



Are You Unbalanced? It Could be Hurting Sales

By Susan Saldibar

No one is naïve enough to think you can get a move-in just through digital ads and emails. Equally foolish would be going door to door attempting to personally engage with everyone you think might become a future resident.

According to Valerie Whitman, VP of Senior Living for [LeadingResponse](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner), it's how well you integrate and balance your digital efforts with your face-to-face engagement that will determine your move-in successes. "Your leads represent people in various stages of making decisions," Valerie told me recently. "For them, this is a journey. You need to know where your prospect is in that journey, so that you can communicate with them in a way that helps make your community their 'next step'."

I asked Valerie to share some of her wisdom in terms of creating the kind of integrated lead generation programs that lead to becoming your prospect's "next step".

All leads are not created equal. Don't treat them that way.

We started by talking about digital advertising. The conventional wisdom is that most prospects start their journeys by going online to research senior care. And, for the most part, according to Valerie, these folks are not yet ready to interact in person. So, if you're spending a lot of money emailing and calling them to try to get them in to tour, you might want to reconsider.

"All leads are not created equal," Valerie says. "So don't treat them all the same way," she adds. That goes for those who bounce off your site, as well. "Many communities assume a bounced lead is dead," she says. "But, with the right tools, you can uncover demographic details about them to help you know the best way to keep them engaged, even when they drop off your site," she says. To do that, LeadingResponse has developed a tool that starts by attaching the IP address to a physical one. Then, using their database tools, from that address LeadingResponse is able to get highly detailed demographics, including key data about the individual's income and assets.

“Now you can put a name to those bounced leads and continue to communicate with them,” Valerie says. “We have more and more operators coming to us and asking ‘How can I do something with these bounced leads?’ This is how.”

LeadingResponse will also determine which is the best way to follow up with digital leads, based on their web behavior. “We look at things like the length of time on various pages, and so on,” says Valerie. “From there we can determine the next step. Often that’s in the form of a direct mail piece, inviting them to an educational event.”

Direct Mail . . . Really? Really.

Valerie reports that LeadingResponse is getting an average 78% response from their direct campaigns. Wow. Back in my marketing days, I never got anywhere near that. I asked her how they get those numbers. “It’s because we can get really granular with our targeting,” she tells me. “As for the CTA, we often invite them to an event on a topic we know will be of interest to them. While they may not want a phone call, they often will attend an off-site dinner event in a neutral setting,” she adds.

Once you nail the demographics you can make sure you are marketing to those you know can afford assisted living, among other things. “But don’t just send a postcard,” Valerie explains. “We use very high quality, letter-style invitations. That’s one of the ways we get these higher returns.”

Who will attend an off-site educational event?

Now we come to the face to face engagement part of an integrated campaign. This, Valerie tells me, is when having highly granular set of demographic data really works to your advantage. It’s critical that you understand your audience from a consumer behavior standpoint.

“If you’re not getting a strong ROI from events, it’s usually because of poor targeting,” Valerie says. “You may not be incorporating consumer behaviors, not using a hyper-targeted approach. You need to layer in added data sets, such as income, family connections, and so on.”

LeadingResponse has the vantage point of sitting in the middle of their clients’ marketing campaigns. They understand digital marketing in terms of leveraging the leads effectively. They understand direct mail and how to get 78% opens. Finally, they understand “face time” and the value of the offsite educational dinner events and their ability to get more tours and move-ins.

Budgets are coming up. This may be a good time to re-think your processes.

For many senior living community operators, budgets are right around the corner. This is a good time to step back and take a look at your campaigns. Where are you spending your money? What’s your ROI? Are you still putting most of your money into aggregator sites? “For those still running on the aggregator treadmill, why not peel off 10% of that budget and put it somewhere else?” Valerie asks. Good point.

As to where that “somewhere else” is, the answer is pretty clear. “Off-site educational dinner events,” Valerie recommends. “Because that’s when you will get face time with your best prospects. And it’s where your tours will come from.”



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