



The January Lead Surge: Be Careful What You Wish For

By Susan Saldibar

It's sad and troubling, but the fact is, many adult children of aging parents have their one "big visit" over the holidays. And if they haven't seen their loved one for a while, a family can be shocked at health issues that have cropped up during their absence.

Then come the hurried internet searches and frantic phone calls to find a senior care provider. Yours may be one of them. Your sales team may look forward to the first of the year, knowing they'll get a fair amount of those leads.

But are these the kind of leads you really want?

If your sales team is eagerly anticipating a January lead surge, you may have a chronic sales problem, according to Tom Goldman, Chief Operating Officer at [SoftVu](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner).

"Getting a surge of leads feels great," says Tom. "But it's not a healthy way to manage your lead flow. To be successful over the long haul, you need to cultivate prospects before they have an urgent need. There are better ways to do this."

Leads don't have to be a guessing game anymore.

In case you haven't noticed, the sales process for senior living has changed because the technology behind it has changed. Here's where it's taking us:

- From huge, general mailing lists to smaller lists containing highly granular information
- From mass-generic email blasts to highly personalized, targeted emails
- From passive, third party listings to active digital marketing programs
- From purchasing lists in bulk to evaluating each lead and purchasing individually, a la carte

The benefit of getting an early foothold on using new technology, according to Tom, is that you can edge out fellow operators who are reluctant to abandon traditional methods. “State-of-the-art lead generation that sifts through ‘Big Data’ to refine the leads is gaining a foothold,” says Tom. “And why shouldn’t it? It’s much more cost effective than the older, broader approach offered by companies like A Place for Mom.”

Your window of opportunity, as Tom sees it, is starting to close, however. “We are seeing more communities holding out for a better set of leads,” he says. “Now that they know it’s possible to obtain and pay only for highly detailed, targeted leads, they are getting more savvy about their sales and marketing programs.”

The right questions will help you make the decision.

So where to begin with all this? Start by knowing the questions to ask before selecting a lead generation provider. Here are a few:

- How did you build your database? Look for signs of ‘Big Data’ at work. That’s a good thing!
- What level of detail do you have for each prospective resident? Look for granularity down to such things as whether or not a home-based resident is using a cane or walker.
- What will I pay and when? Avoid those who offer you thousands of leads for one price. Avoid those who charge a balloon payment after your move-in. That “balloon” can be enormous.
- Do you offer marketing automation as well? This indicates that the company will stand behind their leads and not abandon you after the sale.
- Can I see how this works? Make sure to get a full demo and ask plenty of questions so you understand how the platform works.

One last threat . . . or thought.

The important thing is to stop counting on that post-holiday lead surge. “Technology has brought us new marketing automation platforms to put the senior living community operator in the driver’s seat,” says Tom. “Now is the time to check them out. Not later. Because your competition may already be using them,” Tom adds.

Sound like a threat? Maybe it is. But waiting to find out will likely cost you in wasted time, too much money spent and a lot of regret.



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