

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH PROSPECTIVE RESIDENTS

It is a demonstrable fact, based on research, that the first two minutes of interaction with a prospective resident can determine whether the sale is won or lost. Given the brief amount of time, it's important that leasing professionals understand this and have a clear process to start strong. Five points you can incorporate into your process that will ensure conversations with prospects start strong and stay that way throughout the process are: **(1) Best-Friends Conversation;** **(2) Assume Positive Outcomes;** **(3) Don't Interrogate;** **(4) Take Control;** **(5) Make Them Feel Safe.**

Best-Friends Conversation

Embraces the principle that the first and most important rule in dealing with a prospective resident shouldn't be for you to focus on making a sale. Instead, it should be to initiate a "best friends" conversation. What does this mean? This type of interaction is based on the premise that if an old friend came in knowing you have expertise about apartments and asked, "Where should I live?" you would not start marketing features and benefits. You would instead take time to catch up and learn what is important to them and advise them on what they should do. If their needs were a match with your community that would be great, but if not, that would be okay too. Applying this tactic to a prospect, don't start by trying to sell your property. Find out what is important to them and what they really need. Always be upfront and honest in your advice. Base it on their best interests not yours. Prospects, friend or stranger, can sense your intent. They know if you are not aligned with them, they instinctively will feel it. They may not express it but if they do not feel that you place their interests, first and foremost, it will have a material negative impact on the rest of the process.

Assume Positive Outcomes

Whenever you meet with someone, always assume that you can help them. You are the Apartment Professional so assume that they will value your opinion and your interaction with a prospective resident will go positively. This assumption creates a confidence that is attractive to prospects. Just as they can sense when you are not aligned with their best interests, your confidence will have a material impact on the outcome as well as the enjoyment of your sales effort.

Don't Interrogate

Know the difference between asking good questions and interrogating the prospect. It is fundamentally true that the most powerful thing a salesperson or leasing associate can do is to ask good questions. However, it is critical that the conversation never feels like an interrogation to your prospect --- knowing the difference between the two is a fine line. Questions should be conversational. Always keep them open-ended and ask follow-up questions. Use the "tell me more" technique to keep your prospect comfortable and sharing. Listen carefully and demonstrate that your focus is on them and their needs with your responses and follow-ups.

Take Control

You are the expert. You manage tens to hundreds of moves a year. Your prospect moves less than once a year. Relocating is one of the most stressful events in anyone's life. Walking into a building to meet with a "salesperson or leasing associate" who is a stranger just adds to

that stress. When people are nervous, they are looking for someone to guide and control the process. Controlling does not mean being a jerk or dominating the situation. Your prospect will respond positively and appreciatively if you guide them through the process in a confident professional manner focusing on them and their needs.

Make Them Feel Safe

A final point in the process of dealing with prospective residents is to always remember that finding a place to live is stressful. The best way to counteract this type of pressure is to create a feeling of safety. Empathizing with your prospect and removing judgments in conversing with the prospect are key to creating a welcoming environment where they would feel comfortable living.

Incorporating these five points into your process of dealing with prospective residents will put you in a position of professional authority while also increasing your likeability factor. Respecting you and liking you, are two things that should result in increasing your positive results with prospective residents.