Tips for Handling Internet Leads

ServiceTRAC, LLC

Popularity of Internet Shopping

Today the internet is playing a greater role than ever before in the marketing of Senior Housing. According to research, Internet shopping is now more popular than thumbing through the yellow pages. There are a variety of different web sites whose sole purpose is to attract those shopping for Senior Housing options. With the purpose of distributing the leads to Senior Housing communities, every Senior Housing company has its own website to educate the public about the company and invite them to inquire about their company. What separates your company's website from your competitors? The bottom line is that leads from the internet are here to stay. The challenges of developing rapport with a lead generated from the Internet are much more difficult than that phone call lead. Your website has to be at least one step above your competitors'. Your follow up must be a giant leap above your competitors. One company in Florida states that 20% of all of their leads are from the web and are responsible for 10% of their sales. In a recent study by ServiceTrac, LLC., 20 communities representing a cross section of the industry were Mystery Shopped. The shoppers expressed interest in the communities via the web or through email. The results were surprising. In 50% of the shops, the inquirer had not been contacted in 60 days. In the other 50%, 25% had only been contacted by email with no personal follow-up.

Attitude - All Leads are Equal

Often sales people feel that a lead may be easier to close or more likely to come in for a visit simply because they are closer to the community and that internet leads are generally out of town leads just looking for information. In fact sales people that have the same expectation about internet leads coming in for a visit experience the same closing ratio for inquiry to visit for internet leads as they do for local leads generated by advertising. The moral: You should have the same attitude about internet leads visiting as others. In fact the overall closing ratios for internet leads inquiry-to-move-in are higher than leads generated by general advertising.

"For those who are prepared for this ever-expanding response, the future is bright."

Here are some tips to help your internet leads be more productive for you:

- Follow up (faster): Things happen fast on the internet. If the rule for follow up on the phone leads is two hours; make the follow up for the internet leads instant. The first person to get back to the customer has the best opportunity to win. Put a person and process in place to follow up on the leads.
- Change the Medium (get personal): People who inquire via the internet do so in part because it is an easy and fast way to gather information anonymously. If possible respond to a request for information by reassuring the prospect that you would be happy to forward the desired information. To make sure the information sent is helpful and to expedite the process, a short personal conversation is the best next step followed up with a phone call immediately. This gives you an opportunity to make a <u>personal connection.</u>
- Invite for a visit: Resist the urge to immediately send information; chances are they have already down loaded your information, as well as your competitors' information from the web. They are contacting you for a reason. This is your opportunity to tell you different and better story. Even if they live out of state they probably plan to visit your area in the near future. Always ask to set up a visit with the future resident and the inquirer as soon as possible (ASAP).
- Establish urgency (ask and they will come): Sell what they really need. To give yourself the highest probability to success, follow this critical path on each personal contact:
    1. Listen to the situation with out selling.
    2. Find out who is going to make the decision.
    3. Establish a relationship with the inquirer.
    4. Find out the real issues and feelings, prioritize the inquirers interest today, then do your homework.

Managing Your Internet Leads

Generating leads is only half the story; managing them is the other. Here are some suggestions to managing your Internet leads.

- Build templates for personalized emails. It is very time consuming to send a good quality email to every lead. Build several quality templates that will address several issues. Remember, you have to sell what the visitor needs. Make sure you mention the visitor's name at least twice in the email, and provide your contact information in your signature block. Ensure the templates are personal – not boring.
- Speed is not only good, but mandatory. All research pertaining to Internet leads shows that response time drives closing ratios. If your competitors are responding within 30 minutes, you need to respond within 20 minutes. Decreasing your response time will generate an increased closing ratio.

For those who are prepared for this ever-expanding response, the future is bright. To ensure your company is managing their resources, be sure to occasionally check how your sales staff handles internet by mystery shopping. The Internet is just one of many vehicles we use to generate more business. To master your Internet leads, you must be proficient in "driving" this vehicle.

ServiceTRAC is the industry leader in providing research and training services to senior housing communities. For 13 years ServiceTRAC has consistently improved resident satisfaction and increased occupancy rates at hundreds of communities through benchmarked satisfaction research, sales management training, mystery shopping, and customized performance audits. Our mission is to help our clients delight their residents and impact their bottom line with immediate, actionable strategies.

Will Nowell president & CEO of ServiceTRAC, has more than 24 years of sales, customer service, and training experience. Nowell is a nationally recognized sales skills & management trainer, motivational speaker and senior housing expert. With more than 15 years experience specific to the senior housing industry, he has developed a solid track record of helping communities raise occupancy rates and improve customer satisfaction g, satisfaction research, mystery shopping and full service marketing audits. Mr. Nowell co-authored the 1999 ALFA National Assisted Living Resident Satisfaction Study.

In 2001, he authored a research paper on sales performance measures for Johns Hopkins University's *Seniors Housing & Care Journal.* Nowell has written numerous articles that have been published in various publications including: *Assisted Living Today, Housing Executive Report, National Sales and Marketing Management, Speaker Magazine, Long Term Care Magazine, Quirks Research* and *Arizona Society of Quality Management*.

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