



The New Move-Ins Conundrum: I'll Try This Again and Hope

By Susan Saldibar

Definition of Hope-ium: Try this and hope. Buy more leads and hope. Ignore the data and hope. Ignore what consumers need and hope. That's what Bob Wilgus, Director of Marketing and Strategic Digital Communications for [LeadingResponse](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner) refers to as "hope-ium". And, an addiction to hope-ium can cause major problems:

- It keeps you in a vicious cycle of continuing to do things the old way (with poor and diminishing results).
- It ignores data (information available in your CRM) that might point you in a different direction.
- It causes frustration for your sales people.
- It, directly and indirectly, increases your cost-per-tour and move-in.

This isn't insanity. It's just the way you've always done things, right?

"Hope-ium has its roots in the definition of insanity, 'keep doing the same things over and over again and expect different results,'" says Bob. The key to overcoming a hope-ium addiction is like any other addiction: First, you have to admit you have a problem. Then take steps to get out of the vicious cycle.

Data drives everything. It's a powerful antidote to Hop-ium. Let it lead you.

Start by taking a look at the data in your CRM system and pay attention to what it tells you. "Data needs to drive everything" says Bob. At a minimum, here is what your data will expose:

- **Gaps in what is recorded.** Important leads and information sitting somewhere on note paper, not in your CRM system.
- **Unqualified leads still marked “active”.** Knowing which leads to remove is just as important as knowing which ones to keep. For example, if price is a clearly stated concern with a prospect and they don’t have any access to or qualify for additional resources, that lead should probably be marked as unqualified. It needs to remain in your database for reporting purposes, but it should not be showing up as an active lead.
- **Leads over one year old with no activity.** What happened to the lead? Was it a lack of response? Why has it gone unworked? Detailed data can serve as a guide to either unqualify it or make a fresh attempt to move it forward.
- **Little to no systematic qualification.** It’s one thing to know what a “warm” lead is by definition, but is there a consistency as to how leads at various stages are managed? The data will reveal inconsistencies and help you standardize where necessary.
- **Empty “notes” sections.** Notes provide insight that numbers can’t.

First and foremost you need to get sales people to put every scrap of information into the database. Bob explains, “If not, you’ll have a C-level executive saying, ‘I just saw the numbers and something’s not right’, and the sales people kicking themselves because they know they did more than what’s on the spreadsheet. They just didn’t put it into the database!” How you view the data (leads) in your CRM is also critical, according to Bob. “Leads are an asset that decreases in value over time,” Bob continues. “90% of the names in the database were paid for, directly or indirectly, by the community and should be managed and nurtured as such.”

It’s okay to ask for help.

Data can also tell you if you need to reach outside for help, according to Bob. If you are being frugal and making your sales people wear multiple hats just to save money, you may lower your cost-per-lead. But you’ll likely see fewer move-ins. A deeper dive into your data may tell you that you need to invest more to get the level of return (and move-ins) you are seeking.

It doesn’t help, according to Bob, that there is often a disconnect between the home office (key decision makers) and the frontline managers at the communities. Executive management may be looking at sales and occupancy data, but they are not taking the extra steps to connect what their spreadsheets tell them with what’s happening at the local level. So, if they see a lack of move ins, they may opt to cut costs rather than spend some additional funds up front to yield a greater return on the back end.

That’s where partnering with professionals who know how to use data to build better lead generation programs helps, Bob tells me. “A good outside marketing and lead generation partner should be able to prove, using data, that their programs will result in more conversions,” says Bob. “But someone up at the top needs to be willing to put hope-ium aside long enough to let these folks do the work if it the data supports it,” he adds.

As with any addiction, sometimes you need to hit rock bottom first.

“Say ‘enough!’” says Bob. “Say ‘Starting today we’re going to end our hope-ium addiction and let the data lead us where we need to go.’ Once you start, if you’re persistent and committed to change, things will get better.”



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