

3 REASONS WHY IT PAYS TO STAY ON THE PHONE

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By focusing just a few extra minutes on phone prospects, leasing agents have the ability to maximize their value, earn more money, and add rental dollars to the bottom line.

The phone never stops ringing in your offices, and your on-site staff members are constantly trying to achieve the delicate balance between spending time on the phone, attending to the needs of residents and walk-in prospects, and completing required daily tasks at the property. The real question is, where can they generate the most value?

The surprise answer? On the phone.

By focusing just a few extra minutes on phone prospects, leasing agents have the ability to maximize their value, earn more money, and add rental dollars to the bottom line.

1. A Great First Impression Pays for Itself

Leasing agents are conditioned, by necessity, to micromanage their time in the leasing office. If a prospect feels rushed on the phone when asking questions, they will feel like they are not being listened to and their needs aren't being met, often producing a negative impression about the community.

Spending adequate time establishing a customer relationship while answering questions helps prospects become comfortable with the community and leasing staff member, increasing their comfort level with making a buying decision.

2. Get More Than a Guest Card

A study conducted by SatisFacts Research revealed a correlation between talk time and a prospect's willingness to visit the community.

- Calls that lasted two minutes or less, prospects were only eight percent likely to set an appointment
- Calls that lasted three minutes, prospects were 64 percent likely to set an appointment (one more minute = eight times greater likelihood of setting an appointment)
- Calls that lasted more than six minutes, prospects were 91 percent likely to set an appointment

Prospects that spend more than six minutes on the phone are also better qualified, as the leasing agent is able to gather more information and provide them with a better understanding of the available apartment styles and locations, property features and amenities, and knowledge of the community and

neighborhood area. This means prospects developed from phone leads show up well-informed and ready to make a buying decision.

3. Reduce the Sales Cycle

While we should encourage the on-site staff to answer the phone whenever possible; we ought to be just as diligent in monitoring and measuring the time and quality of these calls. Spending more time on the phone not only helps a prospect, it helps your leasing agents too. Taking the time to properly qualify prospects can save time that would have been spent processing applications, touring the community, and screening prospects who don't meet the rental criteria.

Asking questions and gathering insight can help your leasing agents find the ideal unit, amenities, and price range that best meet the prospect's needs.

Look at your average talk time today on leasing calls. Set a 30-day goal for improvement and monitor the closing ratios of various call lengths to determine which is best for your properties' goals and objectives. I bet you will boost talk time to that magic plus six-minute target. No doubt you will see improved lease conversion numbers as a result of better qualified prospects by providing customers with what they are seeking: excellent customer service from the first time they call your property.

Tony Pusateri is the president of CrossFire Contact Center where he is responsible for overseeing the operations and implementations of the CrossFire Contact Center.



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