

How to Become an Expert to Gain Commitment from Customers

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You know the scenario well: You return to the clubhouse after a very impressive customized and interactive tour of the community, amenities and features, model and their ideal apartment home. You invite them back into the comfort of the clubhouse. After offering refreshments, you then confidently ask your favorite closing question and ask that your customer become a resident at your community. The response is, "I'm still looking around"-- Not what you wanted to hear, to be sure. So what happened? What went wrong?

Starting from the initial stages with the customer, ask yourself:

- Did I create a sense of comfort and home prior to asking questions to discover their needs?
- Did I actively listen to the answers and truly understand what they are looking for?
- Did I customize the tour of the community exactly to their needs and desires, proving value along the way?

If you feel sure about your sales skills in the early stages, you may review closing juncture of the interaction with the customer and consider using this strategy to deter the likelihood of "I still need to look around":

- Clarification and offering
- Hold Option
- Second Appointment and Referral
- Follow Up

Once you hear the "I still want to look around" statement, do not hesitate to get clarification to determine if a re-evaluation of their needs is necessary. At this stage, there may be hesitancy or fear of taking action. What a great opportunity to show that you are a true sales professional with the knowledge and passion to assist them. For example, ask, "I understand that you may want to look around. However, I am confused for we found exactly what you were looking for matching your needs with the first floor, large living space and tons of storage -- all within your move in timeframe plus all within your budget. I would not want you to miss out on this perfect fit. Is there something that I missed when we were discussing your needs?"

Wait for their answer, which more than likely will reveal the clarification that you are looking for of whatever the concern is that is stopping them from committing. After providing a solution or further information to ease their mind, offer again to help them become a resident. For instance, "Are you sure you want to continue to look around?" It has been proven that most times this additional step is all that is needed to get the desired commitment. However, be prepared to go to the next level by offering a Hold Option (please check your company policy).

The Hold Option allows the potential resident to temporarily take the apartment off the market, plus gains a partial commitment from the customer. An example of this is, "Let's go ahead and get your paperwork taken care of and get your address today. I do understand that you have an appointment at XYZ community. Why don't we at least take your apartment home off the market by putting it "On Hold". This would be at no risk to you – I only need from you is to fill out the application and

_____ (follow your company policy), which will take your apartment off the market for 24 hours to ensure that your apartment will not go to someone else. “

If the Hold Option is not taken, then the final and last point to gain commitment is to offer the customer a referral of either a sister community or a surrounding community that you have a referral relationship arrangement with. Did you know that most customers return 2 or 3 times before making a decision? Do not hesitate to schedule a second Appointment within a 48-hour period. This may be necessary because all decision makers are not available or other information of their move must be acquired such as firm job offer or move-in date.

An ideal way to wrap up gaining commitment on a positive note:

“I understand that you want to review all your options. I am so confident that you will be back because we have everything that you are looking for in your home. Plus you loved the _____ (fill in the blanks with items that they loved on the tour). This comparison chart also may be helpful for you to see how we stacked up against the surrounding communities. To help while you’re touring the surrounding area, allow me to give you this brochure that lists the other communities with our company located within a few miles. Before you leave – Let’s go ahead and set a follow up appointment for tomorrow at this same time. Great!”

If you follow the outlined steps, you will increase your commitment and raise your closing ratios while you are building long-term relationship with your residents. However, the underlying key to all of these steps is your desire to help your customer determine their needs and sincerely assist them in finding a home. The more focused your sales efforts and questions are will lead you to gaining their commitment to become a resident at your community. It’s up to you to make it happen!

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