

Weathering the COVID-19 Storm: The Importance of Resilient Sales & Marketing

Meeting Consumers' Needs Now & Later

The consumer experience is rapidly changing across all industries. Every market is finding new ways to adapt their business and communication strategies to comply with new standards for safety and to meet the latest buyer preferences, all of which are shifting daily — sometimes even hourly.

Teachers who have been honing classroom learning for decades are now delivering all their lessons online. Groceries are being delivered straight to our homes; new cars are coming to our driveways. Changes like these are necessary, but for many businesses they're uncomfortable, unnatural, and can be overwhelming. Comfort zones are being thrown out the window across the board, and the senior living industry is no exception.

This is a new game, and while even the immediate future is uncertain, we know the effects of COVID-19 will last far beyond what's happening now. How you adapt your sales and marketing strategies to meet the new needs of the senior living buyer's journey will determine the success of your community in both the short and long term — resiliency is more important than ever.

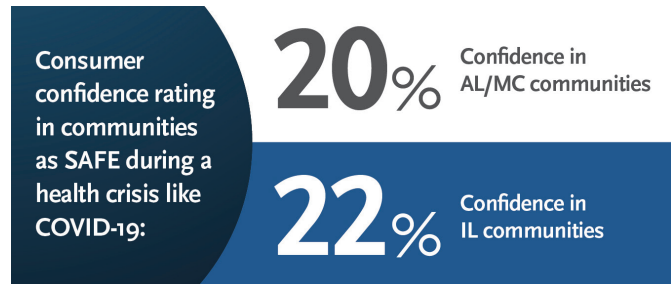
Conditions, Changes & Challenges: What's Happening?

As we keep our finger on the pulse of dramatic change in our industry, we recognize common challenges faced by senior living communities. The majority of these are driven predominantly by uncertainty, fear, and the struggle to cope with and adapt to the loss of traditional tools and methods.

It's important to recognize and acknowledge this adversity, accept the changes as they come, and take control of what you can in order to meet challenges head on with new solutions and strategies that are focused, resourceful and significant.

Insights from GlynnDevins Senior Living Consumer Sentiment Survey (2020) reveal that your community is facing consumer unease, as many are concerned about COVID-19 cases and the spread of sickness, and some lack confidence in senior living.

You've also lost the ability to engage with prospects face-to-face, and you or your staff may be having difficulty adopting and using vital technology as efficiently as is necessary. The economic impact and future ability of prospects to afford senior living is unknown, and no one can predict what will happen next.



These challenges aren't insurmountable, and they don't have to determine the success or failure of your community. The biggest mistake would be to avoid taking action and forego the opportunity to come out of this stronger and more resilient. Those who do will exhibit a larger propensity to adapt and walk away with a new toolkit at their disposal.

With that said ... take consistent stock of the difficulties and snags, but with a clear purpose to set realistic and immediate goals you can meet to overcome them.

New Normal & New Consumer Needs

With these challenges come certain expectations from leads. Based on our recent survey, *GlynnDevins State of Senior Living Survey – Community Sales & Marketing Leaders (2020)*, we've identified a few insightful consumer-focused preferences for engagement that can guide your sales and marketing efforts moving forward.

DO: Focus on a human touch, virtually.

In the absence of face-to-face meetings, your sales and marketing efforts need to be focused on providing a human touch, and showing you care. Getting back to basics and building strong relationships are key. It's imperative to meet their desire for the personal touch of in-person engagements by embracing technology.

DON'T: Sell. Sell. Sell.

Keeping the same sales mentality as before isn't feasible, effective, or appropriate for the current climate. It's not easy to change habits that are deeply ingrained into our sales and marketing practices, but it's absolutely necessary. Try to shift from a selling to a nurturing mindset to meet consumers where they are and ensure they'll still be interested after the storm.

THE WORLD LOOKS PRETTY DIFFERENT TODAY.

**New Challenges
Need to Be
Met with
New Solutions**



GlynnDevins offers senior living marketing and occupancy solutions for the complexities of today's rapidly changing marketplace.

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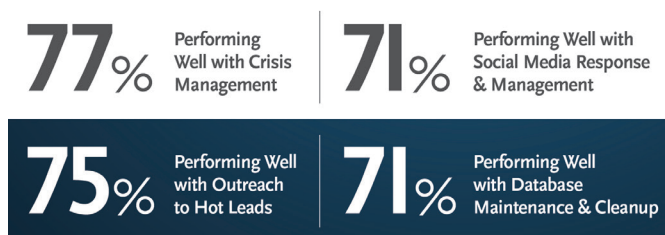
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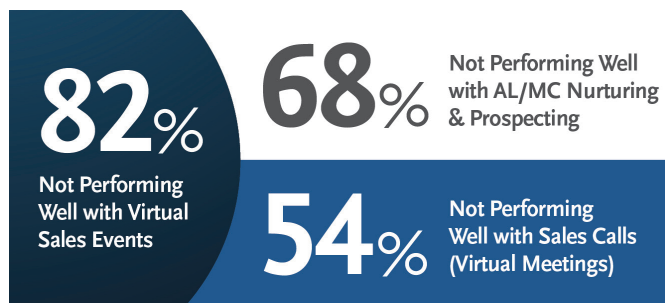
Successes & Struggles: What's Working?

Adapting your tactics to meet these new consumer needs is vital, but communities are having an easier time applying some tactics than others. Following the initial onslaught and response, we've seen a few commonalities surface in communities' performance. Many senior living communities are facing the same struggles in a few key areas. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those communities are also having similar successes.

The recent survey of community sales and marketing leaders shows that social media response, crisis management, hot lead outreach, and lead database maintenance are all high points. Many communities are excelling in adapting and shifting to meet the needs of this new normal.



Many communities don't feel confident in the proper adoption and use of technology, and the ability to nurture and educate leads effectively.



When it comes to virtual sales events, virtual calls, and making more personalized, nurtured connections with leads, sales and marketing efforts have faltered. These aren't brand-new problems, but they're being ushered to the forefront, and in turn are causing us all to propel change and innovation in areas that have previously fallen to the wayside.

Forward Focus: What Can Be Done?

This is uncharted territory for many in the senior living industry. Right now, a top priority for communities across the nation is the need to learn to use virtual technology, and personalize strategies to better meet consumers where they are in the buyer's journey.

To set up your community for success both now and later, it's vital to recognize and adapt to these catalysts for change. Many of the technologies and strategies that will help your community succeed and keep up with competition going forward are already available to you — they just need to be adapted and streamlined. You must meet new challenges with new solutions; if you use the same tools in the same way, you may find yourself falling behind.

To meet the new needs of consumers and keep up with the virtual shift happening across all industries, communities must fully embrace technology and the tools it provides. It's important to be nimble, be prepared, and focus on taking control of what you can. Train your team how to keep prospects motivated without in-person methods, enable them to learn how to hold virtual tours and conduct better virtual calls, continue to create helpful content, clean up your processes, and keep your pipeline open and filled.

Future Strategies: What Will Continue?

Creative and innovative solutions may be urgent now, but we won't see them go away when the immediate danger of COVID-19 subsides. Even when in-person, face-to-face engagements become a reality once again, the virtual tools that were born from necessity will be at all communities' disposal and can be leveraged to stay competitive.

The pandemic jump-started the embrace of technical infrastructure and increased adoption of educating and nurturing tools for the senior living industry. Now that the groundwork has been laid for new strategies and new mindsets, this shift in philosophy and business acumen will continue to evolve as we move through the fallout ... in whatever form that may take.

Virtual selling isn't going away. Nurturing and educating leads and the ability to adjust the selling mindset properly aren't going away. The more resilient and adaptable your sales and marketing efforts are now, the better set up for success you'll be after you've weathered the storm. If you empower your community to grow, become more buoyant, and take steps forward each day in the pursuit of realistic goals, you'll come out on the other side stronger, more competitive, and with a greater skill set than ever before.

Change can be overwhelming. Adding the unfamiliarity of new processes and technology to the mix during an already stressful time is even more uncomfortable and difficult. **Just remember that this is a marathon, not a sprint. We're in this together, one step at a time.**