

Want to Lease More Apartments? Get the Biggest Bang for Your Buck from Internet Marketing

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Did you know that 52% of Internet leads that we receive in our inboxes are never followed up on? Unbelievable! That is over half of the interested parties inquiring about your community who are not getting a response! Compare and consider if you did not answer half the calls that came in everyday! Or even imagine if you refused to talk to every other person who came in to tour your community. That is a huge amount of valuable business lost right at your fingertips knocking on your web door. Answer the email or maximize the phone call and let them in.

You can do this by Understanding the Value of Internet Leads, Use all the Tools and Quickly Respond with proper Netiquette.

Did you also realize that Internet leads are more qualified and eager to take the leasing process to the next step? That's because they take the time to research and evaluate all their housing choices. When Internet customers email or call – they are ready to do business! They have already seen your prices, floor plans, virtual tours and photos. For all you know they have picked out their favorite floor plan and placed the furniture. All you need to do is invite them out for a tour or proceed with the lease over the phone!

Did you realize that Internet searchers seek out farther ahead when looking for an apartment home? According to a recent study by Apartments.com, 42% of their visitors are looking to move in 60 days and 20% in 3-6 months. It is understandable the reasons why an immediate move-in lead would get worked harder than one that was looking 90-days out. However, the chances are pretty good that are looking at a few future notices to move out. So no need to look in the crystal ball— more than likely you will need this business. It has been proven that residents who look 60 days in advance stay an average of 2.5 years. Compare that to someone who wants to move-in less than 30 days will average one year or less of residency. Doesn't this make one want to focus more on those future internet leads?

Using the Internet as a Leasing Tool

The Internet is a great tool to but also to close the deal right then and there over the phone. Encourage the customer to get back online and use all the images and visuals online such as virtual tours, floor plans or photos to get them excited about your community and apartment homes. Walk them through your community to build up anticipation before they arrive. They may even lease sight unseen by filling out your application online and using their credit card!

If you are not already extremely familiar with each of your Internet ads – I challenge you to immediately go online and thoroughly study each site. Knowing the in's & outs and to how use the provided tools will assist you to leasing apartments. For example, most sites have surrounding city informational links and stats that could build your knowledge base plus give your customers more information during their decision process.

According to Homespages.com, a real estate portal, the top searches when people are searching for homes are seeking school information and community knowledge such as crime stats, weather, population and other demographical information.

According to Apartments.com's Internet customers, the features that are found to be most useful are the area map, driving directions, real time availability and link to property management's website. This same study reflects that 35% of the leads are coming from out-of-state and 31% are moving within the state so it crucial that surrounding area information links and information is known and provided. If you knew that your customer is moving from out of town, wouldn't be extremely beneficial to know this in order to customize your phone call or email to share local area tips and other useful information? Gaining this knowledge will lead you to becoming an amazing expert resource to your customer as they proceed through the moving process. Does your site(s) adequately provide regional area information to your prospective customers and is the information correct? Take a look and make the needed adjustments such as adding links or maps.

Be an Internet Monitor

Get in the habit of going online at least monthly to not only review and update your community's Internet advertisements but also to see what your competition is up to. Remember that anyone at anytime 24/7 can view your sites so ensure that it is looking the best it possibly can. By simply updating copy, photos or changing headlines can improve performance. Price adjustments and other changes such as updating your photos can easily be made online or by calling your local representative or Webmaster. Do not hesitate to make recommendations to your company's marketing department if your community needs additional Internet exposure on other site or beef up current ads. Be prepared to do research and present the reasons for the additional cost with expected ROI and even to offer take ownership to set it up. Pick one day a month to monitor your site(s) and stick with it to become committed to Internet Quality Patrol.

Another way to use the Internet is to print out all ads and insert them into your Leasing Presentation book. This will be helpful for you while on the phone if you cannot access the web. This will enable you to become familiar with what each site offers and what your customer is looking at. You may even be able to use the ads to improve source tracking methods to narrow down the correct site that the customer viewed you on by having them point to it or even describe it.

Knowing what tools each site contains in addition to gaining the knowledge of how to use it will advance your Internet leads into leases quickly.

Early Bird Gets the Lease!

Responding to Internet leads will be the best way that you can spend your time in building your potential customer database. Treat it just as urgently as if it is a phone call or potential customer walking in to your office. Respond to the Internet lead in the same way the lead came to you within 1-2 hours of receiving the call or lead. Also ensure that the Automatic Response is being utilized, if that is an option, and customize it with distinguishing elements of your community.

A great idea is to compose an Internet Response Letter thanking them for their interest and highlighting the qualities and services of your community unique from the copy on your site. You can cut and paste this letter from a Word document and then customize it to the needs of the customer once it is in the email. For example, you may include some teaser tidbits describing the one bedroom apartment and its view. Include also that you will follow up with them within 24 hours – And do it! The Internet Response Letter will save you time and effort, plus make you a Leasing Superstar.

Don't forget when responding to Internet Leads to follow the Golden Rules of Netiquette:

- Always Spell Check for a positive first impression
- Add your digital signature supplying your name, title, community name and contact information (phone, email, website URL)
- Ask permission first if you want to send additional attachments

If the Internet lead provides the customer's number, always follow up with a phone call to answer questions, build excitement and rapport then set up an appointment to come tour your community.

You should record the Internet traffic on your community's guest card record and track the call or email. If you are a stickler when tracking Internet Leads, the numbers for potential move-ins will be staggering! It will not take long for you to realize the positive impact by understanding the immense value of the Internet, responding and tracking Internet leads can tremendously enhance your numbers.

Quickly volunteer to be your property's Internet Ambassador by checking the quality of the site(s) and taking charge of all the leads coming in. Remember that this is a Leasing Professional's dream marketing machine working 24-hours a day, 7 days a week on your behalf. You will see immediate results when you maximize how this tool is used and will be so glad that you did!

The Quintessential To Do Challenge:

Become Knowledgeable of all Internet Site that you advertise

Familiarize yourself with all the tools on each site and how it can be used

Internet Quality Patrol: Create check schedule to verify accuracy monthly

Respond to email leads within 1-2 hours

Call back all leads, if they provide a phone number

Track all Internet leads

Check out and become familiar with all competitors' websites

Next Leasing Meeting: Discuss and review all Internet sites in how the leasing team can maximize the effect of this amazing tool.

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