



Onsite Solutions

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How Did You Hear About Us?

BY LISA TROSIEN

Every day, in management companies across the United States, multifamily educators, marketing directors and executive managers ask the same question: “How do we get our leasing professionals to track their traffic?”

It’s a fair question. Having been a leasing professional for many years, I know that my focus was not always on tracking how the prospect heard about my community, but rather, how to get him or her to lease from me. And I’ll admit it; there were days when I didn’t ask *anyone* how they heard about us. So, how do you get leasing professionals to track their traffic accurately? Here are a few different approaches to the problem.

The ‘Drive By’ Approach

Multifamily consultant Mary Lou Gurski shared a story with me one day of how frustrated she became when her leasing team continually insisted that ‘drive by’ was the very best source of traffic. Their insistence was so great that she actually dropped all of her advertising because her team *knew* that ‘drive by’ was the best source. What happened? All those prospects that were ‘driving by’ stopped ‘driving by’—because the advertising source that got them to drive by wasn’t being created. Her leasing team realized very quickly that their job was to track traffic accurately, or soon there wouldn’t be much traffic to track at all.

The Upside Down Guest Card Approach

In a lengthy conversation one

day with Joyce Rinck of Berkshire Properties, she and I devised a solution that rewarded the *prospect* if the leasing professional failed to ask what advertising generated their visit. We designed what we called “The Upside Down Guest Card.” This card is a typical 8-by-11 card except for the very top of the card. That portion of the card is printed so that it was readable by the prospect and not the leasing professional. It read: “You get two free movie passes if your leasing professional doesn’t ask how you heard about our community.”

The Toll-Free Number Approach

This is probably the simplest approach to solving the problem, but it does cost your community additional dollars. Ask your online or print advertising partner if they can assign your apartment community a toll-free telephone number to place in your advertisements. Each advertisement would have a different toll-free number, thereby allowing you to track each advertisement’s effectiveness separately. The reports generated by these numbers will allow you to find the source that is bringing you the most traffic.

The ‘Get Every Single Source’ Approach

Marketing expert Jennifer Nevitt doesn’t like the “How did you hear about us?” question. Nevitt believes that prospects often hear about us from a variety of sources, and she thinks that trying to narrow the prospect down to one source

isn’t the best path to take. Research done by HPC Interactive backs up Nevitt’s theory. They found that prospects typically use more than one source to find an apartment home—some using multiple print guides and multiple online sources—or a combination of both print *and* online. The repetition of seeing your community in several sources may be a key to bringing more traffic to your community. Therefore, asking your prospect for only one source could lead you to make erroneous marketing decisions. Another approach: “Asking your prospect which source was the most helpful can help you identify which media sources provide the greatest benefit to a prospect,” says Nevitt.

The ‘What’s In It for Me’ Approach

How many leasing professionals know the importance of tracking their advertising sources? All too often, leasing professionals are simply trained to ask the question, but never taught the *why* of asking. Make sure your team not only knows the why, but the cost of each and every advertising source. A savvy leasing professional can help your community save thousands of dollars per year in unnecessary or ineffective advertising. ■