



Sucky First Impressions Cost Real Dollars

By Susan Saldibar

How much does a bad impression cost you?

Weird question, right? Well, maybe not. I spoke recently to Darren Mathis, President of LincWare (a Senior Housing Forum partner). They're the folks who have created Admit+, a digital admissions platform that has basically removed any paper component to the admissions process and reduced the average admissions time down to about 15 minutes.

So, they know something about first impressions. A good one can bring great reviews and referral business. A bad one can be costly in more ways than you think, according to Darren. So, I asked him to share how that bad impression becomes so costly. Here are a few of his points to consider.

- **Hard cost:** The cost to get them in the door. Marketing studies have shown that you'll spend upwards of \$1,000 just to get the prospect in for a tour of your community. Lots of time and effort by your sales team to keep them engaged and work towards the close. To lose them in the admissions process means real money out the door. And a frustrated sales team to boot.
- **Time cost:** If your new almost-resident isn't thrilled with all the paperwork and sending documents back and forth, they're not going to move as quickly. Even if they still go forward, it's human nature to drag your feet with an organization that appears to be dragging theirs.
- **Competitive cost:** New communities are coming equipped with automation. That includes the admissions process. They are integrating their systems and making it easy

and fast for new residents to sign, complete, and move-in. Those who don't, look dated. And it will cost you as your new resident, dragging their feet, decides to check out the competition.

- **Referral cost:** How much does a bad review cost you? Lots of paperwork, lack of organization, missing documents, flustered, paper-chasing staff? And a one-star rating to top it off.
- **Talking about you:** Residents talk most about you in the first 30 days of making their decision. What do you want them sharing about your organization? Do you want them telling their friends and family about how complicated the paperwork process was? How many trips their son/daughter had to make during their workday to get the paperwork completed? This is the most important time to get it right.

Darren is quick to say that a slow, paper-based admissions process doesn't necessarily mean your prospective resident will drag their feet, leave for another community and/or write bad things about you. But what he is quick to say is that first impressions count. Expectations are high before move-in and anything that gets in the way of that positive momentum can cost the community in ways you may not anticipate.

"Your admissions process says something about a community itself as well as how residents can expect to be treated," Darren says. "By providing a smooth, hassle-free admissions process, a community is creating a positive onboarding experience. Remember, this is your first real business transaction between you and the resident. Residents don't remember what you said, but they'll remember how they felt."