



## 3 Core Principles for Successful Senior Living Advertising

By Pam McDonald

Paul Flowers, President of [Circa 46](#), an advertising agency with a specialty in senior living and a Senior Housing Forum partner, sums up the three core principles of successful senior living advertising as follows:

1. Be meaningful.
2. Be compelling.
3. Be visible.

### **Be Meaningful**

Paul points out that the first core principle – Be Meaningful – is foundational for all effective advertising. So, If your advertising message is going to be meaningful, it must answer these questions:

- Why should a prospective resident pay attention to your community in the first place?
- What is it about you that would make them consider leaving their homes to live in your community?
- What is it that makes your community different and better than other senior living options in your area?

Paul says, *“Answer these questions right and you are well on the way to creating advertising that generates quality traffic to your community!”*

### **Be Compelling**

If you hope to establish your community into your prospect’s consideration set, your advertising campaign must be compelling. That means your advertising message must demonstrate value – and do so in a manner that demands your prospect’s attention.

As Paul notes, *“That means you must do more than simply present your community’s features. Value demonstration is that “meaningful message” (mentioned above), and it must create an impetus for your prospect to take a deeper look at you – especially if you can offer value your competitors cannot match.”*

Another factor that helps make your message compelling is ensuring your communication is “focused.” Paul warns, *“Don’t dump every good thing about your community on your prospect. Stay on point, driving home your strongest, most meaningful message – because when your advertising attempts to deliver a lot of messages, those messages tend to subtract from each other!”*

## **Be Visible**

No one can predict when someone will decide it is time to make the move to senior living. Therefore, according to Paul, it is essential that your advertising is visible – or “findable” – when a prospective resident becomes motivated to move and that it appears where prospects expect to find it.

Paul says, *“For a lot of reasons, at Circa 46, we like to start with a strong search engine marketing campaign as a base for senior housing advertising programs. According to a 2012 Occupancy Advantage survey, 87% of people who contact a senior living community will check it out online before contacting in person or by phone. A solid search engine marketing program can ensure your website is findable, when a prospect begins looking for senior living options.”*

Other places your prospects will expect to find information about your community include your local newspaper (if placement of your ads can be focused geographically), direct mail that’s targeted demographically and geographically, and of course, referral sources.

Your message must be clear – that is, easy to read and comprehend. As Paul points out, *“It is a hard fact that as we age, our vision tends to decline. This decline affects such things as the perception of contrast, color and sharpness of detail, and must be taken into consideration when advertising to seniors.*

*“Written communication to older adults – whether it’s newspaper ads, direct mail or websites – should always use larger type sizes; a 12-14 point font should be the minimum. Stick with common typefaces that seniors find more readable and, equally important, make sure there is good contrast between the text and background. Readability is paramount.”*

As vision declines, so can hearing, so when communicating orally with older prospects, clarity – of diction and of thought – is key.

Aging adults who process information more slowly may have difficulty reading and understanding written material that is dense with long, complex sentences and multiple clauses, Paul notes. “And this problem may be further complicated as seniors often find it harder to focus their attention and deal with distractions. Hence, make your ad copy simple and easy to read. And by the way, this is consistent with good advertising technique, whether you are targeting seniors or teens.”

Adherence to these three principles will result in successful advertising for your community. *“In fact,”* Paul states, *“they will result in successful advertising in almost any product category, because they simply reflect good advertising technique.”*



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