

# OUTREACH WITHIN REACH

**Outreach marketing really should be divided between two categories, Internal Marketing and External Marketing. Internal Marketing is the “resident fulfillment factor” for resident referral. External Marketing is networking with your community neighborhood.**

## INTERNAL MARKETING

Even the most clever and creative ideas for marketing apartment communities can become stale in less than six months. Therefore, we want to make sure we stay on top of industry and economic trends. One thing that never changes or becomes stale is the importance of promoting a resort-like feel that comes with the community. Remember that “home” is the # 1 travel destination. This idea should also reinforce the thought that community managers should identify specific needs and tastes of their residents and act accordingly.

- **As 38 percent of residents** participate in sports leagues, form a bowling, softball or volleyball team and alert residents on how to participate and involve their friends.
- **More than 1/3** of those who have a pet, own a dog. So, host a “Yappy Hour” instead of a “Happy Hour” where dog-owners and their dogs can convene, creating a popular social event. By also providing a dog-grooming center, or mobile grooming, residents will see how much the community cares about animals.
- **Track the type of retail** packages delivered to the leasing office. If an abundance of them come from Avon, host an Avon party. Or, display the catalogs of online retailers popular among residents.
- **Communities should promote** many of the basic maintenance duties they already perform. This creates an impression of even more amenities. For example, tell prospects how often the air ducts are cleaned or point out that each apartment must pass a 360 – point inspection before move-in.
- **A community’s web site** pages should offer a clickable link that translates the text into Spanish.
- **The community room** should be used by residents, and not simply designed for aesthetic reasons. Hold a “Sunday Brunch” or a “Parents Night Out” with movies and popcorn for the kids.
- **Create a study room** for the children of residents to do their homework, considering that most youths attend the same school and have the same assignments.
- **Allow residents** to paint their walls a color of their choice from a community color palette.

- **The most popular** welcome gifts today are computer memory sticks, laptop lights and cell phone covers. Surveys show that more than 80 percent of those who receive valuable gifts remember who gave them the gift.
- **Valuable coupons** and gift cards for things such as gasoline are a better alternative to rent concessions.
- **A real turn off:** Because the little extras make a difference...Have you ever left for work and can't remember if the coffee maker, iron, and toaster are off? Help alleviate your residents stress and make sure your community is safe. Let residents know to give the office a call and a team member will run over to their apartment home to make sure the item is turned off. Just imagine your resident's co-workers and friends hearing how XYZ apartments saved the day!
- **Mr. Wake-Up** is an actual web site you can use to take your customer service to the next level. Many of us have hectic schedules and could use a little help in the morning getting out of bed. Now residents can use this unique resource to wake up and smell the coffee a little easier. [www.mrwakeup.com](http://www.mrwakeup.com)
- **Early Bird Winners** can really help you with your resident referrals. Instead of giving money off the rent or movie tickets, get more bang for your effort with a pizza delivery to your winning residents work. Now everyone will want to know where they live!
- **Value Recognition Payments**, otherwise know as RENT, can now take some direction from the food service industry. Why not take your service to the next level for that very busy time of the month and start Curbside service on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month, with breakfast-to-go bags!
- **Don't settle on just promoting** the benefits of the community. Do some research and highlight some of the other features that the neighborhood offers, such as historical districts, parks, shopping, and cultural events.
- **If a picture paints a thousand words**...then why not give our prospective residents a disposable camera to take with them as they look for a new home?! This company can even print a 4-color message at the bottom of the photo. When the prospect gets the film developed, the message from you appears! Call 818-772-4528 for details, or email: [captioncam@earthlink.net](mailto:captioncam@earthlink.net) Another less expensive idea is to purchase a Polaroid camera for each leasing professional and have them take the camera on the tour, letting the future resident take any pictures they want of your community. At the end of the tour, take a picture of them by the pool for them to take. Staple your business card on the bottom of the photo.
- **Build a referral program.** All sales professionals will confirm that the hottest leads come by way of referral. A good referral is close to qualified and well on the way to a buying decision. The trick is to develop a strong relationship with your residents. They are your best target influencers. In line with the Chinese proverb about one hand washing the other, every referral you make today is a potential referral coming your way tomorrow. Once a quarter have referral party for all residents to invite a friend and enjoy the community. Whether you have a BBQ, cocktail hour, seminar or buffet, encourage residents to bring their buddies!

*Selling, more than anything, is a personal-relationship business, founded on friendship, influence and goodwill.*

## **EXTERNAL MARKETING**

**NETWORKING** – BE PERSISTENT... Stop complaining about no traffic. Create traffic. That's your job! Start an outreach program visiting area merchants and local schools. Make sure you contact at least ten businesses each week. You have to learn to step out there in order to make connections. You're working hard to provide something special for your residents, be sincere in your approach. If you are sincere, then the sincerity comes across. (Giving gifts to area businesses and handing out "freebies" is a great icebreaker.)

How about corporate sponsorship and creating a better business guide for your residents? Within the guide or Neighborhood Business Discount Card, you would list the local businesses participating, their discounts, specials etc. for your community residents. (Good neighbor Card, Resident Advantage Program, etc...) All of this contributes to the perceived value, and promotes retention/referrals.

In exchange for being listed or participating in your guide or card, the business has access to hundreds of new customers and by being a resident of XYZ apartments; your residents get freebies and discounts! Never be afraid to exchange one service for another...it will benefit everyone!

Always check with your residents to find out where they are shopping, eating and patronizing. Use your community demographics to help direct you to the places of employment, and other venues based on important targeted information, such as age and family status.

There are no useless connections. Hand out your business card to anyone and everyone! Consistently be thinking of ways to forge new relationships with businesses, prospects residents and at events or dinners.

**PRESS EVENTS** – Not all companies can be like Microsoft, where every product launch is a media circus, but you can increase turnout. Food drives, hosting Red Cross CPR to the public, major give-a-ways, Rehab or new amenities can draw your local news channel. If press in person is not what you want, a press release can be just as beneficial.

**CONFERENCE ROOM RENTAL** – Think your local businesses would like a nice place to conduct business? This is another great way to make your place known in the neighborhood. Offer to rent your conference or clubroom to area businesses for the exposure.

**GUEST SUITES** – Are guests coming to town? Guest suites can be a great amenity for residents and area businesses. To make the guests visit extra memorable, have the refrigerator stocked and/or deliver flowers and gifts before they arrive, “Complements of the XYZ Team!”

**HOSTING** – Chamber lunches, Red Cross CPR, food drives, and locator luncheons. Invite all Chamber members or area locators to tour your community and have lunch on you. A buffet to start, then the tour and a return for desert. Your efforts will pay off.

**NEWSLETTERS** – are an incredible way to reach your residents and area businesses. Make sure newsletters are informative, give events and praise. They should never contain negative or disciplinary articles.

This is another way to help area businesses get new customers and help your residents to get freebies and discounts. Let your local businesses advertise in your newsletter for the small price of a discount to your residents.

**CONSUMER ENTICEMENT** – Retailers in supermarkets see the checkout isle as their “last hope” to entice customers to buy one more item. Many of the big chains have been experimenting with just which items are hot buttons to customers and how they can maximize on this knowledge to make the most money before the customer leaves.

It would be smart for our industry to think the same way! What is your prospects’ last sight before leaving your community? The dirty back of a sign? How about putting a sign on the way out thanking people for living at, or visiting your community? What about a bootleg sign on the leasing office walkway, on one side the sign thanks a prospect for coming and on the other side says, “We hope you enjoyed your visit.” Follow the lead of supermarkets and keep closing the sale until the last minute.

**PREFERRED EMPLOYERS** – Contact your local Chamber of Commerce to get a list of the largest area employers or use your software demographics report to see where your residents work. Contact these employers with offers of housing for their employees. It will be important to offer these employees an enticement, such as a lower deposit, a gift card, or some type of upgrade in their apartment home.

**PEDIATRICIANS** – Visit your area doctors and leave coloring books for the children with a “complements of XYZ Apartments” and information on the front cover. Or visit

area doctors offices with a newspaper and the flyer attached to the front with property information.

**VETERINARIANS** – Visit your area vets and leave treat bags for cats and dogs with a business card attached.

***Remember, if you keep on doing what you have always done, you are going to keep on getting what you always got!***