



Why This Guarantee Could Change the Way You Market

By Susan Saldibar

You know that feeling when you absolutely, positively know you're right about something? You rant, you rave, you scream at the top of your lungs to the naysayers, "This is correct. This works!" What about the frustration when those naysayers keep on doing what they've always done because -- well, that's what they have always done?

That's the vibe I got while talking with Bob Wilgus, Director of Marketing and Strategic Digital Communications for [LeadingResponse](#), a Senior Housing Forum partner. And, in Bob's case, he's so sure about something that, instead of ranting and raving, he's putting a guarantee behind it (more about that later).

Are you driving away your own prospects?

The "must be on my property" mentality is driving away the kinds of prospects you want.

LeadingResponse, as you may know, plans, promotes and hosts off-site educational events. They've been doing this very successfully for over 20 years and for about 25-30 different consumer-driven markets, ranging from retirement planning to purchasing franchises.

Senior living communities, they are finding, are a perfect fit for these events. Only there are quite a few naysayers who don't quite see it that way. They remain "hard-wired" to the notion that events must always be hosted on their properties. And it's that mentality that, according to LeadingResponse research, may be driving away the very prospects they need to attract to be profitable.

"We get it! Senior living operators want to get as many people as possible coming through their doors," says Bob. "But there is a whole group of future residents out there who want to know about you, but they aren't yet ready to walk through your doors," he adds.

And those "less acute need" residents are the ones you want to get in front of and engage with, aren't they?

The 100 Attendee Guarantee

Every quarter, the LeadingResponse team has a huddle. They look over results to see what's working and what's not working. Here's what is working, based on their analysis of the last 16 months:

- Educational, social dinner events...
- Held at a local popular restaurant...
- That strictly follow the LeadingResponse formula...
- Will produce a minimum of 100 highly motivated attendees (potential residents and their adult children).

“We looked at these numbers from our educational events in every way possible,” says Bob. “And they were consistently getting well over 100 attendees,” he adds. “So we decided to put our money where our mouth is and offer a ‘100 attendee guarantee’”.

Of course, there’s more to hosting an event than sending out invitations and serving a nice dinner. There is a formula to this, one that LeadingResponse has taken years to develop and lock down. However, once the wheels are in motion, the results they’ve witnessed -- first hand -- have made it easy to offer a guarantee.

Meet The Consumer On Their Terms, Not Yours

This is a consumer-driven business. And the consumers want to meet you on neutral ground.

According to LeadingResponse research, the adult children are key participants in the decision making process; they are also attending these events. “Having an event at a restaurant gives them a safe place to learn about senior living options. So they go to the event and see other adult children,” says Bob. “They think ‘Oh wow, I’m not the only one...’”

The numbers may make the decision for you.

I asked Bob to share more of the math behind off-site events, especially since they typically cost a bit more than hosting on-site. He was ready and eager to share. “If the average life of a resident is 22 months; take the revenue of monthly rent x 22 and divide by total amount of marketing dollars spent. It’s not hard to see how \$7,500 spent in January can yield hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue for the community.”

But it’s the communities using LeadingResponse’s offsite community event marketing program who are really doing the math, according to Bob. They are beginning to realize that, after about six months of doing educational offsite dinner events, they have accumulated a healthy pipeline of prospective residents; some of whom may move-in next week, others who may be ready in a month or two. So they’re replacing a lot of their old marketing programs with a steady schedule of off-site events.

Do what you always did. Get what you always got.

As Bob sees it, a new era of consumers are screaming for change. But in too many cases, operators are reluctant to respond. They may lose out in the long run. In other words, “If you always do what you always did, you’ll always get what you always got,” he says.

The bottom line is that the old model of holding on-site events to generate “traffic” just doesn’t generate the tours and move-ins anymore. Bob says it best, “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results – that’s the on-site event model.” The good news for senior living communities is that LeadingResponse is offering a proven alternative. And, for the risk-averse senior living operators, they’ve got the guarantee to back it up.



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