

## What Drives Aging Adults And Marketing Implications Senior Housing Operators Should Consider

As we age, we experience an onslaught of *losses* which impact our quality of life. These can include – but are not limited to – losses like:

- Loss of physical strength
- Loss of health
- Loss of peer group/friends
- Loss of financial independence
- Loss of authority
- And more.

Seniors respond to such losses by battling to *maintain control* of whatever they can hold onto in their lives. Frank Luntz, a political consultant and pollster, identified a list of major concerns his research had uncovered among Americans, 65+, in his book, *What Americans Really Want*. Most of the concerns listed by Luntz are rooted in a senior's need for control. Hence, "control" is the place to start when considering how market to this aging cohort:

- **Control** – The sense of control is important to seniors, because it speaks directly to what many seniors fear most: *dependence on others*.

Marketing Implication: Recognize this prevailing need in sales messaging. Demonstrate how the senior living community values and facilitates a resident's independence and control.

- **Peace-of-mind** – It is not "security" that matters, it's *peace-of-mind*. Peace-of-mind provides assurance that the senior has absolutely nothing to fear.

Marketing Implication: Identify what it is about a senior living community that gives residents peace-of-mind – the confidence that there is nothing for the senior to fear when residing at a certain community. Make this an underlying theme in every selling message that is communicated.

- **Health** – Anything that promotes "healthy living" or a "healthy lifestyle" will attract a senior's attention. It is not just about health; emphasizing lifestyle and living helps seniors feel they can remain active and in control – that they still have the power to live their lives the ways they wish.

Marketing Implication: Show how the senior living community embraces a commitment to healthy lifestyle, and how that lifestyle commitment is not only more fulfilling but also enhances the senior's capacity to live the life he or she desires.

- **Financial Independence** – Control, peace-of-mind and good health are all linked to *freedom from financial worry*. This is particularly important to those seniors who are on fixed incomes.

Marketing Implication: “Can I afford it?” is by far the most common question asked by a prospective resident. While there are pros and cons to published pricing for senior housing, there is good reason to help a prospective resident explore options to make senior living affordable, and to create a plan that ensures the prospect will be able to remain at that community for the rest of his or her life.

- **The “Good Life”** – Entitlement to *live well* in reward for a *life well lived* is considered by many to be a sacred, fundamental right – the best illustration of the “American Dream.” It becomes a compelling desire and an expectation that, if not met, will lead to despair.

Marketing Implication: By positioning life in a senior living community as that “reward” for a life well lived, the appeal of the community’s selling message is enhanced. However, this positioning must be more than an idle promise; the community must be able to demonstrate how it delivers on that promise.

- **Companionship & Connectedness** – Loneliness is an undeniably painful component of the aging process. Lifelong friends and peer groups are dwindling. Family members are pulled away by other activities and responsibilities. For many, this loneliness in their latter years is a cause of fear.

Marketing Implication: This fear can be turned into a strong selling point for almost any senior living community. The social aspect of living with other aging adults who are in the same situation can re-energize a senior’s life, especially if compared to living at home alone.

Aging adults grasp tightly to whatever they can control, aware that their control over their lives is fleeting. The senior living community that can embrace the seniors’ need for control and provide them the mechanisms to help them maintain that control longer will find it easier to win them over to the community.