



In Senior Living Sales, Where They Live Now Matters, Too

By David A. Smith, CEO of [Sherpa](#), a Senior Housing Forum Partner

For the past 30 years, I have been fascinated with the question, What does it take to help an older adult prospect — one who is not already in crisis — get "ready" to move into senior living? The American Senior Housing Association (ASHA) recently released a new tool, [Where You Live Matters](#), designed to educate seniors and their families on the connection between where you live and how well you live as you age.

The Starting Point

Resistance to age-segregated housing runs strong and deep, especially among today's generation of senior housing prospects. Because this resistance is grounded in conflicting emotions, not facts, it can't be overcome with reason, logic, flashy marketing campaigns or traditional sales techniques. Even among our qualified leads, upwards of 8 out of 10 seniors say they simply aren't "ready" to buy.

Negative associations about aging also prevent sales counselors from believing that they could help individual prospects "get ready" even if they wanted to. As a result, most sales teams tend to focus narrowly on closing sales with the most urgent prospects, the ones in crisis. Instead of helping reluctant prospects "get ready," most communities simply categorize them as cold leads and resort to passive and ineffective strategies for conversion: sending bulk mailings, increasing call/tour quotas, enlisting an adult child or professional influencer or waiting for a crisis.

What we really need to increase conversion rates is to help all prospects, not just those in crisis, to develop awareness of their unmet needs and nurture their acceptance of change. Especially for higher-functioning prospects, the starting point is learning where and how they live now.

Where You Live Matters

ASHA's new tool [Where You Live Matters](#) enhances and improves outreach messaging around the idea of helping seniors get "ready." Where You Live Matters provides seniors and their family members with unbiased, research-based resources, including videos and downloads, to help them begin the senior living journey. The idea is "to take seniors and their families from over-whelmed to empowered" about their future housing needs. It is an important and admirable objective.

Where seniors live now reflects their personality, distinctiveness and individuality—the very things they would need to give up or change if they decide to move. Until they are "ready" to consider change, they are "closed" to being sold. In order to confront emotionally based resistance, we need strategies to "open" higher functioning prospects up and facilitate buying before we attempt to offer product-centered solutions. Before we help them find a new home, we must understand where they live now.

Prospect-Centered Selling®, which is built into the core workflows of Sherpa CRM, focuses on building trusting relationships one prospect at a time. Our software uses common denominators and empathic connections to create a safe emotional space where prospects can trust us enough to talk openly about their life stories, values and vulnerabilities, including the issues with their current living situation. We do this not to sell but rather to help the prospect get "ready" by building awareness and motivation for change within the mind of the prospect themselves. This process also humanizes and personalizes the prospect in the mind of the sales counselor, which in turn amplifies their motivation and desire to help.

What You Can Do

So if you want to improve conversion ratios, enroll in and take the messaging from the ASHA program, Where You Live Matters. It is a program that deserves our support. Adapt and use the messaging in your marketing, lead generation and lead nurturing campaigns. But more important, invest the time and give your sales counselors permission to give this messaging framework context and meaning for each individual prospect based on where and how they live now. It will improve your conversions, and you will be amazed at the results.

Has your community utilizes Where You Live Matters? Do you have questions about Prospect-Centered Selling or helping older adults "get ready" to buy senior housing? Connect with [David on LinkedIn](#) or read the [Sherpa blog](#).



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