therapy and the other group which received music therapy. The music therapy group showed greater physical improvement towards walking in a shorter period of time.

What Seniors Need to Know About Blogging

Twitter, Facebook, and other social networking sites, with their moment-by-moment updates, may well not interest plenty of people. Blogs, however, are catching on with seniors and with good reason: They are mentally stimulating, they are a great way to preserve family memories, and they are a way to stay in touch with individuals and the world.

What is a Blog?

"Blog" is an abbreviation for "Web log." It's like a note or newsletter that anyone can read. People who write blogs are called bloggers, and they usually write about things that interest them or about which they have some level of expertise. Blogs can be about professional subjects, news-oriented, chronicle hobbies or projects, or simply be more of a public journal. Most blogs allow readers to leave comments, which can lead to lively exchanges between readers and other bloggers.

The Associated Press interviewed seniors who blog and found a wide range of benefits and outcomes.

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Seniors and Blogging (continued):

People don't read blogs simply to get the news. They could read a newspaper for news reports. Instead, people read blogs to get bloggers' opinions on the news, the world, life and more. Don't blog like a reporter. Blog like you're having a conversation with each of you readers. Blog from your heart.

Swine Prevention Guidelines

You have likely heard all the recent news about Swine Flu. To date, almost all cases in the North America have been mild and the chances of contracting it are still remote. Even so, we are taking steps to ensure all of our caregivers are educated about Swine Flu Prevention Guidelines as prescribed by the Center for Disease Control. We are currently in the process of obtaining relevant information from all active caregivers, including recent travels and experienced flu symptoms. We are very concerned as we know that seniors are at particular risk due to difficulties recovering if exposed.

There are steps that professional and family caregivers as well as the community at large can take to decrease exposure and combat symptoms. We are training all of our caregivers to abide by the CDC's guidelines regarding the Swine Flu. Here is some pertinent information that everyone should be familiar with:

- The disease's symptoms resemble those of seasonal flu – fever, sore throat, cough, congestion, chills, headache, body aches, and fatigue. Some patients also report diarrhea and vomiting.
- If you have symptoms, see your doctor or visit a community clinic. A medical provider's

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Seniors and Blogging (continued):

Benefits of a Senior Blog

Bloggers who were interviewed by the AP said that senior blogs offer many benefits for older adults:

- Senior blogs help older adults keep their minds sharp.
- Senior blogs keep the authors up on current events.
- Senior blogs are a great way to meet people around the world.
- It's easy to share life experiences, wisdom, and information through senior blogs.
- In some cases, senior blogs give the authors a bit of fame and recognition for their efforts.

"It brings out the best in me," Millie Garfield, 80, told the AP. Millie is the author of the senior blog called My Mom's Blog, created with help from her son. "My life would be dull without it," she said.

Senior Internet Use is Growing and So Are Senior Blogs

Here are some statistics on Internet use among older adults, from the Pew Internet and American Life Project in February 2004:

- 22 percent of Americans age 65 and older use the Internet. That's more than 8 million people. In contrast, 58 percent of 50-64 year-olds, 75 percent of 30-49 year-olds, and 77 percent of 18-29 year-olds go online.

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Swine Prevention (continued):

diagnosis is important and prescription antiviral drugs are most effective when taken within 48 hours of the appearance of symptoms.

- If you are ill, avoid travel AND DON'T GO TO WORK OR SCHOOL.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based cleaners and hand sanitizers.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and then discard the tissue. Or if necessary, use your upper sleeve – not your hands.
- If you're healthy, wash your hands often and avoid ill people. The flu's incubation period is 24 to 48 hours.

For more details, go to www.cdc.gov/flu/swine or for information in Spanish, visit www.mienlace.com

New location and Features

Home Care Assistance announces the opening of our newest offices, located in **Austin, TX**, **Northern** and **Richmond, VA!**