

Selling Your Property's Amenities

By Tiffany Yelverton

We all have amenities, different from property to property, that we list in our advertisements and other collateral material, and we want to make sure that we mention them all to our customers. However, our presentation might sound as though we are selling our community similar to 'David Letterman's' Top 10 List!

It's difficult to rattle off every single amenity in our sales presentation, especially where time is of the essence for the customer who is calling or walking through the door. We also don't want our presentation to sound like a 'canned' script.

We should never forget that each customer's needs are different and it's vital to determine what the customer wants. Differentiate what is most important to the customer and zoom in on those things during your telephone call or tour of the community. Focus on what is important to them - this is a key element during the sales process.

Establishing a vision of what each amenity looks like, smells like, and feels like can be a difficult task. We need to paint a picture with words that invoke warmth, comfort, convenience and/or privacy. We can accomplish this by using words that would be pleasing to the customer based on their individual needs. For example, if the customer mentions that privacy is most important, offer an apartment home in a more secluded part of the property instead of one by the pool. It's easy to become your own worst enemy in the sales process if you do not remember to determine the specific needs and desires of each customer.

Leasing professionals must rise to all challenges and deliver specific information that matters most to the customer. Ask permission to ask questions. For example, start out by saying, "If you'll give me just a few moments of your time to ask you some questions, I'll be able to find the perfect apartment that meets your needs." This explains what you are going to do and why and helps break down a common barrier put up by customers.

Once you've gotten permission to ask some questions, start asking! Strive for open-ended questions that invite longer, more detailed answers. The open-ended question invites the customer to elaborate about their thoughts and needs. Try asking things like:

- "Are there any specific features you're looking for in a new home?"
- "What things are most important to you in an apartment?"
- "Why are you moving from where you are living now?"

Another important technique involves using assumptive questions. In an assumptive question, use phrasing that assumes the customer will become a resident of your community. For example, instead of asking, "When do you need an apartment," you might ask, "When are you planning on moving into our community?" This type of phrasing is an invitation to the customer to become part of the community.

As the customer begins to respond to your questions, pay close attention. He or she is giving you precious information that you can use to tailor your presentation to his or her needs and desires. For example, has he or she mentioned that he or she does a lot of work from home? If

so, emphasize how “wired” your units are. Do they love to cook? If so, talk about your new, state-of-the-art appliances. To net it out, show him or her how your community is ideal for his or her particular lifestyle needs.

As you describe your community’s features, use colorful, inviting words such as bright, cozy, spacious, airy, comfortable, and warm. If this doesn’t come naturally to you, practice! Work on “talking” your way through each of your community’s amenities to paint a picture of each room as you go walk on a tour or elaborate on a floor plan. Instead of saying, “The bedroom is down the hall to the right,” say, “At the end of the hallway, if you turn to your right, you’ll enter the first bedroom suite, which is large enough to easily accommodate a full bedroom collection, complete with a king bed. The windows in this room are also oversized, so you get a terrific sense of light and spaciousness, not to mention a great view.”

Here’s another idea! Consider adding a game to your next team meeting and call it “Name that Amenity.” Write down each amenity on a small slip of paper and place them in a fishbowl. Each team member will pick a property amenity. Each player will then take one minute to describe the amenity in a way that paints a mental picture to the other players who will act as the customers. The rest of the team will then collaborate and have only one opportunity to name the amenity.

Our owners spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on a property’s amenities from the lush manicured lawn to the convenience of our trained maintenance team that takes care of service requests. Owners sink serious dollars into providing an environment that is self-contained and carefree for our residents. Yet, one of our greatest amenities can be an invisible one to us...our residents. A happy resident is a walking and talking billboard to promote what is wonderful about the community, one that can be traced back to a leasing professional that took time to determine what was most important to that resident and offered an apartment home that met those needs. At the end of the day, isn’t it a great feeling knowing that you have assisted someone in finding his or her next home?

About the author: Tiffany Yelverton is the President of Creative Apartment Marketing, a consulting firm specializing in training, marketing, and strategic planning. Her expertise in assessing a property’s potential has increased the net operating income for many properties with her key ingredients of facilitating and training the on-site and supervisor teams with customized ‘how to’ steps in achieving profitable goals. Please visit CreativeApartmentMarketing.com for more information.