

# **25 Marketing Mistakes** *Assisted Living and Residential Care Facilities Make Which Cost Them Revenue*



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Thank you for requesting this report. Your decision to order tells much about your openness in trying something new and considering additional options for future changes. Marketing is one of those necessary elements in which we must continue to evolve and learn as we reach our prospects.

This discussion of marketing mistakes allows many assisted living facilities the opportunity to learn from the mistakes of others.

Even though this report focuses on marketing mistakes, we do not mean to imply that everything you are doing is wrong. Most facilities have a method or two that is very productive and gives them their greatest stream of new residents. However, when a facility is allowed to create a new method for locating residents, as well as tweak their present system, new success can be found and additional residents can be generated.

## **How much are facilities losing?**

Before we focus on mistakes and how to avoid them, let's get an idea of the depth of the problem. If you average just three beds open without a resident throughout the year, you have lost a great deal of revenue! Those in the industry know I am being very conservative in my estimates. You might be one of those who say, "How did you get your numbers?" Let me explain. This is how I can be so sure about organizations losing so much revenue. If your organization charges around \$1500 per resident each month (this is rather low), and you average three beds open throughout the year, it comes to over \$54,000. If you happen to charge as much as \$3500 each month and you have three beds open, you have just lost the organization \$126,000. Some organizations have a resident occupancy of only 45% and have lost even more. This can be prevented with some minor modifications in marketing.

## **How can you use this report?**

This document is written as a secret weapon to help organizations like yours become more productive when reaching new clients for their facility. Each point is designed to help give you numerous ideas in creating new ways for marketing your organization and ultimately filling empty beds while also establishing a waiting list of candidates. As you read this report, don't be afraid to mark it up and make notes for further examination and research. This report has been designed to assist you as an action plan in helping you increase your residency counts and stabilize income.

## **What should you do after reading this report?**

There are three groups of people who will be reading this report.

*Group #1* are those who make excuses for why there are empty beds and low revenues. They normally focus on reasons that are outside their control. Excuses are different than reasons. Excuses are created to take the pressure off and point blame in another direction. On the other hand, reasons can be a calculated analysis of low results which explain why something is not productive. In addition, reasons can be educational with the end result being a new solution.

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*Group #2* think they already possess all the marketing knowledge ever needed for this industry. Anytime we discuss marketing, we always deal with individuals who want to fight us on the front end by showing us all the great depths of truth they possess in the area of marketing. They can quote all the marketing theories. However, sometimes they are using techniques and marketing plans which have become outdated. The most ridiculous thing is to continue wasting marketing dollars and expecting results to be better. For this group of knowledgeable individuals, I would like to suggest that if your techniques were working so well, your revenues would not be low and your beds would be filled.

*Group #3* are those who will take action and responsibility to make changes so they can be successful. This may mean learning new techniques and making changes to target specific groups. This group will do what is needed to be successful. Which group are you? Hopefully, you are willing to move into our third group by reading this report and taking action. This group understands there is no miracle worker who can come in and fill the beds for you. If you desire for the revenue to change and the population to increase, there must be some special actions created. Reading this report and creating an action plan of high priority items for examination will start you on your way.

To assist you in gaining a better focus on areas in which to analyze, we are going to put our consulting hat on for the remainder of this report. We want to show you some areas which consistently surface as problems in assisted living and residential care organizations. This report in no way implies that these mistakes are happening in your facility. You may even discover that you are successful in 15 out of the 25 areas mentioned. However, we recommend you recheck and examine each area to make sure processes are running smoothly and everything is in order. If one part of our marketing mix is misdirected in any way, it can have a dramatic effect on our end results. This is why you will see a close connection to marketing and other processes such as customer service. To fail in one area can kill our recruiting efforts due to negative publicity and word-of-mouth advertising.

In the following pages, we have researched and found there are 25 marketing mistakes which cost assisted living and residential care facilities lost revenue and wasted dollars. Once again, we do not think every facility is committing all of the mistakes. However, why should we needlessly lose any clients or have beds empty when additional knowledge is at our finger tips?

## **Marketing Mistake # 1**

### **Unwilling To Spend Money or Create a Realistic Marketing Budget**

Some organizations are blessed to have been established in a day when there was a higher need for facilities. Past demand has created a false view with many who have been in the industry for some time. Today there are more choices, and the prospects have a higher level of expectation than before. Facilities have missed or ignored the changes in competition and foolishly think there is still no need to market. If they do market, they commit very low dollars to marketing campaigns. If an organization continues to be defiant on marketing their services, they will take a hit in their revenue base in the future.

#### **▪ *Low budgets can come because of indecision on how much should be committed.***

It is hard to make a rule on how much money should be committed for marketing. Some industries will market depending on a percentage of revenue, while others have a set monthly amount. Marketing dollars should be enough to allow you the opportunity to compete against your competition and to meet organizational goals and objectives. However if goals are not being reached, it might not be the amount of money but how it is being spent. When you get into committing a huge amount of money

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to marketing, you could be pushing your organization out of balance and may create a cash poor situation for the entire facility. Balance is the key to your commitment.

▪ ***Low budgets automatically hinder your target group from knowing about you.***

You have a target group based on need and age who can use your facilities. When you limit your marketing dollars, you prevent these potential residents from making a knowledgeable decision. When this need finally does surface in their lives, without your marketing material being in their hands getting your message across, you will not even be in the running as a possible facility.

▪ ***Low budgets leave the buying decision in the hands of your customer.***

How much research will a customer or their family do on picking out a residential facility? Many will examine numerous homes and will interview or tour several. However, they usually go after those facilities which have used marketing material to differentiate themselves. The information is readily available, and their questions are answered. Residents or their families want someone else to do the work for them. They will read material created by experts in the field, but many are learning as they go through the process. So make sure your material is in the prospect's hands.

▪ ***Low budgets reinforce wishful thinking rather than action oriented planning.***

Wishful thinking is hoping things will be better this year but without doing anything differently. Wishful thinking could work, but in most cases it is wasted time in an apathetical mode rather than proactive. Marketing allows us to stop the wishful thinking mode and become proactive. This will draw potential residents toward you.

## **Marketing Mistake # 2**

### **No Lead Generation Mechanism In Place**

### **To Create a Flow of Qualified Prospects**

Understanding the one-step and two-step methods for creating lead generation ads can create a constant flow of potential customers. The difference between the one-step and the two-step is very simple and is explained below.

▪ ***One-step lead generation method***

The one-step method of marketing asks the prospect to buy the services outright and gives them the price. These advertisements point people to a service with the hope that they will purchase because they have seen the advertiser's name or its benefits in print.

One-step lead generation is normally less productive for high priced services than a two-step lead generation. In the one-step method, you are paying to advertise to a large number of individuals who might not want your service. This means your advertisements are normally larger and cost more money to get the attention of more readers.

▪ ***Two-step lead generation method***

A two-step method normally asks the prospective customers to respond for a free tape, video, booklet, or report. This free item educates, gives additional information, and allows you more time and space to get your message across to them. The two-step method gives the prospects the opportunity to raise their hands and let you know they are interested in this service either for themselves or their loved ones. After they have raised their hands, you can use marketing dollars to encourage these prospects to purchase your services. This is accomplished by a repetition of marketing material being sent to the group of prospects. This reduces waste in the marketing budget, and it allows you to spend your money on a higher percentage of real prospects rather than suspects.

Both of these methods are successful and can be part of your marketing mix. However, remember the two-step method allows you to spend your money on the highest potential prospects. In order for this to work best, you must create a free item that will be desired by your niche. You want to show your expertise and bond with your potential target group. This item must have real information or value to your niche target, or it will not entice them to make the request. A sample of this is what you hold in your hands right now. My free report is an item which you requested, and I could send for a minimal expense. I can show my expertise in this area and meet your need at the same time.

## **Marketing Mistake # 3**

### **Handing Off the Marketing to People**

### **With Little or No Marketing Knowledge**

Giving the marketing efforts away to someone who is not trained and has little knowledge base in this area can kill an organization! In addition, be certain the marketing personnel understand the business goals, vision, and mission for the coming year. This knowledge is imperative, and it helps them focus the marketing in a way that can support these organizational goals.

When we give this responsibility to subordinates, we must make sure they understand where to get qualified help. Some foolishly think marketing only involves the placing of a few advertisements and making sure the yellow pages are updated. This type of narrow thinking is why 95% of the assisted living facilities all market themselves by sending the same thing.

One way to help remedy this problem is to make an individual or a team responsible for marketing. Then provide them with training. This establishes to the organization, as well as potential customers, a named contact to help field all questions. A responsible person or team assists the organization in three different ways.

▪ ***Naming a responsible contact highlights marketing as a priority.***

Marketing is sometimes looked at as a secondary job or one that is not as important as other tasks. Placing someone in this position shows that the organization is making a commitment to moving prospects through the process toward becoming residents.

▪ ***Naming a responsible contact focuses efforts on new business.***

Without new business your client base eventually dwindles. Marketing makes sure you are filling up the pipeline of potential residents for tomorrow. Residents and their families often choose a facility

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which gained their attention at some point and continues to make a connection with them over and over again.

▪ ***Naming a responsible contact allows training and education to be targeted.***

Training dollars are often in short supply for facilities. With a limited budget, it is good to allow one person the opportunity to increase his/her expertise in marketing. After this person has gained this knowledge, he/she can pass this information along to others and educate or coach them to more success. In order to do this, one must find seminars, books, and educational material which will move this process along in the shortest period of time. Our organization, The Mathis Group, provides this training by giving onsite seminars throughout North America. We also offer a home study program with strong marketing content. Regardless of how the individual receives the training, it must be done quickly so that any adjustments can be made in the present marketing materials being used.

## **Marketing Mistake # 4**

### **Forgetting That Marketing Results Can Be Sabotaged Because of Little Things**

Customers build up a strong resistance to all of the marketing over time. When it comes to marketing, you must be able to grab their attention in a matter of moments. As we examined assisted living markets, we noticed the best results come from focusing on five different marketing indicators. Each indicator, when used properly, can have a powerful impact on the outcome of your marketing campaign.

▪ ***The copy must be correct.***

Copy can be defined as the content of the marketing piece. It can consist of a headline, photo, or any other information which will emphasize what your organization has to offer. Together, the copy content and terminology reflect the image of the facility and the message you wish to convey. By looking at your copy, the prospect will know the benefits of choosing your facility over another.

Copy is often determined by the media means in which the information is conveyed. Media examples include brochure, billboard, television advertisement, newspaper ad, etc.

▪ ***The target group or niche must be right.***

Who are your real customers? Unless you're able to answer this question, you probably are marketing to the wrong people. Many mistaken organizations think everyone is their customer. In the case of residential care, the assumption may be that people who are between the ages of 57 and 100 are the prospects. This might or might not be true based on your skills, accreditation, license, and target of your particular facility. So, should you market to every senior adult between those ages? Or would it make more sense to break that population up into smaller target groups who may have a higher priority in moving to a facility similar to yours? Remember your target audience, and write a marketing piece addressing their needs and communicating the benefits you have to offer.

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▪ ***The customer must have the ability to pay for the service.***

Paying for the services you offer is very important when examining the marketing mix. This consideration seems to be forgotten when designing the marketing tools. It also is often overlooked when targeting potential customers. Think about how many senior adults or special need prospects who do need your services but cannot afford to pay for them. Perhaps they have not done the necessary paperwork, or they do not have the proper insurance. You must take steps, based on your research, to be able to target those prospects who have the ability to pay. It is a waste of your organization's money to send our materials to individuals who cannot afford your services.

▪ ***The sales process must be quality.***

The sales people of each organization must go the extra mile to make sure they are ready to deal with prospects as quickly and as professionally as possible. Organizations can successfully surface numerous prospects; however, they often miss the opportunity to sell when the prospects finally begin talking to the sales department. In some organizations, the sales staff feels they are basically just a tour guide for their facility. Sometimes all they do is run various tours of people through the building. To be successful, however, all sales professionals must be able to answer questions about the benefits as well as determine the buying signals of the prospects. Training in consultative selling or relationship selling is very beneficial for your marketing professionals. We have discovered that these skills enhance the marketing professional's ability to close the deals without gaining much hesitancy from the prospects or their families.

▪ ***The sales professional should have closing skills.***

When prospects examine your facility as a potential home for themselves or for their loved ones, you must make sure you look for the signs that they are interested in making a decision. When a prospect is ready to make a decision, the sales professional must know the proper approach in helping them finalize his/her arrangements. It is not uncommon to have sales professionals forget the basics of asking prospects and their families if they're ready to do the paperwork. Every sales person should create a series of closings to use in his/her type of selling experience. Even if the family is not ready to make a decision, the sales professional should at least obtain their name, phone number, and address. This will allow you to follow up with additional marketing information later.

## **Marketing Mistake # 5**

### **Using Image Marketing Which Cannot Be Tracked**

Image marketing is marketing which is commonly seen on television, radio, and newspapers. Image marketing focuses its attention on getting the name of the organization out in front of the public. Image marketing is not really focusing on trying to make a sale or to get prospective customers to respond. Its main objective is name recognition. A good example of this is the Goodyear Blimp flying high over a football game. Goodyear does not think people will rush out and purchase tires during the middle of the game; they're shooting for name recognition.

Image marketing is an excellent tool if you desire to have your name known, and you happen to be an organization with a large marketing budget. However, most assisted living and residential care



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facilities must watch every dollar. This includes marketing. There are four areas of concern one must examine when looking at image marketing.

- ***It is based on how much you can spend.***

Sales representatives for image marketing usually begin the conversation with you by asking how much you have to spend. Then they will draft a plan based on your budget. By knowing the amount of your investment, they can determine how much media time and space you can buy. They are usually nice, ethical people who are easy to get along with, and they will often make it convenient for you by coming to your facility. However, be wise and cautious. Double check their proposed plan to make sure it offers the best potential results for you. Sometimes their motivation can be driven by profit rather than in your organization's best interest.

- ***It focuses on the media rather than the target group.***

Your main goal is to fulfill your organizational goals, vision, and objectives. This means you must reach your target group each and every time you market, or you will lose money. Unfortunately, it is sometimes difficult to emphasize a target group when using image marketing because of the media size involved. Image marketing encourages buyers to spend large sums of money with the hope that their target group will be in the media audience and will accidentally see it. Most media sales representatives will not understand your organization's goals, vision, or target audience unless you provide this information. It is very important that you do this.

- ***It is hard to measure.***

If you asked your sales representatives to track the results of image marketing, they would say that it is not possible. With image marketing, they are correct. If sales go up the sales representative can take the credit, but if you lose money they will normally suggest you increase your budget. What if you made adjustments in your marketing mix, and you were able to track the response of each marketing campaign? Yes, you would be wiser to spend your marketing dollars in a more efficient manner. In most cases, by making some minor adjustments to your marketing, you will be able to track, measure, and make your marketing dollars more productive?

- ***It is expensive.***

Image marketing is some of the most expensive marketing any organization can do. This is because it is normally geared to mass media efforts. It might be appropriate for some organizations; however, in most cases it has limitations for the assisted living and residential care facilities. The price tag prohibits the consistency of its usage. In the future, look at your marketing through new eyes. How do you know if your present marketing is successful or not? Are you reaching your target group? What is your cost per qualified prospect?

## **Marketing Mistake # 6**

### **Neglecting To Use Repetition In Marketing To Potential Clients**

Repetition is the name of the game in marketing today. One shot marketing will get some sales, but in most cases it will not be very successful. Repetition or sending a specific message to your targeted

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customer for a targeted response is what is needed for success. It never makes sense in marketing to throw hard earned marketing dollars up against the wall with the hope that it will bring in results.

#### ▪ ***What is meant by repetition?***

Repetition in marketing is when you send out marketing messages over and over again to the same target prospects. This could be resending the exact same marketing piece or something completely different in appearance. It can include using the exact same message but in a new media. The main thing is to pick your message and make sure you have it hitting your target group consistently.

#### ▪ ***Why should we use repetition in marketing?***

Repetition in marketing is needed because of the high tolerance the average prospect has to marketing today. Most of us have been bombarded with all sorts of marketing messages clamoring for our attention. This has created a huge amount of resistance. In order to overcome this, we must be willing to send repeated marketing messages to our targeted group. Unless we are willing to do this, it is very likely the prospect will never notice our marketing.

#### ▪ ***What are the best intervals for using repetition in marketing?***

Most marketing experts believe the repeated marketing messages must take place with intensity over a short period of time. Some have been so specific as to specify that a prospect needs at least seven marketing touches from your organization within a twelve to eighteen month period of time. This is why your target group must be highly qualified. This means that in order to capture the attention of your prospects, you will be investing and reinvesting marketing dollars into your targeted customer base. In order to make sure you get the attention of your niche, you must be willing to repeat your message and offer over and over again.

## **Marketing Mistake # 7**

### **Making Your Organization Look, Sound, and Appear Just Like Your Competitors**

Differentiation of the services you provide and the value you deliver is a must in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Unless the customers understand exactly what it is that makes your facility different from the others, they will tend to just focus on price. This is why so many sales professionals complain that they cannot make sales; since they are not the low cost provider, they do not have a chance. If you are not able to differentiate your services and the value you deliver, then the prospect has nothing to compare except cost and is wise to measure their benefits on price.

Our business culture in the assisted living and residential care arena causes us to fit in rather than differentiate ourselves from our competitors. We mistakenly think if others are doing their marketing a certain way, it must be correct. This is why we must rethink our strategy concerning differentiation.

#### ▪ ***Differentiation is needed to help you separate yourself from competitors.***

Why do you want to look exactly like your competition? What benefit is it to look the same? As we think this through, we recognize that we would rather follow than lead in most of our industries. This means we do what others do. We try to match or mimic without researching to see whether their process

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is any more effective than what we are presently doing. A great example of this is in the automobile industry. You'll notice the commercials and ads are so focused on looking the same that they sometimes become confusing. This is the opposite of the response you want. Your marketing purpose is to set yourself apart so that the prospect will remember who you are and what you have to offer. What is it about your facility that stands above all the others? That is what you want to emphasize. The more you separate yourself from your competition, the more leverage you have for attracting in the caliber of prospect you desire.

▪ ***Differentiation helps you to be able to show your strengths and abilities.***

Quality care is mentioned as one of the highest motivators as to why people would choose a particular facility. Align your strengths with the quality care, the dependable services, or the competent, caring staff. Try not to say the exact same things which everyone else is saying. This creates massive confusion for the prospect in separating different facilities. Remember to magnify what you do best from the customer's view point. What is it about your organization that makes you stand out above the others? What is it that you do better than anyone else? What is your area of expertise? The answers to these questions will differentiate you from other assisted living facilities.

## **Marketing Mistake # 8**

### **Marketing Only During a Crisis or Low Population**

Marketing during crisis creates an off-again on-again method. Marketing is the life blood of any facility. Without it you will be vulnerable to competitors who will dominate your customer base. Turning the marketing on and off puts you in a crisis mode.

Think about it from a strategic point of view. Where is the organization heading in the next three years? Will the marketing you are presently doing drive the business in that direction and to that level of revenue? For many, the marketing is so unfocused that it will not create the level of revenue needed to sustain the business long term. In some cases, the same facilities might not exist in five years.

One way to combat this is by creating marketing strategies which are not driven by crisis. These strategies take place all year long, and they support organizational values and goals. When this is done correctly, it prevents the need for organizations to market only in a crisis mode. Marketing in a crisis mode affects the organization in three negative ways.

▪ ***It turns your marketing strategy on and off based on circumstances.***

Turning your marketing strategy off and on throughout the year can cause you to lose motivation, direction, and a competitive advantage with your prospects. In some cases, turning marketing on and off does not really save you any money whatsoever. It might be that your customer base has not heard from you in seven months, and you have to start all over gaining a repetitive position in their mind. If a customer has not heard from you in a while, they could be making the assumption you no longer exist.

▪ ***It keeps marketing professionals out of balance with changing priorities.***

Changing priorities is difficult for any organizational employee. It is especially difficult in the marketing and sales profession. Sales and marketing are based on goals, cycles, and processes. This means it might take months to close a sale with a potential resident who has been receiving your

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marketing. In other cases, the prospect might examine your material for months or even years before they make a decision or have a need for your services. Don't throw your marketing professionals out of balance based on too many changes. Plan and budget so that they can run their course. Set your priorities and drive your business in that direction.

▪ ***It expects instant and immediate results.***

It is clear that many people in the area of management do not understand the marketing process at all. This statement sounds harsh, but you can see this by how often they want instant results with short term marketing. In some cases, upper management expects marketing professionals to fill empty beds in a matter of days. This normally will not happen without a consistent marketing program which has a full pipeline with targeted prospects. The best way to do this consistently is through a strong yearly marketing plan with quarterly goals and objectives.

## **Marketing Mistake # 9**

### **Using Outdated Marketing Plans**

Hopefully, your organization is doing more than just refreshing old marketing plans. Our culture and competition are changing so fast we must update continuously. This means understanding new ways of gaining customers and bringing in new target markets. This is why those with the responsibility of marketing must constantly read and study new techniques. They must stay on top of the direction of the industry. There are three primary reasons why organizations should not short circuit the marketing process by using an old marketing plan.

▪ ***New techniques are overlooked.***

Old marketing plans are based on research that is outdated with past goals and objectives for the organization. One of the exciting things about creating a new marketing plan is that it can include the usage of exciting new marketing techniques. These techniques can surface all around us. In many cases, you can learn techniques from other industries and adapt them with only minor changes to your field.

▪ ***New technologies are not included.***

Planning your marketing effort is totally different today with the impact of technology and the internet. The collection of new prospects for future business and instant research in your field are at your fingertips. Technology allows you the opportunity to acquire potential customers for less money than previous marketing efforts. When we use outdated marketing plans, we do not consider some of these great technologies which make our job easier and give us more leverage over our competition. For example, you have the ability to e-mail a newsletter to thousands with one punch of the keyboard. With e-mail you also can stay in constant contact with prospects. Some of the best technology being used has only been proficient in the past five years, and the technological industry continues to broaden. Stay informed and let today's technology work for your facility.

▪ ***New goals, vision, and objectives are not reached.***

Make sure you use a new marketing plan which emphasizes the new organizational goals and objectives. Each year as an organization creates their strategic plan, they should form a clear cut focus in

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one piece for their marketing efforts. All marketing efforts must reinforce the mission, vision, goals, and objectives that have been set by the organization's executive director and board of directors. Old marketing plans will often miss this focus. A new plan will allow you to analyze what is needed in order to implement this new strategic mission. In order to do this, one must have an open mind and be willing to try new things.

## **Marketing Mistake # 10**

### **Forgetting To Look Through the Eyes of the Prospective Customer**

A good rule of thumb for success in any business is finding a need and filling it. However, professionals in residential care are notorious for doing things in reverse. Some have mistakenly created a service with the hope that people will want it. This strategy can produce customers, but finding a need first and then providing a solution will provide a customer base in a shorter period of time. You must remember to think like your customers. Rather than fighting against the customer, you need to learn the techniques that help you and your staff come alongside and assist them in their buying process. All potential residents have certain reasons for their placement and have preferences in what they are looking for in a home. It is to your benefit to know and understand their feelings. This will require management and the board to examine the facility through new eyes - the eyes of the customer! When you do this, you'll notice there may be adjustments needed in the marketing material, the facility's appearance, or in customer service. There are two main ideas we must consider when looking through the customer's eyes.

▪ ***The eyes of the customer see things we don't.***

When a person visits your facility, what do they see? Appearance is very important, and sometimes it is the little things that are noticed the most.

Call your facility and see how your staff answers the phone or handles questions. Are they nice? Are they helpful? Or do they come across as being impatient and rude? All of this is seen by the customers and will influence their decisions.

You might even consider sending a "secret shopper" to look at your facility. This person would come under the pretense of being a potential resident. He/she would walk through the entire facility and experience the sales process with your staff. You would then be able to benchmark the positives and negatives of how personable and effective your staff was with the customer. This is not trickery; your intent is not to create a situation for failure. Your purpose is in evaluating the effectiveness of the customer relationship.

▪ ***The eyes of the customer focus on wants and needs.***

Looking through the eyes of the customer also means focusing on their highest priority items. Many customers are looking for a residential center that has particular services, and they are interested in hearing about those services in great detail. However, many sales professionals forget this fact and continue going down the road of a standard sales script in showing the potential customer items that are of low priority to him/her. For example, several years ago I was placing my sister in a long term care facility, and I had some questions concerning the facility and their services. While talking to the sales staff, I asked my questions and was abruptly told they would be answered later. The sales professional

was not very sensitive to my situation or to the anxiety which accompanies such an important decision. Remember to always go the extra mile in making sure the focus is on what the customer needs and wants.

## **Marketing Mistake # 11**

### **Forgetting To Retain Customers**

Acquiring customers is a must for organizations to stay in business. This is true especially when those customers are hard to find. After these prospects do become residents, though, you want to keep them. Customer retention will create more profit the fastest. What would happen if your customer base did not shrink 20% each year as some organizations report? Retaining customers requires looking at the customer differently and demonstrating long term customer value.

Focus on how you can retain residents and keep family members from moving their loved ones from your facility. Remember that all your residents and their families have the ability to advertise by word of mouth. They are talking to other friends who might be in need of these same caring services your facility provides. Perhaps there is an additional family member who will also require special care in a short period of time. For example, one facility specialized in Alzheimer's treatment. The resident's family was so pleased with the care given that they praised the facility out in the community. Now, because of their reputation for quality care and service to Alzheimer's patients, others are considering the facility when a need arises. Referrals, whether formal or in conversation, are vital to retaining your present customer base.

## **Marketing Mistake # 12**

### **Little or No Way of Tracking Your Marketing**

How successful are your present marketing efforts? You should be able to track this and know your marketing impact. When you use tracking mechanisms, you have the ability to focus your marketing money and evaluate its return on investment. However, many people are not sure which dollars are successful and which are missing the mark. As mentioned earlier, many residential centers use image marketing which is so difficult to track. If this is your present habit, then you will continue to have trouble tracking which media is working for you unless you put in some very specific tracking mechanisms to monitor it. One way of solving this problem is by creating a tracking mechanism for all marketing from this point forward. Tracking can make the difference on where you spend your money while minimizing waste. Tracking can provide three main benefits.

- ***Tracking allows you to know which media is productive.***

Someone once said they know only half of their marketing is working; however, they are not sure which half. If this sounds familiar, tracking will make the difference for you. How does it work? Tracking is using codes, special addresses, special names, or any other thing added to your marketing to identify its source. For example, you might receive an advertisement in the mail asking you to call "Tom" at this number. When you dial the number and ask for "Tom" you find there is no such person, but someone else will gladly help you. The name was simply used to signify which advertisement picked up

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the prospect. Also, you may consider using a special box or code the prospect must leave when responding to the advertisement. Lastly, you might plan to just ask the prospect how he/she heard of you. In all of these, tracking would allow you the ability to stop guessing about which media is generating the best response.

- ***Tracking allows you to know what you pay for each prospect.***

Cost per prospect is a term that is used in marketing. How much does it cost for you to get a prospect into your pipeline and then turn him/her into a customer? Some organizations will pay just a few dollars for prospects while others pay almost nothing because of their usage of the internet and technology. Others will invest hundreds of dollars to attract and convert that prospect into a sizable customer. If you can develop a system that attracts the prospect, and you are capable of paying more for that prospect than your competition, you can virtually control your industry.

- ***Tracking allows you to spend dollars for media used by your customers.***

One of the ways to do this is by making sure you know your customers and can get in touch with them with the proper media. This might be inclusive of print media such as journals, periodicals, and newspapers, or it might be radio and television. One of the best ways for connecting with your target customer base is by seeking out trade associations which cater to your target audience. Trade associations can be researched in any public library. One resource is *Gale's Book of Associations* which will give you 44,000 different associations in North America. You can look up associations which target your audience and purchase their mailing list or advertise in their periodicals. This allows you to get that face-to-face with your niche audience.

## **Marketing Mistake # 13**

### **Forgetting To Monitor Your Competition**

Do you know who your competitors are? Do you know anything about them? Amazingly, many do not! Some mistakenly think their competitors are more successful only because they are cheaper or have a larger sales staff. Could it be that the competitor knows something about marketing to their customer base, and you do not? Could it be that they are learning to minimize waste from their marketing? There's nothing wrong with monitoring your competition to see in which direction they are heading or how they are positioning themselves. Monitoring your competition means watching their advertising and marketing, examining their strengths and weaknesses, and making comparisons between you and them. Monitoring your competition means using information as a competitive advantage for your organization. Monitoring your competition can benefit you in three primary ways.

- ***Monitoring your competition allows you to continue to differentiate.***

There are many areas that are standard in assisted living and residential care facilities. These areas are hard to differentiate because they are the foundation of this industry. However, it is not uncommon for facilities to be able to differentiate themselves on secondary issues such as service quality, price, image, or anything else that impacts the perception of the prospect. For example, some of your competitors will use price as their main selling point while others will use service. Perhaps there is a way for you to use image, location, sales, or service to show your facility's higher quality? Remember, do not

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just *tell* your prospects why you are better; *demonstrate* why they should place their family member within your facility. If you are wondering what it is exactly that does make you stand out among the others, survey your residents, staff, and community. They will tell you.

- ***Monitoring your competition allows you to learn from their mistakes.***

Where did your competitors make a mistake? Can you learn from this mistake? In the industry of assisted living and residential care, you normally find great workers and administrators. Very seldom do you find individuals who do not love their client base and love what they do. However, this does not mean that mistakes are never made. You must monitor your competition to see in which area they don't measure up and then use this shortcoming to separate yourself. By learning from your competitor's mistake, you gain the knowledge of their experience which can save you money and time. In short, you know what not to do.

- ***Monitoring your competition allows you to learn from their successes.***

On the other hand, where is your competitor being extremely successful? Are you doing any of these same things? For example, many years ago when the quality thrust first began, many organizations switched over and started a long campaign for high quality. It spread to other facilities in other industries because people were monitoring their competition and began applying some of these new techniques. If your competition is doing something that is exceptional, and it fits your marketing plan, your goals, your vision, and your objectives, you can use some of these same strategies and techniques with your organization. However, be cautious and do not appear to just be a copycat with everything the competition is doing. Every facility is unique; some of the ideas will not work for your situation. Pick and choose. Make smart adjustments.

## **Marketing Mistake # 14**

### **Forgetting To Focus On a Specific Target Group or Niche**

Targeting your customer group is the best and fastest way of creating instant prospects. However, in order to do this, you might need to eliminate some of your prospects who do not meet your target profile. Who are the real buyers of your services? If everyone is your customer, then no one is really your customer. We must be able to get our hands around a target group.

Niche and target marketing allows your organization to do three primary things. The better we can understand and control our target, the better we will be able to provide services that match their requirements.

- ***Niche and target marketing allow you to control the marketing dollars.***

Controlling your marketing dollars is very important. The more you are able to control your marketing budget and keep it functioning at a high level, the better the results. Some organizations can turn their marketing budget over several times throughout the year just in the increased placements. What does this mean? It means taking a smaller budget and causing it to replenish itself in a short period of time which gives you the production of a much larger budget. Controlling your marketing budget also helps because you are able to select certain journals, space advertisements, radio stations, or television stations that cater to your marketing niche. Restricting your marketing with a purpose of dominating a niche will prevent you from spending huge dollars.



▪ ***Niche and target marketing allow you to be “a big duck in a small puddle.”***

What does it cost to gain strong name recognition in your industry? What does it cost to allow all your target customers to know your expertise of service? This is what is meant by being “a big duck in a small puddle.” If the small puddle is a targeted niche who needs your service and has the ability to pay for that service, you have the capability of creating a brand equity in that same niche. An example of this is when an organization dominates a niche to such a point that they are the preferred provider in that industry. However, branding may take time to create this level of response from your target group.

▪ ***Niche and target marketing allow you to gain details on how your customer thinks.***

Each customer niche has particular needs and wants. The better we understand these needs and wants, the better we will be in servicing this group. It is sad to say that many organizations never understand what their customer really needs or wants. When you do a good job analyzing your customer, you have the capability of becoming an “expert” in their eyes. This expertise can allow you to charge a premium for your services because your customer base perceives you are indeed the expert in the industry.

## **Marketing Mistake # 15**

### **No Creation of a Unique Selling Proposition To Set Yourself Apart**

A unique selling proposition is very important in differentiating you from your competition. However, most organizations either do not have one, or they have incorrectly positioned themselves. In some cases, people think the USP is nothing more than a little slogan used on letterhead. As long as we say something about customer service, quality, and low price we are fine.

▪ ***Defining a USP***

The USP is best defined as one or two sentences that allow you to position your services in your prospect’s mind. This position can be based on a number of variables. Your unique selling proposition must impact the emotions of the customers and attach them to your business. This works best by focusing on specialized benefits, specific talents, or services you offer. Once you have created a USP, it must be placed on all marketing material.

▪ ***Types of differentiation***

Differentiation with the USP may focus on care quality provided to the residents or customization to individual needs. Depending on your facility’s strengths, the USP is determined. The following is a sample listing of possible ways to differentiate your services. You have the opportunity to align yourself with any of these and create a USP based on their drawing power.

- Specialty in services provided
- Geographic location
- Experience or years in business
- Low cost provider
- Prestige

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When an organization differentiates itself by using the unique selling proposition, they are actually anchoring their position into the minds of all prospective residents. People can then understand what your specialty niche is as a long term care provider. Differentiating allows you to stand out as unique in your specialty.

As you can see, the USP goes along with other differentiation principles that have been taught in this report. As you decide to set yourself apart from other service providers, you'll see the benefit of creating a focused specific and clear USP. Begin now creating a listing of samples you might consider. Don't rush this process; it takes time. It will become the central image developer of how your prospects will view you.

## **Marketing Mistake # 16**

### **Failure To Forecast the Direction of Your Industry**

Where is your industry headed? Are you one to look in the rearview mirror of your industry? Or are you a visionary peering into the future? If you are able to forecast the direction of the industry, you have the capability of getting a jump on future services which you should offer. Forecasting the future of the industry means thinking outside of the box and stepping outside your cultural environment. Forecasting does two primary things for the industry.

- ***Forecasting puts you on the front end of change.***

Within the next five years, there will be major changes taking place within residential care. This is due in part to the large population of senior adults who will begin looking for these types of services. The demand will cause competition to increase. Unless you are prepared, these changes will catch you off guard. Some in your industry might never be able to regain the lost revenue and residents. This will impact many centers with foreclosures, buy-outs, and downsizing. Preparation is the key. Look ahead and evaluate what needs to be done now to prepare for your future in assisted living and residential care.

- ***Forecasting allows you to adjust faster.***

I know it is difficult to predict the direction that the assisted living and residential care industry will take. Sometimes, forecasting is like educated guesses. However, it is best to be prepared and have strategic ideas in place. These strategic plans can always be adapted to your ever-changing industry. By assuming change is going to take place, the mindset of the facility is ready to embrace the necessary adaptations to meet the needs of the residents. Forecasting can save your organization and even put you in the lead for future growth.

## **Marketing Mistake # 17**

### **Neglecting To Gather Precise, Critical Data**

Marketing data can help you make calculated marketing decisions. Unfortunately, organizations resist the time needed to gather research data. Instead, they often spend their money on hunches and waste marketing funds. Unless an organization is willing to take the needed time to research and gather proper data, they are going to make huge mistakes and waste revenue that can be used in other places.

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The type of data for your research will depend upon your specialty. We will discuss SIC codes and the NAIC codes in later sections. For now, I would like to focus on a different approach in researching your industry. I suggest you research other residential care facilities and find out who has a strong profit margin in the industry. In other words, who is making the money? Who is being successful? What are they doing special in order to corner the market with their niche? What is making them the preferred provider?

Search for answers to these questions:

- **What niche are they presently controlling?**
- **What services are they offering to this niche?**
- **What pricing strategy have they developed?**
- **What kind of special regulations, rules, or certifications do they use?**
- **What does future research tell you about this niche?**

As you examine the niche, look for special ways to they have marketed. Examine their services. Perhaps you can reposition your organization to include some of these successful techniques. Each question gives you focus in developing your strategy for dominating the niche. The last two questions cause you to consider looking at rules, regulations, and certifications that you might need to incorporate in your facility. Do you have these gaps within your organization? The last question forces you to forecast the future demand for your service. Remember, stay ahead of the changes and be prepared.

## **Marketing Mistake # 18**

### **Unwilling To Use SIC and NAIC Codes**

If any part of your marketing budget is spent on partnering with insurance companies, you will want to consider this section. Each industry has a business classification called a Standard Industrial Classification. The North American Industrial Classification allows you to find providers. You can learn how to gather these codes and focus on niches and target groups. These can have a high degree of potential business together with a partner.

There are two specific areas to consider when using these methods to assist you in your marketing efforts. First, you can consider doing joint ventures with other businesses that target your niche market. Second, you can target organizations who sell long term care insurance.

- ***SIC and NAIC codes allow you to do joint ventures with other businesses.***

Joint ventures can best be defined as when two organizations come together to go after business with the same target group. Normally, in a joint venture the two organizations do not compete against each other. Joint ventures help an organization reduce their marketing dollars while reaching the same target group. As you brainstorm on which groups to consider doing a joint venture, you can use the SIC and NAIC to approach them efficiently. Joint ventures with others businesses allow you to reduce the cost of obtaining qualified prospects to a minimum. This means you can do twice as much marketing for half the price.

- ***SIC and NAIC codes allow you to specifically target insurance companies who sell long term care coverage.***

Why would you target insurance companies? Those insurance companies which provide long term coverage benefits can be of great benefit to you. SIC and NAIC codes provide you with the information to segment these organizations. As you focus on insurance companies who provide long term care, you can target your message of a win-win situation for both your facility and their company. Even if for some reason, you did not want to partner with an insurance company, you still have the opportunity to rent their list of names and market to these individuals directly. After renting the names, you can design targeted marketing to individuals with the knowledge that they possess the ability to pay for your services.

## **Marketing Mistake #19**

### **Giving Features of Your Facilities Rather Than Benefits**

Features and benefits are common terms used throughout sales and marketing material. However, so much information is still focused on features which are defined as what the organization wants people to know about them. Features often can be ego driven and miss the customer's focus.

There are two common ways of focusing on benefits rather than features. But we must first look through the eyes of the customer as a prospect. Second, we must analyze what the customer really wants to receive from our service. Benefits can be defined as what your service does for your customer. Residents do not want just a facility to live in. They want the reassurance of help when they need it.

- ***Benefits are looking through the eyes of the customer.***

Looking through the eyes of your customer means finding out what is important to them. Many forget to do this and attempt to sell the same services to everyone. This creates a gap between the customer and the service you deliver. The customer may feel his/her arm is being twisted to purchase something that does not really fit his/her individual need. To overcome this, you need to make sure every service has been examined with fresh eyes from the customer's perspective. Looking through customer eyes is the freshest and fastest way to reposition and benefit that customer.

- ***Benefits can be defined as what the customer really wants to receive.***

Have you ever asked your customers what it is they really want to accomplish by using your services? This one question can set many organizations apart from the others because the prospects then believe you are customer focused. For example, when The Mathis Group conducts onsite training for companies across North America, we always ask the client what core competencies they would like to have included in the training. We also ask them what they desire for their employees to walk away with after the training. From these questions, we are able to determine what the customer really wants to receive from our training and which core benefits they value in their organization. We then use this information to make changes in the training program so that the customer receives exactly what they desire most – their benefits. Unless we have asked the questions and know the customer's point of view, we will miss meeting their objectives. Remember, benefits normally point out what the customer receives. So, focus on converting all your features over to benefits. They will attract the customer and demonstrate your expertise. They will let the residents know you are focused on them and not on your facility.

## **Marketing Mistake # 20**

### **Forgetting That Prices Must Be Balanced With Value**

Where does your organization rank compared to your competitors in the pricing strategy? Unless you understand your position in the customers' minds, you will not be able to create marketing that creates the biggest impact. It is possible that positioning your facility as the low cost provider may create future problems. Those who have chosen this as their unique selling proposition sometimes struggle. In the short run, it is possible to use this strategy effectively and create a presence in a short period of time. However, it may cause you to become very vulnerable to competitors who have a deeper financial base.

One possibility your organization may want to consider is increasing the other benefit values to your customer base so that you do not need to always focus on being the low cost provider. You can create ways to level the playing field by giving other value added benefits missed by the competition. Cheaper is not always better. Many potential residents will pay a higher price for more benefits.

Positioning yourself in the middle or high price position does force you to justify those higher prices with a greater level of value. Unless you are able to justify this expense, your customer will have a tendency to go with the lower price every time. It makes sense. This is why differentiation and pricing strategy always go hand in hand. What do you have to offer? Is it worth the cost?

## **Marketing Mistake # 21**

### **Unwillingness To Design Strong Copy With an Emotional Appeal and a Call To Action**

Designing copy that will impact your prospects and move them along in the sales process is a must for any marketing piece. This process allows creative freedom to be dispensed through design, wording, and color scheme. Good copy which matches your target niche will quickly build a large customer base.

The main problem with designing marketing copy is that people normally write in a formal fashion. This style is normally a mistake for the average reader. Did you know most people in America read on a sixth grade level? Therefore, make sure your marketing copy is simplistic, informational, and understandable. You want them to get your message loud and clear.

There are two considerations we must examine in designing copy with strong emotional appeal for our prospects. First, copy must be designed to pull the customer along toward a decision. Second, our advertising copy must ask for a decision to be made.

- ***Copy must be designed to pull the customer toward a decision.***

When writing copy for any marketing piece, you must remember your target who will be receiving the advertisement. Too many times people forget to keep the copy simple, direct, and on task in order to move the potential buyer through the process of making a decision. Unless the buyer is interested, informed, and encouraged to act, a decision will not be made. If we elicit no positive response, we have just lost marketing money making contact with them. All your marketing should be designed to help the customer conclude that your service is their best value.

▪ ***Copy must ask for a decision to be made.***

What kind of decision do you want the prospect to make after he/she sees your copy? What is the next step you want the prospect to take? The second consideration in designing copy is closing the marketing message with a request of some kind. Your copy has a purpose, and the request you make of the prospect should fulfill that purpose. For example, you may have them request additional information, schedule a telephone conference, or plan a tour of your facility. Each of these may cause the prospect to take one step closer to a placement.

## **Marketing Mistake # 22**

### **Creating a Yellow Page Advertisement**

### **Which Look Like a Big Business Card**

Yellow Page advertisements all seem to look alike. Just thumb through one in any city. Why do they look so similar? In many cases, these advertisements have been created by the local yellow page representatives. They place all the information in the advertisement, and they make sure the information is correct. Obviously, this is lacking in effective marketing technique. You want the yellow page ad to inform people and generate interest in your services. You do not want to look like all the other phone book advertisements. There are four main components in creating a successful yellow page advertisement which will gain the attention of potential prospects.

▪ ***Create a headline which focuses on a benefit.***

Examine any yellow page book, and you will notice the top portion of the advertisement will normally contain the business's name in big bold letters. This is a huge mistake! Most likely, the prospects will not be searching for a particular name in the yellow pages. Instead, they are looking for a topic heading. They have a problem or need, and they are looking for someone to provide a solution. So, rather than use your name as the headline, think of the main benefit your facility provides, and use that as the focus of the headline.

▪ ***Create a headline with a unique selling proposition at the top of the page.***

One clear way to gain your customer's attention while using the yellow pages is to create a unique selling proposition as your header. This can be something as simple as a specialty service. The point is to cause your customer to notice your advertisement and make a decision to contact you prior to any of the other competitors in the section. Your unique proposition headline should be something that allows your organization to demonstrate its specialty or point out what is unique about it.

▪ ***Create a headline that differentiates your organization from the others.***

Create a headline that differentiates your organization; how are you different from the others? For example, examine the attorney section of your yellow pages. You will see a good sampling of how differentiation can work. Notice how the lawyers separate themselves based on their specialty. Some headlines might read "Call us for tax problems" or "We are the injury lawyers." They are not trying to secure every type of legal business imaginable, only business which falls within their niche. Assisted living facilities can use this same technique. In which niche are you the expert?

▪ ***Create a headline that specifies which customers you want.***

Creating a headline which states the group you desire is very effective for targeting your niche. This type of advertisement weeds out those people who are outside of your target group, but it reinforces the drawing power of those within the niche. This type of headline will many times say “Attention” or “Warning” and then identify to whom the advertisement is addressed. Sometimes it is appropriate to identify a large group of people. For example, “Suffering from Alzheimer’s and don’t know where to turn” identifies people with Alzheimer’s. You immediately have their attention.

## **Marketing Mistake # 23**

### **Participating In Trade Shows Without a Strategy For Success**

Are trade shows a part of your marketing mix? If so, are you picking the shows which target your specific demographics? There are several trade shows which target niche groups in a particular age bracket. These may be potential placements for you. Why spend an average of several thousand dollars to be at a show and receive little or no response from those in attendance? If you research and plan ahead, your marketing dollars can be used in the most effective way. There are many little things to consider as well. For example, do you know the best place for your booth? Are you aware of prospects’ behavior when they attend a trade show? Yes, there are several strategies for trade show success.

▪ ***Which trade shows should you attend?***

Determining which trade show you want to be involved in is very important. These events cost a great deal of marketing money and time. You want to make sure you are attending the proper show. Trade show executives have demographics of attendees, and this can be sent to you prior to booking your booth. This means you have the opportunity to see if the demographics of the show match the services and the population you’re trying to target. You should not just randomly pick a trade show to exhibit your services. At most local libraries, as well as on the internet, you can find listings of trade shows throughout the United States. As we examined residential care and assisted living services for this report, we found many shows that target the elderly or the special needs client. Attending these trade shows might be advantageous for you to consider.

▪ ***Where do participants register for the trade show?***

Most participants who attend a trade show will stop at the registration table first and then proceed to the booths. Usually human nature steers them to walk down aisles to the right. If you have a choice on choosing the location of your booth, this might be something to consider. You want to gain the prospects’ attention quickly. By having your booth strategically placed, you will gain higher visibility.

▪ ***Where is the main flow of traffic at the convention?***

The main flow of traffic at any convention can be very different based on its design. To help you in making preparations, you need to know the layout of the convention. Where are the main hallways located? Which doors will the majority of the attendees enter? This information provides you the advantage in picking a booth that is going to be in a high traffic area. Trade show success is always enhanced if you are in a high visibility, high traffic location.

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▪ ***Where are the restrooms located?***

Being located close to the restrooms can be very positive for your booth. People will take restroom breaks while they are there. This constant flow of traffic allows you an opportunity to talk with your prospects.

▪ ***How will you attract qualified prospects to your booth?***

Gathering qualified prospects can be a challenge. Your purpose in participating in the trade show is to showcase your facility. People need to visit your booth in order for you to do this. You will want to make sure your booth is neat, attractive and eye catching. Of course, you will want to have informational materials which you can give the prospects. You may even consider having a drawing of some kind; perhaps give away a DVD player or a VCR. These prizes always attract attention! By requiring the prospects to register for the prize, you have made it easy to obtain their name, address, and phone number. You will be able to visit with them and pre qualify their need for your services.

▪ ***How much are booth rental and setup fees?***

Booth rental fees can range from a few hundred dollars to several thousand. You initially are renting a space; location and size of the space determine this initial cost. Then, depending on your needs, you can add rental of power, drapes, tables, message boards, etc. The informational packet for the trade show will provide a listing of items available for rent as well as pricing for these items.

▪ ***What guidelines need to be in place for working the booth?***

When working the booth, some basic guidelines need to be in place to maximize your time with prospects. Most prospects will only come by your booth once so you have a limited amount of time to be able to gain their attention. Be friendly and courteous as you greet the people. Showcase your facility and your services with confidence and enthusiasm. Be prepared with informational handouts or brochures which detail your expertise and provide answers to frequently asked questions. Dress appropriately for the image you want to portray to the prospects.

## **Marketing Mistake # 24**

### **Under Utilizing Press Releases**

#### **As a Manner of Gaining Public Trust and Recognition**

Press releases gain more attention because they come across as news. They give information about the organization and individuals involved. Whenever you include press releases into you marketing mix, you can extend your marketing dollars. Press releases are printed by media for no charge to you. When marketing comes across as news worthy, it is possible to gain more free publicity with news media, journal entries, or even radio interviews. Learn how to focus your press releases so they can be used by different media. As you consider writing press releases as a form of advertising your services, there are some simple guidelines to keep in mind.

▪ ***Position all press releases as news rather than marketing.***

The press release is a great form of marketing; however, you must position it so that news editors will use it. This means that you must position the release so it is newsworthy. If you are trying to promote an



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event, slant the press release in such a way that the event becomes the news story. You do not want it to sound like an advertisement. For example, rather than simply advertising your Halloween party, write a news article about the residents and staff getting prepared for the party by creating their costumes. This press release may be picked up by news agencies as a human interest story or as a community service announcement.

- ***Create events that are newsworthy.***

You must look at your present calendar and create events that are newsworthy. This means taking some of your normal activities and turning them in to something that can be reported to the news media. For example, a police department contacted us for strategic planning training. Rather than just have the training for the division and let it go at that, they did a press release to the community. They reported they were working on a new strategic plan for the community. Because of this press release, two major news teams and the Mayor visited the training sessions. A press conference was even held prior to the training. Your facility, too, can benefit from public relations press releases.

- ***Discuss important current events that will attract media attention.***

Discussing current events is one of the simplest ways to be picked up by the media. Know what the current issues and concerns are which affect your industry. Look for opportunities to speak out on these topics. When major changes are in order, often media will seek out spokespeople who have different opinions or views on the issue. Make yourself available to offer your expert opinion. Reflect your facility's position on the issue and emphasize your benefits. If your facility is given the opportunity, make the most of it.

## **Marketing Mistake # 25**

### **Low Emphasis On Referrals or Testimonials**

Referrals are letters of recommendation. You have provided an outstanding service to a person, and he/she is recommending that service to another. Ironically, many of your residents do desire to give referrals, but you forget to ask for them. Perhaps you need to develop a referral plan which can create a stream of new prospect leads. In addition to referrals, potential customers can be influenced by testimonial letters from past purchasers of your services. Testimonial letters are one of the greatest leverages you can use to draw new business into effect in a short period of time. Testimonial letters build your case for price, value, and service to future customers. Many of these letters can come also from family members of your residents as well as other credible people in your community.

- ***Where to gain referrals***

Gaining referrals can be very easy if you have set up a system to encourage friends, families, and professional groups to take part. The community is very willing to refer to your facility, but they possibly have never been asked by anyone. Let me suggest four areas which can help you gain future referrals.

***First, medical staff who are located within 5 miles of your facility should be contacted.*** Usually the first stop for a family, prior to placing a loved one in residential care, is a long discussion with a family physician. Most of the time family members have not considered what resources are available in

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the community. They are expecting expert advice and recommendations from local medical staff. For this reason, you want this medical staff to understand your purpose and specialty. They can give you a referral.

*Second, contact senior adult centers.* Senior adult centers are located in every community throughout the United States. They are used to reinforce socialization and nutrition for local senior adults. This is a great place to make sure you have strong visibility. This population will talk among themselves, and they will possibly need your services in the future. In some cases, it might be good to create events that will cause these seniors to visit onsite at your facility.

*Third, contact home health care organizations.* Home health care organizations assist any potential clients in being able to stay in their home as long as possible. However, if circumstances change, they will begin looking for services to provide a higher level of care. Some clients will discuss options with a home health care worker who has been helping them for years. This can lead to a referral.

*Fourth, local religious institutions should be contacted.* Local religious institutions can provide a wealth of referrals. Many families will contact their minister or priest to discuss the selection and placement of a loved one in an assisted living facility. If this religious leader knows about your facility, then he is able to share your information with the family. He is able to give the referral.

▪ ***Where to gain testimonials***

What do people have to say about your facility? Testimonials offer a rich source of credibility. They show real people with real opinions. Testimonials can be obtained from several groups and can benefit you in getting families to at least take a tour of your facility.

There are three possible groups of people from whom you might consider when obtaining testimonials. First, you can get testimonial letters from the family members of your present residents. This will provide you the opportunity to make the family members feel important, and it will allow you to say “thank you” for what they are doing to support your services. Second, gather testimonials directly from your residents who are living in your facility now. Many of your residents are very high functioning and would love to give a positive testimonial about the organization. This can be done in letter form, or it can be done by video. The video can then be used later in other types of media such as radio or television. Third, you can pick up testimonials from your staff and employees. What would your employees say about the organization if they had a chance? The positive things they have to say about the facility and their working environment would make a good testimonial.

## **Action plan for using this report to its fullest**

Now that you have finished reading this report, what is the next step? What do you do now to help your organization be more effective in your marketing efforts? There are five considerations each facility should go through to increase the effectiveness of their marketing efforts.

**Consideration #1** – Go back through the report and highlight those marketing mistakes you believe are happening inside your present organization. You're looking for mistakes that are consistently happening over and over again. Do not worry about those occasional mistakes. They can be circumstantial in nature and are probably not the norm.

**Consideration #2** - Pull out all marketing materials and examine them with new eyes, as if you were the customer searching for your services. As you look at these marketing materials, examine them for good solid advertising and eye appeal. Examine the clarity of the message, the size of the type, the target group being specified, and the overall impression you have from looking at this marketing piece.

**Consideration #3** - Conduct an audit of all your processes within the organization that deal directly with the internal clients and their family members. Look for anything which could generate bad word of mouth advertising. Make sure your clients have the highest delivery of patient service possible and all family members are treated in a very respectful manner. If you do find a process or a system that is breaking down, take careful steps to remedy it now!

**Consideration #4** – Establish a marketing team who has a passion and love for your organization. The creation of a marketing team can benefit your organization by letting everyone know you are focusing on growth and stability for future business. This team should possess strong communication and writing skills and have a thorough understanding of the organizational goals.

**Considerations #5** – Provide additional training for your marketing team and your executive staff. Training can come from the reading of books or attending seminars. One possibility you have is The Mathis Group's program entitled *Marketing In A Box For Assisted Living And Residential Care Facilities*. This program provides narrated PowerPoint slides in a show format to walk your marketing team through each section of the marketing process. As you study each marketing core competency, you will participate in numerous hands on activities to develop your own marketing materials while you learn. This program is normally a two-day live presentation; however, it has been placed in a multimedia format on CD's with participant guides for your convenience. If this is something you would like to consider, please contact Dr. Keith Mathis at the phone number on this report.

# Want To Learn To Dominate Your Residential Target?

## *Marketing In A Box*

### *For Assisted Living And Residential Care Facilities* **The Art of Attracting New Customers and Markets**

**Description:** *Marketing In A Box* teaches techniques for creating and attracting new prospects. This course is designed to begin with fundamentals of marketing and go through each of the different media types to create a successful marketing campaign. Participants will discuss pricing, create their unique selling proposition, and explain how to write copy which attracts attention and increases response.

- Examine controlling factors of marketing
- Evaluate qualities of a great market
- Discuss the 4 P's of marketing mix
- Identify discounts and special offers
- Design USP: Unique Selling Proposition
- Review product life cycle
- Classify techniques for repositioning a product or service
- Identify types of buying decisions
- Design messages which are emotional
- Explain prospect behavior
- Analyze barriers to product positioning
- Identify guidelines to repositioning a product or service
- Evaluate product life cycle
- Examine ways change influences pricing
- Discuss the benefits of headline core competencies
- Analyze benefit statements
- Discuss mailing lists and demographics
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of differentiation
- Analyze the types of buyers
- Examine direct mail
- Explore good yellow page advertisements, brochures, direct mail, business cards, bill- boards, internet, and display advertisements

## Questions and Answers

### What You Might Want To Know About Our *Marketing In A Box* Program

▪ **Question #1 – Who should definitely want the *Marketing In A Box* course?**

Answer: This course can be taken by anyone who desires an in-depth knowledge of marketing. However, there are some special people this course will help in becoming more successful in filling beds and generating revenue.

- Administrators of assisted living or residential care facilities
- Individuals who have (or will have in the future) responsibility for sales and marketing of your services
- Individuals who are wanting to create a stronger bond and value with potential prospects
- Future designers of marketing or advertising copy

▪ **Question #2 – Why is *Marketing In A Box* such an expensive course?**

Answer: This course is only expensive if it does not help you focus your marketing efforts. This course has been priced so it is a fraction of the fee Dr. Keith Mathis receives for conducting on-site training. For example, your organization could pay as much as \$7000 to bring Keith to your facility to conduct the training face to face. So, this course has been designed as a way of allowing all facilities the opportunity to receive this training, regardless of their size. Depending on the *Marketing In A Box* option you choose, Keith has also made available extras like a conference call with your marketing team or administrators and two coaching sessions by phone. You can also receive critiques on pieces of your marketing if you wish. Look at it this way; all of this for less than the price one resident will pay for one month.

▪ **Question #3 – Why should you invest in the *Marketing In A Box* course?**

Answer: This course will provide you with foundation marketing skills as well as secrets for capturing your target group while controlling your budget. This course cuts through the clutter and gives you relevant knowledge. We have offered a discount on the course if you order by the expiration date. There is no risk; we offer a 100% guarantee.

▪ **Question #4 - How long does it take to work through the *Marketing In A Box* course?**

Answer: Each person will work through the course at a different rate of speed. It is set up in 11 individual presentations. This lets you control how long you work on each session. In some cases, you will return and relisten to the content of a past session several times.

▪ **Question #5 – Do you need past marketing knowledge?**

Answer: This course is designed to begin where you, the learner, might be. If you are an experienced marketer, you will move through some of the sessions at a faster pace. However, if you are a novice, you will have the opportunity to lay a solid marketing foundation which will influence future marketing plans and campaigns. We recommend that regardless of your marketing level or knowledge, you go through each of the 11 narrated Powerpoint presentations and follow along in the

## **The Mathis Group, Inc. Presents A Special Report:**

### **25 Marketing Mistakes Assisted Living and Residential Care Facilities Make Which Cost Them Revenue**

participant's book. Go through the entire course. You will learn foundational concepts along with advanced marketing techniques.

▪ **Question #6 – What is a narrated PowerPoint presentation?**

Answer: Each of the Cd's will be loaded into your PC computer, and you will see a visual presentation in PowerPoint. Throughout the presentation, you will have each marketing component verbally explained in detail. Each Cd will automatically run to take you through the course of study with graphics and in-depth marketing concepts.

▪ **Question #7 – Do I need to have the software program PowerPoint?**

Answer: No. Included with the *Marketing In A Box* course is a program called PowerPoint Viewer. This program allows every PC the ability to see and hear the narrated show without purchasing any software. If you already have PowerPoint, then there is no software to load. Just put the Cd in and it runs. If you do not have PowerPoint, just install the Viewer which comes with your kit and off you go in seconds.

▪ **Question #8 – What comes in *Marketing In A Box*?**

Answer: You will receive 11 presentations which have a narrated PowerPoint presentation. Included is a notebook which contains both a master book with all the answers from the presentation as well as a participant's book. You will also receive a printed master copy of the 200+ PowerPoint slides. You will receive a license to use for training your additional team members directly from The Mathis Group. Depending on the option you choose, you will receive critiques of your marketing pieces and extra participant books. Also, conference calls and phone consultations are available in some options.

▪ **Question #9 – What if I want more personalized service or help?**

Answer: Dr. Mathis can be contacted directly and is prepared to assist you with whatever you need. Whether you need onsite seminars or more help designing or restructuring your marketing material, contact him to discuss the specifics and fees.

▪ **Question #10 – What if I do not like *Marketing In A Box*?**

Answer: In the unlikely event that you do not think this marketing program can help the impact of your facility, we give a 100% money back guarantee, and Dr. Mathis gives you a full 60 days to work through this program. If you do not like it, just return it for a full refund. You have a full 100% money back guarantee.

▪ **Question #11 – What kind of payment options are available?**

Answer: The Mathis Group gives you different options. You can pay in full by check, use your Master Card or Visa credit card, or we will bill your organization.

The Mathis Group, Inc. Presents A Special Report:

25 Marketing Mistakes Assisted Living and Residential Care Facilities Make Which Cost Them Revenue

# Meet Dr. Keith Mathis

*Speaker, Trainer, and Author*

*Specialist In Marketing*

**The Mathis Group, Inc.**

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*PMI - Registered Education Provider*

Over the last several years, Dr. Keith Mathis has emerged as one of the most effective business trainers in the field traveling throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico and South America. His provocative, informative, humorous presentations on a variety of organizational development topics are demanded by progressive companies. An animated and often electrifying platform speaker, Keith never merely talks to an audience, but he also seeks to involve them in his presentations through high content and numerous illustrations. Intellectually demanding of himself, Keith demands no less of his audiences! He comes with thousands of presentations to every kind of organization. He is flexible by teaching in full day formats, multi-day conferences or one hour keynotes for conventions. He is founder of The Mathis Group, based in St. Louis, Missouri.

Dr. Mathis is an expert in marketing assisted living and residential care facilities. He began a self study approach to marketing back in 1979 by monitoring marketing models which were making organizations very successful. For twenty years he has used many of these techniques with not-for-profit organizations in promoting events and major campaigns. He has developed step-by-step processes and techniques which allow marketing campaigns to make a major impact without using and wasting huge dollars. Keith is still a constant student of marketing. He continues to research marketing trends and examine new methods for reaching target groups and niches.

Keith serves as an adjunct professor of business/management at Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale, teaching Marketing, Consulting, Management, Communication, Customer Value, Leadership, Organizational Behavior, Strategic Planning, and Customer Service. Keith is a Certified On-Line instructor who holds a B.A. in Behavioral Science, a M.S. in Management, and a Ph.D. in Administration Management.

Keith is the author of *Dinosaur Tracks: Modern Leadership Strategies for Changing Employee Performance and Behavior*. In addition, he has authored numerous training programs as well as magazine and newspaper articles.

He is a member of National Speakers' Association, American Society for Training and Development, and World Future Society.

**The Mathis Group, Inc. Presents A Special Report:**

**25 Marketing Mistakes Assisted Living and Residential Care Facilities Make Which Cost Them Revenue**

**100% Money Back Guarantee**

If you are not satisfied with *Marketing In A Box*, return it anytime within 60 days of purchase for a full refund - No hassle. We also guarantee the quality of each CD. In spite of quality controls, sometimes products are damaged. If any of your material is damaged or defective, we will replace it at no charge.

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**Mail**  
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Eureka, MO 63025

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Quantity	Option #1 – Basic	Price Each	Sale Price
1	<i>Marketing In A Box</i> – 11 Narrated CD PowerPoint Presentations, Printed copy of PowerPoint, Master Book, Participant Book	\$1299	Included
1	Critique of marketing piece with feedback and suggestions	\$125	Included
1	Extra Participant Book	\$15	Included
			\$599

Quantity	Option #2 – Premium	Price Each	Sale Price
1	<i>Marketing In A Box</i> – 11 Narrated CD PowerPoint Presentations, Printed copy of PowerPoint, Master Book, Participant Book	\$1299	Included
1	20 minute conference call with Dr. Mathis - set by appointment	\$300	Included
3	Critique of marketing piece with feedback and suggestions	\$375	Included
3	Extra Participant Books	\$45	Included
			\$799

Quantity	Option #3 – Premium Plus Coaching	Price Each	Sale Price
1	<i>Marketing In A Box</i> – 11 Narrated CD PowerPoint Presentations, Printed copy of PowerPoint, Master Book, Participant Book	\$1299	Included
2	20 minute conference call with Dr. Mathis – set by appointment	\$600	Included
4	Critique of marketing piece with feedback and suggestions	\$500	Included
5	Extra Participant Books	\$75	Included
1	30 minutes of coaching with marketing team/administrator by phone	\$400	Included
			\$999