EXECUTIVE INSIGHTS SERIES | VOLUME 2

Senior Living Marketing Performance

How Operators and Marketing Leaders Can Connect Marketing Investment to Qualified Leads, Tours, Move-Ins and Occupancy Growth

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Prepared by Fountain Digital

Digital Marketing Fueled by Analytics and Technology

Senior living organizations have access to more marketing data than ever, yet many leadership teams still struggle to answer a fundamental question: Is our marketing actually working? Executive Insights | Volume 2 examines how operators and marketing executives can move beyond surface-level activity metrics to understand whether marketing investments are generating qualified inquiries, tours, deposits, move-ins, and sustainable occupancy growth.

The guide explains why lead quality matters as much as lead volume and why attribution is rarely straightforward in the senior living decision journey. Prospective residents and their families may encounter a community through referrals, search, reviews, advertising, events, website visits, phone calls, and other interactions before scheduling a tour. Instead of searching for perfect attribution, leaders need credible evidence that reveals performance patterns, supports smarter investment decisions, and identifies where prospects may be disengaging.

Marketing performance is also a shared organizational outcome. Results are shaped not only by campaigns, but by sales follow-up, CRM adoption, community operations, availability, the prospect experience, and leadership decisions. This guide outlines how an executive marketing scorecard and a more focused performance conversation can create visibility, establish ownership, and turn reporting into action. The goal is not more data or another dashboard - it is greater clarity, stronger accountability, and better decisions about how to drive growth.

Executive Summary

Senior living organizations are entering a period of significant opportunity.

61.2M	20%	13%
U.S. adults over 65 in 2024	Of the U.S. population	Growth from 2020 Census

The number of U.S. adults over 65 reached 61.2 million in 2024, representing nearly 20% of the population and 13% growth from the 2020 Census. Not surprisingly, the senior housing market entered 2026 with rising occupancy, sustained demand and limited inventory growth. Driven by rapid market growth and greater access to data than ever before, senior living operators are demanding stronger performance insights, increasing the importance of disciplined marketing investment and community-level visibility.

For senior living marketers, they are overseeing a flurry of activity and gathering mountains of metrics.

- Visitor behavior on their website
- Impressions, clicks, and conversions from advertising platforms
- Inbound call tracking
- CRMs tracking prospect activity
- Sales documenting tours, deposits, and move-ins

> Still, many Marketing leaders struggle to answer a basic question: **Is our marketing working?**

MOVING FROM DASHBOARDS TO DECISION-MAKING

The problem isn't a lack of data or reporting capabilities. Most Executives and Marketing leaders have an seemingly infinite stream of data points and ways to analyze them.

These dashboards executive dashboards may contain dozens of metrics without clearly showing:

- Which investments are producing qualified demand
- Which communities or markets need attention
- Where prospects are leaving the decision journey
- Which channels are influencing tours, deposits and move-ins
- Whether Marketing and Sales are working toward the same objectives
- What leadership should change next

Marketing activity, sales performance and business outcomes are often measured in separate systems, discussed by separate teams and interpreted through different definitions.

> **Findings from Salesforce's State of Data and Analytics report confirm these gaps:**
>
> - 63% of data and analytics leaders say their organizations are struggling to drive business priorities with data.
> - Less than half (49%) of business leaders say they can reliably generate timely insights.

Research across Sales organizations also demonstrates underlying alignment and trust concerns: only 35% of Sales Professionals completely trust the accuracy of their organization's data.

Instilling more confidence in the data and creating greater alignment does not require asking Marketing teams to defend every click or explain every short-term fluctuation. It requires **shared accountability between Executive Leadership, Marketing, Sales, Operations, and agency partners. To achieve this, all teams need to understand the desired outcomes, trust the underlying data, and know what actions they own.**

The end result is moving from dashboards to decision-making.

5 Executive Takeaways

1 Marketing Activity Is Not the Same as Driving Results

Impressions, website visits, clicks, and email engagement help teams understand how individual channels are performing. What they don't show you is whether they're driving business impact.

To understand if Marketing tactics are driving results, leaders need to understand whether the team's efforts are producing qualified inquiries, tours, deposits, move-ins, and occupancy opportunities.

2

Lead Quality Matters More than Quantity

A channel that generates a large number of inquiries may seem successful, but unless it's improving qualification rates, tour conversions and move-ins, it's not generating the results you need.

The best-performing campaigns are the ones producing the most leads. They're the ones producing the most value at a sustainable cost.

3

Standard Definitions Drive Accountability

Marketing and Sales cannot evaluate performance consistently without standard definitions of what constitutes an inquiry, a qualified lead, a Sales-ready opportunity, or a Marketing-influenced move-in.

Standard definitions create a common language and set expectations for performance. CRM lifecycle stages are specifically designed to categorize contacts according to their progression through marketing and sales processes and clarify how leads move between the two functions.

4

Dashboards Should Drive Decisions

A useful dashboard does more than display data. It highlights trends, exceptions, risks, and opportunities so leadership can determine where to invest, where to intervene and what to test next.

5

Everyone Is Responsible for Performance

Marketing can generate visibility and demand, but it does not own every aspect of user experience.

Website usability, response time, sales follow-up, community availability, pricing, reputation and the tour experience can all affect conversion. Accountability must extend across the complete journey. This is why lifecycle-stage tracking and connected sales records are essential: they make it possible to examine progression beyond initial lead creation rather than assigning performance responsibility to marketing alone.

The Marketing Accountability Gap

In order to move from dashboards to decision-making, metrics need to do more than provide data points and measure engagement.

Engagement metrics are still absolutely necessary for Marketing teams, because they confirm whether the tactics currently in-market are working. Marketing needs engagement metrics to evaluate campaign performance, determine where to adjust budget/spend, and pinpoint changes in audience behavior.

However, metrics that only show website traffic increasing by 20% are only providing one piece of the puzzle. A 20% increase in traffic is an observation. Not an insight.

OBSERVATION		BUSINESS INSIGHT
Traffic increased by 20%	ACCOUNTABILITY GAP	Which traffic led to move-ins?

This creates an accountability gap: information that doesn't directly connect to a desired business outcome. The accountability gap occurs because leadership only has information on what happened, but not why or how. Metrics that tell the complete story of what happened, why, and how provide the next-level insights that are needed for informed decision-making. These next-level insights are called marketing intelligence.

MARKETING INTELLIGENCE ASKS:

- Did the additional traffic come from the right audiences?
- Did it reach the communities with available inventory?
- Did those visitors become inquiries?
- Were those inquiries qualified?
- Did Sales respond promptly?
- Did the prospects schedule tours?
- Did any become residents?
- Was the result worth the investment?

The difference is not the amount of data available.

The difference is what questions the data can help the organization answer .

Executive Insight

Closing the Marketing Accountability Gap requires next-level metrics that move beyond what happened to provide leaders insights into why it happened, what it means, and what should happen next.

Measuring What Matters at Every Stage

Once your organization has moved from standard metrics to marketing intelligence that enables informed decision-making, the next step is aligning your intelligence to stages of the customer decision journey.

Most major analytics and CRM platforms allow organizations to distinguish between prospect interactions at the early stages of the senior living search and later-stage activity with commercial intent that will eventually lead to a conversion.Using this framework, you can align your established lifecycle and funnel reporting tools to the key stages of the decision-making journey: awareness, consideration, sales engagement and decision.

Awareness

Purpose: Create visibility and consideration.

For the senior living search, this stage is typically when older adults or their families realize they have a need for senior living. Your community(ies) need to be showing up in search and cited in AI tools to get on their radar.

Relevant measures may include:

- Qualified audience reach
- Search visibility
- Direct and branded traffic
- Content engagement
- New-user growth
- Video engagement

Consideration

Purpose: Help prospects evaluate options and build trust.

During this stage of the senior living search, older adults or families seeking care for a loved one are gathering more in-depth information about potential communities they may want to visit. This is where the work your Marketing is doing to build awareness begins to pay off. To keep prospects engaged, be sure your site has relevant, in-depth content that helps answer their questions and guides them further toward their decision.

Relevant measures may include:

- Engaged website visits
- Key-page views
- Resource downloads
- Return visits
- Calls and form submissions
- Inquiry conversion rate

Sales Engagement

Purpose: Turn interest into a meaningful conversation.

In this stage, older adults and families are booking visits and reaching out directly to your Sales team. This is where rapid response and a seamless hand-off to Sales are critical.

Relevant measures may include:

- Qualified inquiry rate
- Speed to lead
- Contact rate
- Appointments or tours scheduled
- Tour show rate
- Follow-up completion

Decision

Purpose: Convert qualified interest into residency.

In this final stage, your prospects are becoming residents. But marketing intelligence is just as critical. These insights can reveal why some prospects drop off the radar and don't move-in. They can also help you tweak your flows to build winning, repeatable plays with a proven track record.

Relevant measures may include:

- Deposits
- Move-ins
- Tour-to-deposit conversion
- Inquiry-to-move-in conversion
- Sales-cycle length
- Cost per move-in
- Lost-lead reasons

The strongest measurement systems preserve visibility across the journey instead of treating every form submission as the final result.

Leadership does not need every available metric in every meeting, Instead, they need the right level of information **for the decision being made.**

EXECUTIVE QUESTION
Does our reporting make it easier to decide what to continue, change, stop or investigate?

Beyond Volume: Why Lead Quality Matters

For years, lead volume has been one of the most visible measures of marketing performance. It is easy to understand, easy to track, and useful for showing how much response a campaign generates. But volume alone cannot tell senior living leaders whether their marketing is attracting the right prospects.

A campaign that produces a large number of inquiries may appear successful at first glance. Yet another campaign with fewer leads may generate stronger prospects, more productive sales conversations, and more opportunities to advance toward a move-in. Without visibility into lead quality, marketing teams risk rewarding activity instead of performance.

A more complete evaluation follows the prospect through the journey:

Inquiry → Qualified inquiry → Contact → Tour → Deposit → Move-in

Performance should be examined at every meaningful transition.

Lead quality adds essential context to the numbers. It helps organizations better understand which campaigns, channels, and tactics are producing meaningful opportunities—not simply form submissions or phone calls. That insight allows marketing teams to make more informed decisions about where to focus resources and how to improve performance over time.

Using Fountain Digital's Fonterra engine, senior living operators can add lead quality into the full-funnel reporting experience, giving Fountain and its partners a clearer picture of the results behind their lead counts. Rather than optimizing campaigns solely to generate more inquiries, teams can focus on generating more of the leads that matter to each organization.

This creates a stronger connection between marketing activity, sales opportunity, and occupancy goals. It also supports a more disciplined approach to campaign optimization - one designed to produce better opportunities and a more consistent path to move-ins.

This does not mean organizations should eliminate early-stage or awareness marketing. Senior living decisions are often long, emotional and nonlinear. It means leadership should evaluate each channel according to its intended role instead of expecting every touchpoint to produce an immediate move-in.

> **Executive Takeaway**
>
> Lead volume measures response. Lead quality helps measure opportunity.

The strongest performance strategies consider both. By looking beyond the number of leads generated, senior living organizations can make smarter investments, improve alignment between marketing and sales, and build a more predictable path toward occupancy.

Questions Leaders Should Ask to Determine Lead Quality

- Which campaigns are generating our strongest prospects?
- Are high-volume channels also producing meaningful sales opportunities?
- Where should we shift investment based on the quality of the leads generated?
- Are marketing and sales aligned on what constitutes a quality lead?
- Can we connect campaign decisions to outcomes further down the funnel?

> ***"The goal is not simply to generate more leads. It is to generate more of the leads that create meaningful opportunities for your communities."***

Evaluating Performance Across the Portfolio

A campaign may appear successful overall while underperforming in a high-priority market. A community with strong organic demand may make a channel look more effective than it is. Another location may generate sufficient inquiries but struggle to convert them because of response time, availability or competitive pressure.

By evaluating performance across several lenses, leadership can gain a clearer sense of the true effectiveness of each campaign and determine the level of accuracy in reaching the intended target audience:

- **By Channel:** Which sources generate awareness, qualified inquiries, tours and move-ins?
- **By Campaign:** Which messages, offers, and audience strategies produce meaningful engagement and action?
- **By Community:** Which locations are exceeding expectations, and which need additional support or investigation?
- **By Market:** How do competition, demographics, search demand, and local awareness affect results?
- **By Care Level:** Do independent living, assisted living, memory care, and other service lines produce different costs, timelines, and conversion patterns?
- **By Audience:** Are adult children, prospective residents, referral partners, and other decision influencers responding differently?

These comparisons should not be used to create simplistic rankings. Their purpose is to help leadership identify context, exceptions, and opportunities.

The Reality of Attribution

Google Analytics defines attribution as assigning credit to the ads, clicks and other factors encountered along a user's path to a meaningful action. Its attribution-path reporting is designed to show which channels initiate, assist and close conversions, illustrating why last-touch reporting alone provides an incomplete view.

However, senior living decisions rarely follow a straight line. A family may:

- Hear about a community from a friend.
- Search for it online.
- Read reviews.
- Visit the website several times.
- Download a planning resource.
- Click a paid advertisement later.
- Call the community.
- Attend an event.
- Schedule a tour.
- Return weeks or months later before making a decision.

No single platform sees the entire journey.

Tracking limitations can also affect source data. For example, browser and ad-blocking behavior may prevent tracking technologies from recording some traffic-source information.

A paid media platform may claim credit for a conversion. Website analytics may identify a different source. The CRM may record the call as direct traffic. The prospect may personally credit a referral or prior awareness.

Attribution should therefore be treated as a **decision-support tool** not perfect accounting.

A PRACTICAL ATTRIBUTION APPROACH

Leadership should consider multiple perspectives:

- **First touch**
  How did the prospect initially discover the community?
- **Lead-creation touch**
  Which interaction produced the identifiable inquiry?
- **Influencing touches**
  Which channels or content supported consideration?
- **Sales conversion**
  Which activity contributed to the tour, deposit or move-in?
- **Self-reported source**
  What does the prospect say influenced the decision?

According to Google, this multi-perspective approach is consistent with attribution tools that examine different interactions and distribute conversion credit according to the selected model. The goal is not to award all credit to one channel.

The goal is to understand how marketing efforts work together and make better investment decisions with the most reliable evidence available.

Executive Insight

Attribution will never be perfect. It should be credible enough to reveal patterns, guide investment and improve performance.

Building a Connected Performance System

Reliable accountability depends on connected technology and consistent processes. A typical performance environment may include:

- Advertising platforms
- Website analytics
- Form and chat systems
- Call tracking
- Customer relationship management (CRM)
- Marketing automation
- Sales activity records
- Occupancy or resident-management systems
- Business intelligence dashboards

They need to exchange enough reliable information to create a coherent view of performance. As a solution to disparate systems, The Fonterra Data Engine from Fountain Digital connects these reports into one dashboard.

The Monthly Executive Performance Conversation

Fountain Digital Framework: This five-question structure is a meeting framework that empowers leadership to evolve performance reporting and reviews into more meaningful conversations that generate the insights they need to make decisions and assign ownership of follow-through.

Presenting every available metric is not a productive performance conversation. Instead, conversations about reviewing metrics should answer five simple questions.

1

WHAT CHANGED?

Identify meaningful changes in business outcomes, not every normal fluctuation.

2

WHY DID IT CHANGE?

Use operational and diagnostic measures to investigate the likely causes.

3

WHERE IS ATTENTION REQUIRED?

Highlight communities, markets, channels or stages of the journey that fall outside expectations.

4

WHAT ACTION WILL WE TAKE?

Define the decision, test, intervention or resource change.

5

WHO OWNS THE NEXT STEP?

Assign a responsible owner and a clear review point.

Questions Every Executive Should Ask

About Results

- Which marketing investments are producing qualified demand?
- Which channels are influencing tours, deposits and move-ins?
- Are we improving conversion or simply generating more activity?
- What is our acquisition cost per resident?

About Performance Differences

- Which communities are outperforming or underperforming?
- Are portfolio averages hiding local problems?
- Which care levels or markets require a different strategy?
- Where are prospects leaving the journey?

About Data

- Do marketing and sales trust the same information?
- Are lifecycle stages and qualification criteria applied consistently?
- What important information is missing?
- Which conclusions are supported by evidence, and which are assumptions?

About Action

- What should we continue?
- What should we change?
- What should we stop?
- What should we investigate?
- Who owns the next action?

The Standard for Executive Accountability

Another report, more data, or a different tool doesn't close the marketing accountability gap. To close it, leadership needs to feel confident they have a complete understanding of:

- Which investments are producing qualified demand
- Which communities or markets need attention
- Where prospects are leaving the decision journey
- Which channels are influencing tours, deposits and move-ins
- Whether Marketing and Sales are working toward the same objectives
- Where leadership should focus next

For senior living organizations, this requires a connected view of marketing, sales and operational performance.

It also requires discipline.

Definitions must remain consistent. Systems must be maintained. Sales outcomes must return to the marketing record. Reports must acknowledge limitations. Leadership teams must act on what the data reveals.

THE ULTIMATE TEST IS SIMPLE:

Does the organization's performance reporting lead to better decisions?

If the answer is no, the organization does not need another dashboard.

It needs higher-level marketing intelligence, quality leads, standard definitions, and shared accountability and alignment.

Final Executive Takeaway

A high-performance growth engine cannot improve without clear measurement and shared accountability.

Marketing creates awareness, builds trust and generates demand. Sales converts interest into relationships. Operations delivers the experience. Leadership aligns the system around business priorities.

When these functions share reliable data, common definitions and clear ownership, marketing performance becomes more than a monthly report.

It becomes an organizational capability.

ABOUT FOUNTAIN DIGITAL

Fountain Digital helps senior living organizations connect marketing strategy, technology and analytics to measurable business performance.

We work with leadership teams to improve digital visibility, strengthen customer journeys, connect fragmented systems and transform marketing data into actionable intelligence.

Digital marketing fueled by analytics and technology.

Ready to Turn Marketing Data into Better Decisions?

If your organization has more marketing data than clarity, Fountain Digital can help you evaluate the systems, metrics and processes shaping performance.

Start a conversation with Fountain Digital.

Evaluate your current marketing ecosystem and identify practical opportunities to improve visibility, efficiency, alignment and measurable growth.

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