



The New Community Checklist: Are You Doing This?

By Susan Saldibar

People thought Harry Selfridge was crazy. Who would want to visit something called a “department store”? But on March 9th, 1909 Selfridge’s London Department store opened to the sound of bugles as crowds of people poured through his doors. Turns out he had sent out 600,000 invitations in advance and run ads proclaiming the amazing displays visitors would see inside the store.

What could Harry have done with digital marketing and a website?

The folks at G5 certainly know. And it’s a lot more than a few bugles and invitations. They have pretty much nailed the process of using digital marketing to build interest and positive momentum for new communities.

I spoke recently with Celena Canode, G5 (a Senior Housing Forum partner). Celena shared with me their New Senior Living Community Checklist that G5 uses to guide their clients on the path to a successful new community opening. You can download it [here](#):



What's cool about the checklist is that, like any good plan, it starts you out a full year before opening. It's a comprehensive list, so I've extracted just a few of the items to give you a flavor of the level of marketing that is needed in today's competitive marketplace to publicize and build engagement for your new community.

- **9-12 Months:** At this point you should be looking at domain names/extensions, landing pages and your community logo. You should have an announcement on your home page that your new community is coming this [drop in the season].
- **6-9 Months:** This is when you need to lock in your budget for your digital marketing programs. Reach out to the local community and make sure you have property renderings and/or photos, as well as local property listings in places like the local Chamber of Commerce.
- **3-6 Months:** Launch your website/webpage for pre-leasing. By now your social media and digital ad campaigns should be in full swing. Publicize any pre-opening walk through events.
- **1 Month:** Update photos and videos on website. Issue press releases on opening. G5 suggests that you create a New Resident Advocacy Program (Welcome/Lease Renewal/Communication).
- **Opening:** At this point you should have been monitoring your social campaigns and actively engaging with prospects. You should be updating your photos and videos. And, you should adjust all your promotional content and website to reflect that your community is "now open".

This may seem pretty straightforward, but you'd be surprised how many communities either leave out many of the promotional activities or get started too late. I've also seen communities with pages still proclaiming, "Opening in May!" in the middle of July. That's where a checklist, like G5's, really comes in handy.

As I noted earlier, there is a lot more detail in the checklist. You should take the time to go through each item and ask your team if they are executing these tasks and staying on schedule. You may be missing something critical to the success of your opening. Better to catch it now, rather than later.

As for some Selfridge touches? Why not? No one would suggest that opening a new senior living community is like opening a retail store. But it is an "opening". And senior living could use a little Selfridge excitement. Who knows? With some creative thinking, a detailed checklist to guide you, and a savvy, creative marketing partner, like G5, you may be able to boost your openings up to a new level.



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