How Your Community can break through the “I’m Not Ready Yet” Barrier

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# The Challenge

We’ve all heard it at some time. If you’re in any area of senior living you’ve heard it from an otherwise perfect prospect for moving into your community. Those in sales have felt it most acutely. After a veritable symphony of conversations, tours, calls, Q&A sessions, they arrive at a crescendo only to have it ﬁzzle with the words “I’m not ready yet.” The words are a disappointment at least, a threat to your occupancy and bottom line at worst.

Of course, it’s code for “no thanks”, but at a deeper level, it represents a failure to either understand, or meet the needs of, their value system. Value systems are personal and contextual…what was important to us at one point in our lives, is no longer and is replaced with other issues.

So, given that everyone is an individual and the context of their lives is unique, how can you convince them of the soundness of a decision to move into your community? True, older adults do face a common set of challenges and decisions that come with the chronological territory, but to think of them or treat them as a homogenous group is not a strategy for success. That worked with a generation which weathered world events that required them to make sacriﬁces for the greater good, but we are now dealing with a new cohort who have been in more control of their lives, with higher expectations and a more egocentric view of the world. In other words, a potential sales nightmare.

# A New View

Last week, I had a Zoom session with a new ﬁnancial advisor. She spent nearly the entire hour asking me about my lifestyle, my aspirations for the next chapter of my life, what was most important to me (and my wife), and what I felt was the biggest threat to the quality of the rest of my life. Only after that did she discuss what she would do to support us and only after all that came a discussion of our ﬁnances.

I felt like the center of the entire discussion. I felt in control. I very quickly developed a trust in her. I was particularly drawn to her explanation of how she would keep me informed, oﬀer advice to consider, and give me feedback on the performance of my portfolio, all with the clear message she was supporting me in my choices.

Of course, there are elements of this approach currently used in the senior living sales process, but the more consistent message I have seen, is a what senior living can do FOR the resident. With the advent of greater information accessibility, digital platforms to interact, direct, and otherwise control aspects of our lives e.g., physical ﬁtness, lifelong learning, even social connection, the older adult expects more control and deﬁnite personalization of whatever goal they pursue. A model of one-size-ﬁts-all is not attractive. A model where the individual is not an active participant in the crafting of her own path is likewise much less acceptable. The new older adult recognizes they need support, but they are not ready to relinquish autonomy.

# Discussion Questions:

1. What techniques do you use to ensure the prospect that their values are heard, and they are in control?
2. Give an example on how you addressed a prospect’s concerns regarding choices and individual preferences?
3. What questions would you ask to let the prospect know that individuality is enhanced and celebrated at the community?
4. People will often say, “I’ll think about it,” when delaying a decision. What would you do to encourage the prospect to share those concerns with you?
5. How would you explain how the community will meet the prospect at their own pace and encourage and inspire outreach in interests and programs for an improved quality of life?

# **Sample questions for sales team members to use with prospects:**

1. Research shows that 70% of how an individual ages is based on day-to-day lifestyle choices. What’s important to you about your lifestyle?

2. This community encourages every resident to be an active resource and utilize the resources available to them. How would you like to be an active member here? What are you passionate about?

3. Today’s older adults are defying the negative stereotype of aging. What is your perception of getting older?