



2021

TREND REPORT



INTRO

When we think about what 2021 could bring to the digital marketing table, we get super excited! This is a field that's always changing, and as new trends come and go, it's important to stay up to date and informed. Last year, we were thrown a ton of curveballs, and that's going to have a ripple effect in how marketing strategies will be designed in 2021. The biggest things we've noticed in our research? The idea of home has expanded and become an integral focus point for a lot of people. Home is more than four walls - it's the city you live in, it's your sense of community and comfort.

It's up to us to make sure that our campaigns and strategies capture those feelings.

We've narrowed down this idea into three overarching trends that we think should be incorporated into all aspects of your marketing strategy. We'll be chatting research, content generation, SEO, and advertising, so grab a notebook and your favorite iced latte, and let's get started!



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TREND #1

THE MORE THE MERRIER

People are moving both literally and digitally. Be sure to say hi!

According to Hootsuite, there was a huge increase of people using social media who previously were not on [any platform](#), with baby boomers being the primary age group to go digital in 2020. This is your chance to give them a warm neighborhood welcome and introduce them to both the digital community you've facilitated online and your physical homes!



CONNECTING WITH CONTENT

How you create your digital community and voice relies heavily on your content. Here are some key things to keep in mind.

User-generated content

When you look up a new restaurant on Yelp, do you read the reviews and look at the pictures previous diners have posted? When it comes to content, consumers want a taste of authenticity that can only be found by those who have experienced your community first hand! In [a study](#) conducted by *TurnTo Networks*, **90% of consumers** said that user-generated content holds more influence over their buying decisions than promotional emails or search engine results. What's more, is that thanks to the shareability of social media, your current community members have a way to share their content with the use of hashtags and tagged posts.

Bagel bites, not deep dish

With TikTok and Instagram Reels growing in popularity, it's important to make your social media content relevant by breaking it into bite-sized pieces that are visually engaging, easy to digest, and leave your followers wanting more! The good news is that you can easily take long-form content that you already have, such as blog posts and community video tours, and break it into smaller pieces.

Hit your target (audience) with ads

You've probably done the extensive research on identifying who your target audience is for each of your communities, but how are you reaching them? Take advantage of connecting to new audiences with your advertising. In this past year, we've seen an increase in impressions on ads that highlight unique features, such as outdoor spaces, loft spaces, and home offices.

→ **90%**

of consumers said that user-generated content holds more influence over their buying decisions than promotional emails or search engine results.

ARE YOUR GOOGLE ADS UP TO DATE?

In October 2020, Google announced new advertising policies that resulted in new targeting restrictions for ads that relate to home buying and renting. Read our blog post about these updates [here](#).

A community for everyone

In 2020, one of the biggest shifts we saw was the transition from in-person to virtual tours. The fact is, this trend isn't going anywhere, and that's actually a good thing! According to [Realtor.com](#), 59% of millennial homebuyers have taken advantage of virtual home-buying techniques. You can provide this content for your potential homeowners on social media by going live on different platforms to do walkthroughs or chats about your unique homes.

However, as we transition into this new age of digital home buying, it's important to keep the channels of communication equitable and accessible to all. Adding closed captions on your videos as well as language options are a great way to ensure that everyone has the ability to experience your community from home!

As homebuilders, you know that not everyone is at the same stage in their home-buying journey and the game of life. Some are first-time homebuyers, relocating, need more room for their growing family, or even downsizing. It's integral to consider all of these scenarios as they relate to your community. It can be as simple as sharing how low maintenance your homes are, or the accreditation the local schools have!

➔ 59%

of millennial homebuyers have taken advantage of virtual home-buying techniques.



TREND #2

MORE THAN A HOME

Home is _____

Remember how we said to grab a notebook? Now's the time to use it! Set a timer for five minutes and see how many ways you can finish the sentence above.

Done? Great! If you're like us and have spent the past several months at home, it's no surprise when we say that, in short, *a Home is more than a home, and more than a house.* It's the place where you truly live, and that idea goes beyond your front yard.



INTRODUCING THE CLOFFICE

As kitchen tables become conference rooms, classrooms, and more, 2020 brought about a change in how we see space. [Pinterest conducted a study](#) on what search terms saw a substantial increase and released a list of trends they predicted would be on the horizon in 2021. We broke down our favorites in [this blog post](#). One trend that particularly stood out was how people were looking for new ways to use and reuse their living spaces - including the design of “the cloffice”- an office in your closet!

TELL US A STORY

You can use these new lifestyle trends to create a story about your homes. What would life be like in each floorplan? Can you see a family using the loft as a home office, or maybe a gym? Showcase that image in your marketing with storytelling! Play into the unique features that your homes have to offer and how every family can call it home in their own way.

TO COMMUNITY AND BEYOND!

Like we mentioned, home is more than a house! One of the benefits of purchasing a home within a community is not only the access to amenities, but the proximity to schools, shopping, dining, and more. You probably know what those key selling points are for your community, but how are you keeping potential homebuyers informed?

GC
FLY TOURS

One creative solution our team has devised is our newest product offering: *GC Fly Tours!* With this new service, we can create a bird's-eye tour of your community so that potential homebuyers can explore *everything* from the comfort of their couch.

BOOK YOUR FLIGHT! 

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

According to [Forbes](#), consumers are valuing companies that are resourceful and informative about what it is they are selling. They are anticipating that companies, such as homebuilders, will have an understanding of their needs as well as a wealth of knowledge about their industry and the buying process. This is a huge plus for two reasons:

1. You can make the conversation personal and convenient! Your home advisors and sales offices are already the most informed about your communities. You can easily invite those interested in your community to give them a call, direct message, or email to get all their questions answered and more.
2. Informative content is **good for SEO!** You can boost your optimization by including relatable and educational content that's relevant to the key search terms individuals are using when looking for a home in your area.





TREND #3

EASE OF LIVING

Can home-buying have an easy button? We think so!

Did you know that [Vogue interviewed several interior designers](#) about their top 2021 predictions? The key takeaway was the idea of **comfort**. Everything needs to be simple and easy, in every aspect of buying a home!



FOR MILLENNIALS, THE TIME IS NOW!

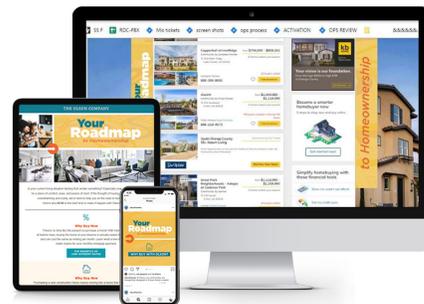
One of the peculiar silver linings of 2020 and COVID-19 is that millennials have moved their home-buying timeline up exponentially. In a survey conducted by [Realtor.com](#) and [HarrisX](#), 49% of respondents said that COVID-19 pushed them to move their timeline up, while 63% of millennial homeowners stated that the ability to work from home was a large contributing factor in their decision to purchase a home. 26% of those surveyed had also said that they were tired of their current living situation, another contributing factor to purchasing a home.

What does this mean for homebuilders? Everything! One of the largest age groups is entering the market at an exponential rate, and with interest rates at current lows, now is the time to really promote the idea of the perfect home.

CASE IN POINT: GET MOVING WITH OLSON HOMES

While 2020 was a year of pause, we wanted to devise a campaign that encompassed the idea of taking those life goals off the shelf and making them happen in the new year! *Get Moving with Olson Homes* is a month-long campaign that focuses on the **now**. Now is the time to become a homeowner and stop renting. Now is the time to stop compromising and find the perfect space in an area you love.

The campaign included a blog, email, and social media assets with this messaging for potential homebuyers to take charge of the “just do it” mentality, and stop waiting for someday. We designed a cohesive, multi-channel campaign that showcased how easy it could be to make those home dreams happen. Our advertising efforts included display banner ads, retargeting ads, social media ads, text message marketing, and email marketing to brokers and consumers.



LIVE SMARTER, NOT HARDER

One of our favorite themes from the Pinterest Trend Report was this idea of self-improvement by way of entrepreneurial spirit and self-care rituals. People are working towards their best selves, and it's up to us to make it easier for them! This year is the perfect time to highlight any and all of your homes' smart home features and how they can make life easier for homeowners.

This can be anything from tech features to keep them connected to their home while running errands, to energy-efficient appliances to save money and help the environment! Take a moment to jot down some of your favorite smart home features and how they can improve quality of life for residents.

HOW CAN WE MAKE HOME-BUYING EASIER?

The act of home-buying is equal parts exciting, gratifying, and terrifying. It's a long process, but how can we make it easier for potential buyers? Thanks to the digital frontier and the rise of online home shopping, we have the opportunity to showcase communities through video and digital media to bring the tour experience to buyers in new and innovative ways.

Hit record

While video adds an extra layer of dimension to your digital endeavors, did you know that it's also one of the most desired content types consumers want from brands? According to [Hubspot](#), 54% of consumers prefer videos over any other type of content. In addition, video on landing pages can increase conversion rates by over 80%, and even just mentioning the word "video" in your email subject line increases open rates by 19%.

Your videos can be anything from a slideshow of model home photos to an in-depth tour, but the important thing is that it should be relatable and informative to the viewer. Keep in mind that your content should always answer the question, "Is this making life and home-buying an easier experience for the person watching it?" Remember what we said about users favoring **snackable content**. Keep each video short, with a few key takeaways that will lead viewers to explore your website or schedule a visit.

Pro-tip

Keep your Instagram organized by utilizing the brand-new **Guides feature!** You can create guides based off of communities or campaigns and place all posts and videos that relate to it in one easy-to-view place.

NEED VIDEO TIPS?
Download our Guide to Going Virtual!



MAKE IT PERSONAL

When someone walks into your community to explore the homes, do you have a single routine you follow, or do you ask some questions to get to know the individual? That same level of personalization should also apply to your advertising. According to a study conducted by [Marketo](#), 63% of consumers said they were highly annoyed with generic advertising blasts, and 80% say they are more likely to do business with a company if it offers personalized experiences. The easiest way to do this is to consider their current and future needs and incorporate them into your advertising. Remember what we said about people looking for homes because they now work from their living room? Showcase that your community has flexible spaces to create home offices! You can even take it a step further and talk about how it can be made into a guest room, gym, or kids' playroom.

START THE CONVERSATION

Did you know that [82% of people](#) want an instant answer to a question? While they could pick up the phone or email your community, there's also the third option of utilizing live chat options on your website or via Facebook! Some of the top benefits of using a chatbot feature is that it is a 24-hour service that can instantly send responses to inquiries and answer simple questions potential homebuyers may have. In addition, chatbots are a great lead generation tool! A chatbot can send the transcript to an online sales agent to follow up and continue that 1:1 conversation.

CAN YOU BUY A HOME THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA?

One of the big changes to social media platforms in the past year is the ability to make purchases directly through the apps. According to [Forbes](#), social media will become a top channel for consumers to make purchases, and brands will need to learn to adapt to these new rules. Will you be able to buy a home via social media? Probably not in the near future, but if you can buy a \$50,000 Tiffany's bracelet on Instagram, the possibility is definitely there.

For now, it's best to embrace the market mentality on social media. Don't be afraid to sprinkle in a few sales pitches into your content! However, be sure to maintain the balance between sales and lifestyle so that your page does not become overwhelmingly saturated.

Pro-tip

Unsure of which feature to highlight? Take advantage of A/B testing! Create different versions of your ads to see how each performs on different platforms. You can review this data with the tools provided to you on each site.

Pro-tip

Want to read up on the balance between your pitch and your ask? We recommend reading Gary Vanerchuck's book, [Jab, Jab, Jab Right Hook](#) or reading [this article](#) on Medium that summarizes the key takeaways.

NOT THE END, JUST THE BEGINNING

Hey look, you've made it to the end! Give yourself a high five. We don't know what the future brings, but we do think that these three overarching ideas will be present throughout this year, and it's important to find a balance among them as you plan and implement your marketing strategy in 2021. We hope this guide sparked the creative flame in your brain, and as always we're just an email/phone call/direct message/carrier pigeon away!

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