



## A Shorter Sales Cycle for CCRC's With More Deposits?

*By Susan Saldibar*

There is a growing group of CCRC sales teams out there who are walking away from their educational events pleasantly surprised with the results. What's putting smiles on their faces is that they are getting somewhere on the order of 1-2 deposits at the event, something that's pretty rare for a senior living sector with a traditionally long sales cycle.

I think it's interesting that the only folks who aren't surprised are the people at [LeadingResponse](#), the provider of their off-site dinner events.

Bob Wilgus, Director of Marketing and Strategic Digital Communications for [LeadingResponse](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner) told me recently that they get this kind of feedback regularly. "Typically, the CCRC sales cycle tends to be longer than that of, say, assisted living," Bob says. "So, their expectation is to collect leads that are maybe 6+ months to a year or so out," Bob told me. "But we've been seeing much more compelling results, such as deposits at the events themselves, with more deposits often coming within a few months after the event."

Somehow I have this image of CCRC's scratching their heads thinking, "What did we do right?" Here's what they are doing right, according to Bob:

1. **They are holding their events at popular upscale restaurants.** Having the event in a local popular restaurant changes the dynamics. It's neutral territory, so there is not the pressure of walking through the doors of the CCRC. There isn't the fear of a high-powered sales pitch. And it gives the presenter a great environment to build their "story" and focus on the benefits of the CCRC, its continuity of lifestyle and the new, fresh image they want the attendees to leave with.
2. **They are attracting more highly qualified target attendees.** "CCRCs are standing up in front of a highly concentrated group of qualified people at these events," Bob says. "And these are people who are financially able to take action if they like what they hear."

Another part of "doing things right", Bob tells me, that can't be shrugged off is the fact that many CCRCs are adjusting the way they present their communities. Traditionally the CCRC sales teams come in with a "real estate open house" mindset. So instead of talking about your unique approach and the continuity of lifestyle, you're sort of boxed into selling an apartment, or a townhouse. But when you have your prospects relaxed and in a neutral location (surrounded by dozens of other affluent couples in a dinner event environment), it's easier to tell your story and strike a more emotional chord with them. They are, after all, sitting, relaxing and having dinner in a good restaurant, not poking their heads into rooms and looking at the pool, gym and other onsite amenities. Makes a lot of sense.

### **Resist using the old real estate sales model. Your reward just might be more deposits.**

Clearly, pairing this shift in the sales methodology with the off-site event model packs a powerful punch. Valerie Whitman, VP of Senior Living for LeadingResponse, recently reported that they are filling the events to capacity and pulling in 144-180 leads. "There is a hunger and a need for that educational component. So, it's been very powerful," she says.

As Bob tells me, "We're breaking the mold. And we're pretty happy about that. We have been slowly moving the awareness meter over to off-site events. We urge CCRC operators to resist the temptation to continue with the traditional real estate sales model --- buffet lunches with mimosas in your rec room. Move to off-site educational events at popular restaurants, like Maggiano's. You'll be in front of a much higher qualified audience. And, if you do it right, you may come away with a few deposits!"

