



The “Check Box” That is Hurting Your Business

By Susan Saldibar

List it and leave it. What could be easier right? That must be why so many communities use referral sites to generate leads. It’s a convenient box to check to make sure you’re “out there”, especially if you lack the in-house skills, time and resources to go it alone.

Now I don’t like to talk against referral sites or “aggregators” as many call them. They provide some pretty big coattails to ride for budget-conscious communities. And, for the most part, they are straightforward about how their model works. So, maybe that’s why the box continues to get checked.

But I find it interesting that, as we advance our knowledge of the inner workings of the internet, better ways of generating leads organically have emerged. I wonder why more communities aren’t starting to wise up to the fact they can now do a lot more on their own.

Before you check the aggregator “box” again...

Case in point are the folks at [G5](#) (a Senior Housing Forum Partner) who have an interesting take on referral sites that might make some communities take a second look at that box they keep checking over and over again. G5 makes a pretty good argument towards a more effective way of boosting your community brand up in page rank, without riding someone else’s coattails (along with all your competitors).

What G5 is saying, in a nutshell, is that you can become your own referral site, by sourcing leads directly from the internet to your website (no expensive middle man). And it’s actually gotten easier, through advances in technology advances and applications. There are companies like G5 who have figured out how to navigate and optimize exposure over the internet in ways that don’t require massive learning curves and “webmeisters” to manage.

Here are five ways, according to G5, that a community can gain better lead traction without playing the aggregator game:

1. Development and reinforcement of your brand. When you use well-designed landing pages within your website domain, alongside a proactive, predictive digital strategy (this is something G5 does), you can amplify your brand and stand out against your competitors. As you know, on referral sites you are simply a listing in the same format as all your competitors.
2. More control over your competitors. When a prospective resident finds your page on an aggregator's site, listed directly below your community are about 5-6 nearby competitors. You may lose the lead before they even click on your link.
3. Shorter distance to a lead. According to G5 research, website leads are 3-4 times more likely to convert than those coming from an aggregator.
4. Control over your prospects' micro-moments. You are in control of your prospects' digital journeys and can maneuver your brand and messaging to capture and convert their micro-moments to a strong lead. (Read more about micro-moments [here](#).)
5. A higher (possibly much higher) ROI. You don't have to shell out your resident's first month's rent to an aggregator and pay to basically share leads with all your competitors. Your leads are yours alone, at least for the time being, to convert into residents.

G5 also suggests that you use social media to "soft close" a prospective resident before he or she even walks through your doors. Use your social media to tell your story and add in photos of real people and videos to bring it alive.

And don't forget reviews. G5 urges communities to make sure you are turning satisfied residents into advocates by making it easy for them to post reviews. According to G5 research, 97% of all consumers read reviews before they decide to take action. They are more important than ever before, especially in this industry. Make sure you have plenty of them!

It would seem to make sense that, as more communities realize they can do a lot of this themselves (with some help from people like G5), they might think twice about checking that aggregator box. Old habit die hard, I know. But maybe not for long.

G5 has written an article with more details and tips, which you can read [here](#).



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