



## This May Be Why You're Not Getting More Leads Through Your Residents

*By Susan Saldibar*

Have you ever gone to an ATM and the person in front of you walks away saying, "It's not working?" What do you do? You walk away and try another machine, right?

That's a psychological reaction referred to as "social proof." We tend to trust the opinions and experiences of other consumers, and we will often make buying decisions based on those opinions.

That's the rationale behind Yelp and Google reviews. And it's also why organizations gather testimonials. As consumers, we trust other consumers. So, if this is true, then why don't we see more senior living communities channeling the opinions of their existing residents to attract new residents? Why aren't they engaging their residents and residents' families as "social proof" to influence others to become residents?

"If you ask them, they'll tell you they have a program in place," says Ashley Nicol, Director of Client Success for [G5](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner). "But what they really have in place are fragments of programs with no uniting mechanism to put them into action."

### **Doing It Wrong**

If, over the last year, you were not wildly successful in turning residents into influencers and advocates for your community, here are some things you may have done wrong:

1. You failed to set the expectation by encouraging residents and families to share their stories and opinions at the time of move-in.
2. You didn't get waivers for photos and videos up front.
3. You made it too complicated for residents and families to share stories and reviews online.
4. Your team was unequipped and unempowered to catch residents in a "feel good" moment and capture their positive experiences.

5. Your team was not properly motivated to uncover and share stories of residents and experiences with photos, videos, and blogs.
6. The programs you do have are uneven, and they are not consistently reinforced, so no one takes them seriously.

The good news is that it is not as hard as many think to begin to harness the residents' experiences and opinions in a way that will provide that "social proof" and turn prospects into residents.

As Ashley says, "First, marketers need to recognize that the buyer journey is no longer linear, it is an infinity loop. It doesn't end with a move-in."

In fact, it's after move-in when the real marketing effort should begin. "Once you convert a prospect to a resident, they become a powerful potential influencer and advocate for your community," says Ashley. "How? Primarily through testimonials on your website, social media, reviews online, and word of mouth."

With good programs in place, you don't have to be pushy.

## **Doing It Right**

The key is to set expectations early in the move-in process. Here's what G5 has found gets good results:

1. Your program for encouraging and capturing positive resident involvement needs to be clear and comprehensive.
2. Your desire for feedback and sharing must be communicated to residents and their families at or before move-in.
3. Everyone, from your executive director to your support staff, should have some level of involvement in encouraging residents and families to share stories and post positive reviews.
4. Your online presence needs to be well-designed and highly visible—from your website to your social media.
5. Your social media and website marketer should regularly post these personal testimonies from residents and their families. Be sure to include videos, photos, and personal quotes.
6. Your review platforms and tools should be easy to use—as close to a one-click review as possible.

## **Strong Residents Programs**

Don't underestimate the power of these programs. When they work, they can transform your entire sales process.

"A strong resident program is one that is tightly woven into the framework of your marketing and service programs," says Ashley. "Your web and social content needs to be highly personal and inviting. We're seeing communities posting creative blogs such as 'a day in the life of' videos of both residents and caregivers. This is what prospective residents' families want to see."

Over the next several years we can expect to see an increased demand for high-quality senior living communities. Boomer-aged adult children will be taking two key actions to evaluate which community they will select for their loved ones: they'll ask their friends and family and they'll go online to check out reviews, testimonials, and videos. It's the authenticity of that "social proof" that you build through your resident programs and online presence, that will help make your community their first choice.



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