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## Seven Rules for Powerful Pre-Marketing to Active Adults




By Todd Harff  
 Creating Results, LLC

A carefully planned and well-executed pre-marketing program can produce tremendous results. But a lackadaisical program can be disastrous. This is particularly true if your company is trying to reach the 55+ market.

One of the challenges of marketing to active adults is that they have little urgency. Unlike other markets, this demographic does not purchase homes because of job transfers, changes in family size or any of the other more time-sensitive motivators.

What active adults have, however, is time and money. You need to create the motivation. That is why a strong pre-marketing program is so critical.

The following are seven rules for pre-marketing to active adults that will save you money and produce results:



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### 1. Allot Six Months for Success

Some builders are so anxious to collect leads that they place a sign on site as soon as they have purchased the ground. But after spending a year getting permits, they end up with a long list of frustrated prospects.

Instead, don't start collecting leads until six months prior to construction. That way, you maintain your prospects' enthusiasm and eliminate their frustration.

### 2. Use Your Pre-Marketing Program as a Research Tool

At this year's International Builders' Show, Barbara Kleger, president of Philadelphia, PA-based Senior Living Consultants, spoke about how builders benefit from including early prospects in the design of their homes and their marketing program. Not only will this approach provide insight that will improve the appeal of your products, these motivated prospects and leads are predisposed to purchase because they have been involved in the process.

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- Six Leaders Named to California Building Industry Hall of Fame
- Sign Up for 2005 Committees and Councils by July 9
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### 3. Keep Communicating

The single largest frustration among people who register during a pre-marketing program is that they feel ignored. They want to find out more. They want to hear about progress. But every day that goes by without a response drains their enthusiasm.

Keep them informed through a friendly, knowledgeable person who will be available to answer their questions and help them to feel valued and important.

### 4. Create Excitement and Confidence

People who sign onto your lead list are interested in your community, but they also are afraid of making a bad decision.

Your more mature prospects probably have either experienced or heard about people who regretted purchasing in a community that never delivered on its promise. A strong pre-marketing program will help prospects overcome this fear by building excitement and creating confidence.

A great way to accomplish both is to take your top prospects on a tour of one of your existing communities that offers similar homes and amenities. To increase your credibility, have some of your previous purchasers serve as the tour guides. Once your prospects see your prior success, they will be motivated to sign up for your next community.

### 5. Separate the Browsers From the Buyers With a Refundable Deposit

Many people will join your list out of curiosity. So how do you know who is ready and willing to buy and who is not? Ask them. The best way is to share all the information that a prospect would need to make a commitment and then ask for a refundable deposit.

The deposit ensures the prospect that they will have an individual appointment and the best selection. Those people who are interested but do not want to place a deposit should be welcome to schedule an appointment at a later date.

Ideally, your first release is small enough so that it will be completely purchased by those who placed deposits. And as the price goes up, the fence sitters will learn the real cost of waiting.

### 6. Celebrate Success

The first purchasers are brave pioneers. If you treat them right, they will be your most loyal supporters. Send them letters, write articles about them in your community newsletter, send out press releases, hold special parties, give them gifts — do whatever you can to make them feel special.

In one community, we sent our first 50 purchasers on a five-day Caribbean cruise. The esprit de corps this created was remarkable — and led to many referrals.

### 7. Maintain Momentum

The worst thing that can happen to a community is to open it with lots of energy, enthusiasm and initial success — and then stall. The people on the lead list who did not purchase are watching carefully to see what happens.

If prices rise and sales continue, they will want to jump on board before they miss any more opportunities. So constantly create urgency, maintain enthusiasm and show progress. It doesn't matter how small the progress may be. What does matter is how excited you and your sales staff are about it.

A successful pre-marketing program requires much more than just collecting names. You must get prospects so excited that they want to move today.

So, are you ready to roll up your sleeves and make your prospects feel important? If not, save your money until your model is open. If you are willing to take the risk, you will see a terrific return

on your investment.

*Todd Harff is president of [Creating Results, LLC](#), an Occoquan, VA-based company strategic marketing company that develops and implements comprehensive marketing programs. For more information, e-mail [Harff](#) or call him at 703-494-7888 x13.*

#### Mark Your Calendar for NAHB's Seniors Housing Symposium 2005

"Building for Boomers & Beyond": NAHB Seniors Housing Symposium 2005 is scheduled for May 16-18, 2005, in Chantilly, VA. Mark your calendars.

#### Learn More About Seniors Housing Through the Seniors Housing Council

To learn more about seniors housing, join the [NAHB Seniors Housing Council](#). The council provides information, education, networking and recognition opportunities for its members and represents NAHB on seniors housing issues. For more details, e-mail [Jeff Jenkins](#) or call him at 800-368-5242 x8292.


#### 'Analyzing Seniors' Housing Markets' Available at BuilderBooks.com

"[Analyzing Seniors' Housing Markets](#)," available at [BuilderBooks.com](#), examines the complexities of seniors' housing markets and explains what developers, investors and other professionals need to know to understand and operate in these specialized niches. The publication familiarizes readers with the various product types and how they relate to the needs of seniors. It also explains market analysis, consumer research, market segmentation, financial analysis, market maturation versus market saturation and gauging performance of seniors' housing. Three case studies of regional markets comparing the development trends of both independent and assisted living within each market are also included. To view or purchase this publication online, [click here](#), or call 800-223-2665 to order.

#### THE NAHB University of Housing Offers Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist 'CAPS' Designation

The [Certified Aging-in-Place \(CAPS\) designation program](#) teaches the skills essential to competing in the fastest growing segment of the residential remodeling industry: home modifications for the aging-in-place. To search for a list of course offerings for this program, [click here](#).

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