



## **Sales Personnel, a Community Asset**

### **By Patti Briggs**

Working in the sales department of many retirement communities over the past twenty-plus years, I have occasionally witnessed situations where the sales staff was treated poorly. I've often wondered why those in authority thought it wise to beret or criticize their salespeople when sales weren't happening as quickly as everyone hoped that they would. It typically fosters fear and lowers self-esteem in the salespeople. Although a lazy or unprofessional salesperson might certainly be the problem, so often the reasons for the slow pace of sales are much broader than just the salespeople involved in the process.

Who really wants to make sales at a retirement community? Of course, the CEO, CFO, and other corporate personnel covet sales; after all, they're depending upon sales to generate necessary income for their community. However, it's the sales staff that truly longs to make sales! And it's not simply about commissions. Successful salespeople care about reaching their sales goals, not only for the sake of their community, but also for their personal goals as well; they are truly an asset to the community they serve.

Many factors are involved in the culmination of a sale at a retirement community. A typical salesperson might be a successful 'selling machine' one month, only then to experience a 'zero sales' month, or two or perhaps even three! Such is the life of most salespeople; the ebb and flow of sales is often erratic, without rhyme or reason.

In contemplating the ongoing sales dilemma at many retirement communities, is it wise to put additional pressure on the sales team to make more sales? Doesn't it make better sense to encourage salespeople by offering positive reinforcement? Wouldn't it be smarter to encourage them to attend industry-related workshops and seminars, read appropriate books, or listen to motivational speeches that inspire and motivate them? It's important for a salesperson to continually nourish his/her mind, body, and soul in order to maintain a positive outlook, while working diligently toward sales goals.

Isn't it best to provide encouragement and moral support to sales staff? Absolutely! Does threatening and belittling staff result in a higher percentage rate of sales? Probably not. In my experience, I've noticed that good salespeople put an unreasonable amount of pressure on themselves already; more is not necessarily better. It's best to encourage the sales staff to sharpen their sales skills by offering to sponsor various avenues of learning



more about their craft. It's paramount that salespeople stay continually focused on making sales because other duties and demands often pile-up in the office on a daily basis.

Finally, maintaining a positive attitude is necessary for salespeople in order for them to be successful. So I say, "More power to them!"



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