



## Want an 83% Increase in Your Community Event Attendance?

By Susan Saldibar

Have you ever received an invitation in the mail inviting you to one of those free informative complimentary dinner seminars at a local restaurant? I've been to a few of them. Here's why I go:

1. They are conveniently located.
2. The topic is interesting or important to me.
3. I get a free meal (hey, why not?).
4. There is no high-pressure selling.
5. It's easy to sign up for more information.
6. I walk away feeling a little smarter than I walked in.

I was reminded of all this when I spoke recently to Bob Wilgus, Director of Marketing and Strategic Digital Communications for LeadingResponse, a Senior Housing Forum partner. As you may know, one of the services they provide are off-site educational seminars for senior living communities.

### Why go off-site to host a seminar, when you really want them on-site?

There is somewhat of a conundrum that perplexes many of the senior living community marketing folks. They know that getting a prospective resident to walk through their doors increases the chance of an eventual move-in. So, they cut to the chase, hosting seminars and events inside their four walls, rather than out in the greater community. They're eager to show off their dining rooms, fireplaces and suites. So why would they host an off-site seminar?

That's a question that Bob is eager to answer. His short answer is that you stand to get a 83% higher participation rate, according to his chart below.

Senior Living Communities holding **On-Site** Events

Market Area	# of Event Dates	Quantity Mailed	# of Responders	Response Rate	Care Type
Melbourne FL	2	6,000	70	1.17%	AL MC
Lynchburg VA	1	7,500	47	0.63%	IL AL
Hackettstown NJ	1	7,500	13	0.17%	IL AL MC
Murphys CA	2	2,800	44	1.57%	IL AL MC
Freehold NJ	1	5,000	55	1.10%	MC
Londonderry NH	1	7,500	65	0.87%	AL MC
Windsor Locks CT	2	7,500	118	1.57%	IL AL MC
Oklahoma City OK	2	1,717	78	4.54%	MC
Raynham MA	1	5,000	36	0.72%	AL MC
San Diego CA	2	7,000	85	1.21%	MC
Londonderry NH	1	7,500	73	0.97%	AL MC
Oklahoma City OK	2	5,000	78	1.56%	MC
Tulsa OK	2	5,000	117	2.34%	MC

**Average 5,771 68 1.42%**

Senior Living Communities holding **Off-Site** Events

Market Area	# of Event Dates	Quantity Mailed	# of Responders	Response Rate	Care Type
Deland FL	2	5,000	122	2.44%	AL MC
North Port FL	2	7,000	163	2.33%	AL MC
Columbia MD	2	7,500	85	1.13%	IL AL MC
Deland FL	2	5,000	73	1.46%	AL MC
Jacksonville FL	2	7,500	103	1.37%	IL AL MC
Ottawa, Ontario	2	5,000	210	4.20%	IL AL MC
Clearwater FL	3	7,408	228	3.08%	IL
Columbia SC	2	7,500	125	1.67%	IL
Walla Walla WA	2	7,500	155	2.17%	IL
Helena MT	2	7,500	118	1.76%	IL
Paducah KY	2	7,500	249	3.67%	IL
Kennewick WA	2	7,500	169	2.33%	IL
Texarkana TX	2	7,500	451	6.31%	IL

**Average 6,878 173 2.61%**

**An 83% Increase!**



## So, after looking at these numbers, the question is “why”?

Here are some of the reasons off-site seminars garner higher participation:

1. While most of the attendees are actively researching senior living communities, some of your ideal prospects are still in the early stages. Off-site events are a proven way to get them to schedule a tour.
2. Off-site events are less threatening. Your prospect will take their mom or dad to a restaurant, but not to an assisted living facility.
3. Zero disruption to your community. 100% focus remaining on residents.
4. You are able to reach more people at a much lower cost.
5. These are exclusive leads – not like the ones you buy (and share) with other communities in your area.
6. You get in front of hundreds of qualified folks who are looking to make a live connection with senior living experts but have been procrastinating, waiting for someone to reach out to them with the right offer - the social dinner event at a local restaurant.

This makes a lot of sense. For most prospective residents, there is a big step between getting more information and walking through the doors of a senior living community. Those are the prospects you want. And those are the very people who attend an offsite community event.

## It may be time to lose the luau.

As convenient and hospitable as it seems for a community to hold its seminars on-site, it comes with some significant risks, according to Bob. “Communities often center an event around a theme. Luau’s are a popular example,” he says. “But you need to remember that you are bringing people into an uncontrolled environment and taking focus away from your residents. This creates an atmosphere ripe for falls and other accidents. I’ve seen it happen,” he adds. In addition, it turns your sales team into event planners (but isn’t that the activity directors job?).

## But what about the extra costs to host off-site? Restaurant space, food costs, etc.?

Actually, from a cost-per-lead, cost-per-tour, and cost-per-move-in perspective – if done correctly, off site events can be significantly less expensive. This is a numbers game. So, you have to look at overall results, not just the hard-dollar costs. Bob shared the chart below, which shows a side-by-side comparison of the average results from on-site vs. offsite community events.

	On-site Event	Offsite Event (The LeadingResponse Program)
Average number of attendees	12	50
Average number of tours	5	20
Average number of move-ins	2	6
Cost per lead/attendee	\$331	\$119
Cost per tour	\$795	\$296
Cost per move-in	\$1,988	\$987

I have to admit that, as a boomer child myself; I’d be more likely to attend a seminar at a familiar, local restaurant than walk through the doors of an assisted living facility.

Bob makes a great point about senior living community operators needing to understand the mindset of their target client. Especially since holding informative seminars outside a community actually increases the number and quality of the prospects reached. Bob is also quick to note that these are exclusive leads you’ve met face-to-face (unlike those cold, impersonal digital leads that you’re buying and chasing every week and that have been shared with an average of 6 other communities in your area). Also, think how unsettling it is for a consumer to be inundated with calls from six competing communities; within a 24-48 hour period from the time they requested information online – not very consumer friendly. “The real irony of offsite vs. on-site marketing for prospective residents is that before every community opened its doors – they held offsite events to promote and generate leads and “hard hat” tours,” says Bob. “It worked then and it works now – if done correctly!”



This article has been brought to you by [Leading Response](#) in partnership with [Senior Housing Forum](#).