



## Is This Your New Differentiator to Increase Occupancy?

By Susan Saldibar

What are the two things most of us fear losing if we move into an assisted living community? Our independence and our sense of individuality. Don't you agree?

The folks at Envoy America agree too. They're out to restore, to the highest degree possible, both of those things for residents. And, since they specialize in senior transportation coupled with assistance and companionship, they're in as good a position as anyone to do it. But they are also confident that by restoring those two things to residents, a community will have developed a strong market differentiator that will 1) attract more prospective residents, 2) increase the tour-to-move in ratio and 3) improve some key efficiencies.

That's a lot to unpack and I admit I'm curious. I caught up with K.C. Kanaan, CEO of Envoy America, to find out why their driver companion services are having such a profound ripple effect throughout the community. A big part of the answer lies in the fact that they offer a lot more than vans running in loops every few hours. So much more, in fact, that many consider Envoy America to be a potential industry disruptor. Here's how they "think different":

1. **Their model is structured to enable highly personalized transportation.** That means that Mary can go to her Catholic church on Sunday and Joe can go to his Synagogue on Saturday. Joe can also go to his favorite Italian restaurant and, at no additional charge, pick up family and friends. Mary can go to her favorite coffee shop along with others from the community. Seniors laud the Individuality and independence. And, with their own busy lives often unable to make every appointment or errand, families appreciate the needed assistance and safety.
2. **No dropping off at the curb.** The Envoy America driver companions accompany residents all the way through the journey. That means they'll go up the elevator to that doctor appointment, from doctor to doctor within a medical facility; they'll pick up from the pharmacy, and go grocery shopping or run errands, etc. No senior need be fearful that he or she will miss an appointment, not find an office or get lost. A greater sense of calm, comfort and ease is created, not only for the senior but for his or her family as well.
3. **The drivers, themselves are special.** They have been carefully trained in aging and dementia, through the Banner Alzheimer's Institute. They understand the challenges of aging and know how to make each journey as easy as possible, regardless of a passenger's condition. Plus, Envoy America likes to hire retirees and veterans as drivers. These are people who worked hard all their lives, and now want to give back to their communities. Folks who see this as a calling and not a job! Who doesn't love that idea?

So, what about increasing occupancy? Taking the above points into consideration, here are 3 key areas where K.C. tells me that Envoy America is helping communities increase occupancy:

1. **Increasing leads:** If you claim to be a “person-centered” community, nothing says it better than providing personal choice and beyond-the-curb assistance. Adding the above differentiators to your marketing messaging shows that you are doing more than talking the talk when it comes to providing person-centered care and services. Mix these differentiators into your digital marketing campaigns and you should expect to see greater inbound lead traction.
2. **Increasing tour-to-move in ratios:** K.C. suggests that communities use their drivers to pick up the prospective resident and family members at their homes and bring them to your tour. The drivers can remain on hand to provide assistance and drive them back home. What a great way to show off the transportation amenity. While en route, the driver can let the prospective resident know that they can go to their favorite hairdresser or restaurant. Independence and individuality.
3. **Making the resident assessment process more efficient:** As you know, before any resident can move in, they have to first go through a resident assessment process, often conducted by a registered nurse. As K.C. explains, many assessments occur at the home of the prospective resident. That doesn’t have to be the case. Using the transportation services, these residents can be picked up by the Envoy America driver and brought to the community for their assessments. Nurses save valuable time and can remain on premise where they may be needed. Residents are assessed in the community rather than in their comfortable environment, often leading to a more accurate assessment.

By the way, it bears mentioning that, using this model, communities don’t have to pay the high overhead of a transportation staff and a fleet of vans. They simply pay for services rendered. K.C. tells me that they are seeing an average savings of 20-40% off traditional van transportation models, while eliminating an often challenging HR headache.

What do you think? Can this new model of transportation not only restore a sense of independence and individuality to residents, but also give communities a strong enough differentiator to help increase occupancy?

Here is what Jon Scott Williams, Executive Director, Fellowship Square-Mesa, the winner of the “Best 2018 Tribune” for Best Living Community in Arizona has to say:

*“There are times when our residents have an appointment outside of our service area, need to be somewhere after hours or may require waiting at an urgent appointment,” Williams explains. “After doing our research over 2.5 years ago, we have discovered that Envoy America is much more than just a driving service. Their service includes transportation that is always coupled with assistance and companionship during the trip. Their drivers are trained to provide a helping hand, just like our staff or a son/daughter would,” he adds.*

Envoy America has received national attention and has been covered in the Chicago Tribune, Seattle Times, Dallas Morning News, Phoenix Business Journal, CBS, ABC, Fox and NBC. For more information about Envoy America, please visit their [website](#).



This article has been brought to you by [Envoy America](#) in partnership with [Senior Housing Forum](#).