

WHEN IT COMES TO SENIOR LIVING, SATISFIED IS NOT SUFFICIENT

VERY SATISFIED = REFERRALS

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Millions of dollars are spent to create and maintain upscale senior housing communities with built-in entertainment venues. Yet the willingness of residents to recommend their community to friends is related most strongly to the resident's level of satisfaction and to nonphysical factors, according to research published in the 2009 Senior Housing & Care Journal.

Very satisfied residents are four times more likely than satisfied residents to recommend their senior housing community to friends and family, according to the survey of 1,042 residents who moved to their independent living community within the previous six months.

Seventy-four percent of the new residents with high satisfaction strongly agreed they would recommend their community to a friend. Only 19 percent of satisfied residents strongly agreed they would recommend the community.

Satisfied is not sufficient. A community must have *very satisfied* residents to create advocates who say their community is *the* place to live.

Factors that Influence Satisfaction

The research also revealed that nonphysical attributes have the biggest impact on residents' willingness to recommend their community. These nonphysical factors more strongly impact satisfaction and willingness to recommend than the attributes often considered primary benefits—services and amenities.

The good news is that nonphysical factors can be controlled, changed and improved. The five most important nonphysical factors are:

- **Quality of Daily Life**, including opportunities for residents to be entertained, improve themselves, avoid boredom, satisfy curiosity, and enjoy a sense of novelty or competence.
- **Dining Flexibility and Quality**, including opportunities for residents to enjoy tasty and

interesting food, a sense of novelty, change, and some control over their diet.

- **Quality of Personnel**, including the ability to create a caring environment that is open, supportive, stimulating, and that incorporates a sense of belonging and being part of a family.
- **Personal Control**, including a sense of privacy, autonomy and the ability to control the environment, as well as a sense of safety and security.
- **Comfort in the Community**, including opportunities to make friends, a sense of self-identity, and being part of something larger through connections to others.

The conclusion? Home is not a physical space or a house. It is a sense of belonging that surpasses a physical environment. When residents feel at home in their community, they are less concerned about basic needs. They have an identity, belonging and social networks that only home can give.

Return on Investment

Communities like yours are likely to achieve higher satisfaction scores, generate more word-of-mouth referrals and a greater return on investment if they focus on:

- **Education and competence** in resourcefully managing the basic ingredients of quality daily life for residents.
- **Devotion to delivering quality** customer service through every aspect of the community.
- **Creativity and time** to learn about, and be with, residents.
- **Aptitude in matching** cultural, educational, entertainment and other programs to residents' preferences.
- **Ability to help** new residents find new friends and feel at home.

When Friends Talk

The research also shows that the impact of advertising significantly declined over time, while the impact of

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learning about the community from a current resident significantly increased.

During the first year their community opened, 62 percent of residents learned about it through newspaper advertising, 31 percent through direct mail and 17 percent from a family member or friend.

In contrast, as a community ages, the percentage of new residents who learn about it from a current resident grows. In the study:

- 14 percent of new residents learned about their community from current residents in communities open for one to two years
- 25 percent from residents who had been in communities open for two to ten years
- 35 percent from residents in communities open for ten to 20 years
- 41 percent from residents in communities open more than 20 years

Partners With Expertise

Surviving in this more sophisticated climate requires self-analysis, commitment, and help from partners with industry expertise. Bottom Line Marketing & Public Relations has relevant expertise in senior housing. From research that drives strategy to tactics that produce measurable results, developers, owners and operators of senior living communities have leveraged our expertise to help them reach their objectives.

It’s easy to work with us. We use best practices to make efficient use of time and resources because we value both. We meet our deadlines, and we keep our promises. That’s our bottom line.

Visit our website, www.blmpr.com , to see how we can help you create very satisfied residents who advocate for your community with their friends and family.

Highest 19 Correlations of “I Am Willing to Recommend This Community to a Friend” with Nonphysical Attributes of Independent Living Communities	
Nonphysical Attribute	Correlation
I feel that my residence here is my home	0.603*
It is easy to make friends with other residents	0.595*
I have control over what I do	0.196*
I feel safe and secure here	0.487*
I have privacy when I want	0.428*
The social opportunities	0.311*
The educational opportunities	0.297*
The cultural opportunities	0.292*
The variety of menu choices	0.288*
Sales counselors	0.284*
The entertainment opportunities	0.283*
The arts/crafts opportunities	0.279*
The type and quality of food	0.275*
Other staff	0.258*
The times available for dining	0.253*
The musical opportunities	0.253*
Executive director	0.219*
Receptionist	0.219*
<i>*p < .0001</i>	
<i>N varied from 887 to 987</i>	

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