

# Are You a Leasing Superstar?

BY LISA TROSIEN



In talking with and watching leasing superstars across the country, I found that these incredible performers have several things in common. If you want to be a power performer for your company, here are five key traits you must have to reach the top (and stay there).

**1. Appearance.** Understand that closing begins when you get ready for your workday. Leasing professionals who consistently perform at the top know that their attitude, appearance and overall professionalism begin anew each and every day. Regardless of their company's dress code, these individuals know that—like their apartments—they must be “rent ready.” Their physical appearance is always immaculate; clean and pressed clothes, neatly styled and trimmed hair; no excessive jewelry or visible piercings. Let's face it ... have you ever tried to buy anything from someone with a pierced tongue, eyebrow or nose? It's distracting and takes away from the overall sales presentation. Likewise, having a lot of visible tattoos is not conducive to successful apartment sales. Cover them.

Short skirts and revealing clothing of any kind sends a strong message to the leasing prospect. It says, “Don't take me seriously, because I don't take my job seriously.” The same goes for clothing that is more aptly suited

for the local nightclub. Scuffed shoes or high heels with broken lifts should be repaired and polished.

Depending on your community's profile, a necktie may be just what male leasing professionals need. A sportcoat or suit also might help send the appropriate message. In his presentation, “Taming the Temperament: Closing the Sale in 30 Seconds” multifamily educator Bill Nye reminds us that the average person makes their decision on whether or not they want to buy from you within 30 seconds of meeting you. Why gamble with something that is so easily controlled, such as your appearance?

**2. Attitude.** Top performers also know they cannot afford to have a bad day. They leave their bad attitude (if they had one when they got up in the morning) at home. Prospects will see an incredibly upbeat, positive and happy person who is sincerely interested in helping them find a new apartment home. It's no surprise that top leasers are almost always described as being a “people person.” Their love of people shines through in their work as a leasing professional.

Some even go through mental exercises to pump themselves up for their workday. In the Dale Carnegie Sales Course, attendees are asked to yell (yes, I said yell!) “I'm exciting

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because I'm excited about what I sell!" during a class exercise. Successful salespeople genuinely are excited about what they sell; if they aren't, they fail. Are you excited about your community? Your apartment homes? If not, try to recapture some of the excitement you felt during your first day on the job. You will be amazed at the difference it makes in your workday.

### 3. Listening Skills.

Top-notch leasers also are incredibly good listeners. They know that "telling" is not "selling." Leasing professionals who are adept at asking questions and actively listening to their prospect consistently have a higher closing percentage.

Excitement about your product is one thing; overloading your prospect and failing to listen to their needs is quite another. Remember to be prospect oriented, not product oriented. If you are not sure how well you listen, pay close attention to your habits on your next demonstration tour. You will know quickly if you are doing too much talking and not enough listening.

**4. Closing Skills.** Superstar leasers know how to ask for the sale. With some prospects, a direct close such as "Would you like to lease this apartment?" is the best approach.

With others, a more indirect question, such as "Shall we go get the paperwork started?" might work best. No matter what type of close will work most effectively, leasing professionals who are at the top of their game know that they must attempt to close every single individual who looks at their apartment homes.

Leasing professionals who fail to ask for the close are doing both their community and their customer a disservice. Anyone who takes time out of their day to view your apartments deserves the courtesy of being asked for the sale. If they were not interested in renting, they would

not come to your building at all.

**5. Follow Up.** Great leasers are great at follow-up. And they do not relent until the prospect chooses to lease from them

or decides to move elsewhere.

In my 23 years in the apartment industry, great follow-up has been an indisputable factor in making the sale. And far too many leasing professionals don't even try to follow up with their prospect.

Just last week, a friend went apartment shopping in Naperville, Ill., which is an overbuilt

market, loaded with concessions and giveaways. She's highly qualified and motivated to lease something in the next 60 days.

She visited five different communities. Each offered at least one month of free rent. Of the five she visited, ONE sent a follow up note. No one has called.

And the note she received? It read:

*Thank you for visiting our community. We sincerely hope that you decide to make Vacancy Village your new home. Please call if you have questions.*

*Sincerely, Jane Doe*

While there are many things wrong with this note, the saddest part is that it was the ONLY note she received, and it obviously is a poor attempt at following up.

Great leasers send personalized notes, based on things the prospect cited as being their favorite about the community—things the leaser learned by using their excellent listening skills.

Superstar leasers also do not limit follow up to a handwritten (not pre-printed) note. They stay in touch by calling or by sending e-mail on a regular basis.

They send their community newsletter and e-mail sites that have a local flair that may interest their prospect or help

them with their relocation. In other words, they personalize their approach to follow-up.

If your leasing skills are not up to the level described here, there is only one person who can change that: You.

So start when you get ready for work tomorrow morning. And be your property's next leasing superstar. ■

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