



How to Stop Wasting Money on Leads That Don't Convert

By Wendy D'Alessandro

American baseball legend Yogi Berra said during the 1973 National League pennant race, "It ain't over til it's over." True, unless you're a leader and marketer at a senior living community, then it's never really over, because meeting and maintaining occupancy rates is an ongoing process, one that requires a constant evaluation of a community's marketing strategy and tactics. You need to measure your lead sources' return on investment (ROI), and then prioritize your marketing dollars accordingly.

Let's start with a quick comparison

If a senior living community pays between \$2,600-\$4,500 for a move-in they received via a paid referral source – and pays \$0 for the leads that don't move into the community, that cost is significantly less than what [Enquire](#) reports that communities are paying for move-ins achieved via other means:

- Direct mail campaign: \$5,292, costing on average of \$757 per lead
- Events: \$1,001, per event, costing on average \$268 per lead
- Advertisements: \$1,623, costing an average of \$564 per lead

The Enquire 2017 Senior Housing Sales and Marketing Benchmark Report, in which 71% of respondents are from independent living, assisted living and memory care communities, supports the growing effectiveness of digital marketing overall and notes how online directories are driving 26 percent of inquiries, more than any other referral source.

The million dollar question is: Are these inquiries leading to move-ins?

The Enquire study shows paid referrals are converting on average at 7%, the same as web leads. Denise Graab, Director of Industry at Caring.com, says providers can boost this conversion rate by:

Improving response time

A [study of several million Internet-generated leads](#) revealed that calling these prospects in under 60 seconds leads to a [391% improvement over average conversion rates](#). Caring.com's Partner Portal helps senior living communities track

leads and Caring.com also provides marketers with referral alerts via email. Communities should respond to those families very quickly because the odds of reaching a prospect who submitted an Internet inquiry decrease dramatically after the first hour.

“Speed to lead is critical for Internet searchers, as are online reviews, which [boost inquiries, tours and conversions](#),” says Denise.

Selecting a true partner

For many families, the referral service is their first (indirect) “touch point” with the marketer’s community. That’s a big responsibility so you want a partner who understands your selling points and the industry, and can carefully guide your prospective resident on this journey.

[Families highly rate Caring.com's referral services](#). Before sending the prospective resident referral to the community, Caring.com spends on average about 20 minutes on the phone with the family caregiver or older adult in an initial discovery and financial qualification process covering their care needs, budget, preferences, lifestyle, etc. Caring.com follows up thereafter with tour reminders, educational information, and search/selection check-ins.

Being a good partner

Your senior living community should ensure that your referral partners have (at a minimum) your current rates and room options, key selling points, and any move-in specials you’re promoting. Using Caring.com’s Partner Portal, you can easily update this type of information on your listing anytime.

BONUS: How to Analyze ALL of Your Marketing Campaigns, Including Internet Referral Sources

Denise suggests marketers should use financial facts and ROI calculations to determine and prioritize their best marketing efforts. “Few marketers have an unlimited budget for advertising their business in every possible place, so it makes good business sense to know how well marketing campaigns are doing and which referral sources are providing the best return on investment.”

Do the Math

Do your calculations to confirm that your referral sources are worth the dollars you’re investing. Remember to calculate the cost of an empty bed as well (how much revenue your community is not earning every month that you have vacancies) – are you doing enough marketing to have full occupancy and a waiting list?

From Caring.com’s Digital Marketing Academy archive, this webinar walks you through how to determine your ROI and offers a series of questions to ask about the various marketing campaigns so you can expand your analysis. Definitely worth the watch!

Review Your Offline Referral Sources

Print ads and articles or a doctor’s recommendation require some extra effort on the marketer’s behalf. Denise suggests adding a “How did you hear about us?” on your website forms, in your script for handling inbound calls, and other related follow-up tactics, or providing a special offer or “mention this” code for each offline promotion.

A final Yogi Berra thought: “*If you don’t know where you are going, you might end up somewhere else.*” In other words, create and follow a sound strategy. Then, be sure your results are worth the investment.



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

