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Senior Marketing Expert Warns of Pestering and Discounting

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From Housing for Seniors

When it comes to selling active adult housing these days, two words come to the mind of [Creating Results](#) founder [Todd Harff](#) -- compelling value.

Harff says some 50+ potential homebuyers are ready to make a purchase, but it's imperative to provide the right product in the right location.

"It needs to be something people see and think, 'it's a good deal,' he says. "It doesn't mean you have to advertise it with starbursts. It just has to be compelling."

And promoting a compelling value isn't simply about continuing to throw effort after effort at prospects. Pestering them is an enormous mistake at a time when consumer sentiment needs to be restored.

"They need a message that builds their confidence," he says. "What doesn't work and alienates these prospects is e-mail and mail fatigue, where every communication is laced with urgency ... It comes across as desperate."

What also comes across as desperate is setting prices too low. While realistic pricing needs to return to the housing industry, a major one-week slash on prices could lead buyers to wonder "what are they going to offer next week" and put them back on the sidelines, says Harff.

Sure, slashing prices can have a short-term gain, which may be necessary for some struggling companies, but it leads to negative consequences in the long term.

"The ones who are going to be successful through this are going to be the ones not focused on the next sale, but the value of the community and the value of their brand," Harff contends. "You'd be more successful to offer a new product line with a better floor plan than just to use discounting."

So, where are the strong markets?

Harff says the strongest 50+ housing markets to target are in metropolitan areas near job hubs. It's the return of the infill developer, so to speak, because the economic slowdown is causing more boomers and seniors to put off retirement by a few years.

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"They want the amenities, but they're not willing to relocate to areas where they have no opportunities for income," he says.



Top on his list in that regard are Washington, DC, because of the government jobs and its new standing "as the financial capital of the world" and Philadelphia. There's also plenty of opportunity to be had in areas such as Denver, coastal North Carolina and throughout Texas.

"People are willing to have a higher cost of living as long as they continue to have the opportunity for good jobs," he says.

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