

CLOSING...

The Bottom Line!

(If you don't lease, you don't last!)

*"A Special Webinar Presentation Emphasizing the Leasing Presentation
Commitment and Commencement"*

Tuesday June 17, 2014

**Presented By: Rick Ellis, CAM, CPM
For Ellis Partners in Management Solutions**

**Webinars that have Impact NOW...
for the Apartment Professional**

Want to get “CLOSED?”

It's Not Really a “Close” ...It is a Beginning!

- 1. “Close”** – What an odd term! It means, “to block against entry, having no openings.”
 - ✓ It's not a close; it's a beginning
 - ✓ It's a commencement; we begin a new phase in our relationship with the rental prospect/client.
 - ✓ Don't follow-up – follow through!

- 2. Create “Relationship”**
 - ✓ Seventy (70%) percent of all sales are based on customer's perception of the salesperson.
 - ✓ Prospect/client hates to stand on the edge of a cliff next to a stranger.
 - ✓ Be FEP – FEP folks lease more apartments!

- 3. What Closing is NOT!**
 - ✓ Giving the prospect/client an application.
 - ✓ Waiting for the prospect/client to say, “yes I want it.”
 - ✓ Handling the prospect/client your card and telling them to call you if they have any questions.
 - ✓ Being very careful to not ask the prospect/client to lease for fear of being “pushy.”

- 4. The Cost When We Fail to Close!**
 - ✓ \$6000 to \$15,000 in annual rental income.
 - ✓ \$60,000 to \$150,000 in REAL property value!
 - ✓ Your leasing commission!
 - ✓ Your professional reputation.
 - ✓ Ultimately, your means of support!

RELATIONSHIP CLOSING

As you seek to gain a commitment, your relationship with the rental prospect reaches its highest importance!

F E P

FRIENDLY * ENTHUSIASTIC * PROFESSIONAL

- 1. FRIENDLY** - A warm smile and cheerful disposition is the foundation of good Relationship Leasing. Nothing takes the place of friendliness. When the prospect calls on the telephone or enters the leasing office, the Leasing Consultant must make this very important person feel welcome. Remember, it is not enough to "be" friendly. You must be "perceived" as friendly by the rental prospect.
- 2. ENTHUSIASTIC** - The middle letter of "FEP" holds the entire word together. The word "enthusiasm" comes from the Greek root word εν Θεος; meaning "in God." To the Greek mind, this word implied "relationship" or being "in relationship." Enthusiasm is not simply hype and rah-rah; bouncing off the walls and ceilings! Instead, real enthusiasm comes from the heart and gives your presentation friendliness and professionalism, sincerity and "life." Enthusiasm builds "RELATIONSHIPS" and makes your leasing presentation genuine and personal.
- 3. PROFESSIONALISM** - The last letter in "FEP" stands for "Professionalism." It starts with how you look, but it goes much deeper than just dress and grooming. It's how you look AND how you "be". Professionalism is the characteristic that gives the Leasing Consultant the discretion and polish to make the Leasing Presentation credible and masterful. Professionalism is the skill and aptitude to do or say the right thing at the right time in the right manner . . . **RIGHT NOW!**

Relationship Closing Secrets

- ...Prospects like to lease from leasing professionals they like*
- ...Prospects will pay more rent to a leasing professional they like.*
- ...Prospects will least "better" when they like you.*

CLOSING BASICS

1. ABC Mentality - "Always Be Closing" - There is no sense in making a leasing presentation if you don't intend to close. The prospect is not visiting your community because he has time on his hands . . . he's interested in leasing an apartment. Believe that the prospect is going to lease. Close the lease in your own mind before even saying "Hello." Your positive attitude and confidence will add enthusiasm and excitement to your presentation encouraging the prospect to lease NOW. Make every presentation a "closing presentation."

2. Develop the "YES" Habit - Get the prospect's agreement on any and everything. It's a beautiful day, isn't it? "YES!" This is a wonderful view, don't you think? "YES!" These little yeses lead to the big YES you want to hear "YES . . . I will lease the apartment TODAY!"

3. Temperature-Taking Questions - Also known as "Trial Closes," these questions help you measure the prospect's readiness to lease. These questions seem innocent enough but quickly reveal the degree of interest in leasing the apartment right now. Try these two classic "Trial Closes":

"How do you think you'll arrange your furniture?"

"Where will you put your TV?"

If the prospect does not answer or sidesteps the question, his interest level is low. Yet if he begins to place his furniture or imagine where the TV will best fit, you have a "hot" prospect who is giving you real closing signals. It may be time to CLOSE!

4. Body Language - Be aware of the prospect's posture. When he uncrosses his arms or legs and leans forward, that can be a sign of openness. Look for a pleasant and relaxed expression on his face and a willing tone of voice. Finally, note if the prospect picks up the lease to examine it (or asks you to clarify the deposit amount). The prospect would not bother touching the lease or asking questions if he were not interested.

5. Know When to Shut Up! - When the prospect says, "I'll take it," stop selling! Just take care of the paperwork immediately!

6. The Best Place to Close? - ANYWHERE! Don't be confined to "closing" only in the Leasing Office. When a prospect is ready to fill out the application, pull it out of your Leasing Notebook and get the prospect writing. Sometimes it is better to have the prospect complete the application in the vacant apartment or model . . . or even around the swimming pool or as you sit in the golf cart.

BOTTOM LINE: GET THE LEASE!

Overcoming Objections

OBJECTIONS SHOW INTEREST: View objections as buying signals and act on them. Objections show interest. The prospect would not bother to object if he weren't interested.

ANTICIPATE OBJECTIONS: You will only hear so many objections about your community. In fact, after 60 days (or less) on your community, you will have "heard 'em all." Rarely will you hear a new objection. Since you know what the prospect will be throwing your way, there is no reason to be "surprised" by an objection. Follow these procedures below:

REALIZE THERE ARE JUST TWO TYPES OF OBJECTIONS

1. **"EASY" OBJECTION** - One that is not true; that is caused by misunderstanding, misinformation, or just plain lack of knowledge.
2. **"DIFFICULT" OBJECTION** - One that is, in fact, true.

BASIC FORMULA FOR OVERCOMING OBJECTIONS

OVERCOMING THE "EASY" OBJECTIONS

1. **Restate the objection in question form.**
2. **Answer it directly, offering proof, if necessary.**
Prospect: "I'm not sure I like the idea of being so far from the bus stop."
Consultant: "Mr. Smith, you are concerned about being too far from the bus stop? You'll be happy to know the bus route runs alongside the property, and there is a bus stop on both sides of the road."

OVERCOMING THE "DIFFICULT" OBJECTIONS

1. **Restate the objection in question form.**
2. **Minimize it by stressing other relevant benefits of the community.**
Prospect: "...But you don't have washer/dryer connections."
Consultant: "Mr. Smith, you are concerned about the lack of washer/dryer connections? We know you like our price and location. And we have brand new laundry rooms with machines that only cost \$.75 cents a load. A washer/dryer in your apartment can be quite a drain on your utility bill."

HANDLING THE PUT-OFF

Special "Objection" Problems

Sometimes it is difficult to tell if the prospect has a genuine objection OR if he is just too nice to simply tell the Leasing Consultant, "I don't like your property . . . I'm not interested." How do you handle put-offs such as "Let me think about it" or "I really want to look around some more"? How can you respond in a way that separates the real concerns from just plain disinterest? Here are some ideas:

1. **"LET ME THINK ABOUT IT"**

The prospect is really saying, "Something is bothering me." We must determine what it is in order to resolve it.

OUR RESPONSE: **"You should think about it; it's a very important decision."**

First, we "Get in Step". We're not fighting the prospect. We are showing concern. But we have not let the prospect off the hook. Next, we ask:

"Would you mind telling me what kinds of things you will be thinking about?"

Then we deal with those items that are bothering the prospect.

2. **"I REALLY WANT TO LOOK AROUND SOME MORE"**

First, get in step.

OUR RESPONSE: **"You should look around. You want to be sure you find exactly the right place for you."**

We show concern, but we don't let the prospect go. We continue by asking:

"Would you mind telling me what kind of things you will be looking for?" or "Where will you be looking?"

Once we know why the prospect is putting off a decision, we can attempt to resolve the problem and salvage the lease. And, if we don't close the lease, at least we know why!

3. **"I'M JUST NOT SURE ABOUT THIS..."**

The HESITANT PROSPECT is tough to read. We must find out if he has a real objection, or if he is just putting up a "smoke screen."

OUR RESPONSE: **"In other words, if that was not a problem, you would want to rent this apartment today?"**

If the prospect answers "Yes," then we are dealing with a real concern.

If the prospect answers "No," then we may be facing a "smoke screen" and need to dig out the real concern.

Dig out "hesitations" with these kinds of questions:

- "It seems to me like something else is causing you to hesitate. Would you mind telling me what it is?"**
- "Is there anything that would cause you to hesitate in renting this apartment?"**
- "Would you mind telling me what's causing you to hesitate?"**

"CLOSES" . . . To Use In "Closing" The Lease

Below are five "CLOSES" to use in securing a commitment from your prospect. NOTE that these "CLOSES" are not the actual close . . . they are techniques of asking for the order . . . asking for the deposit and application. The lease is made or lost long before you get to this point in your presentation. The "CLOSES" below are the Leasing Consultant's natural response to the prospect's buying signals. Incorporate one or more of these "CLOSES" in your Leasing Presentation to "seal the deal."

1. TRIAL CLOSE - As mentioned previously, trial closes are innocuous sounding questions that are used to determine how close to committing to close the prospect is right now. Use one or more of these "trial" questions to probe for information that will reveal the prospect's level of interest.

EXAMPLES: **"How do you think you will arrange your furniture?"**

"Where would you put your computer and computer desk?"

If the prospect begins placing furniture, then you know his interest level is high and it may be time to use one of the closes below:

2. DIRECT CLOSE - When you know you have the agreement of the prospect, GO FOR IT! Ask for the lease!

EXAMPLE: **"Joanna, I know you would love this apartment home. Let's go back to the office and take care of the paperwork. Then I can hold this apartment for you."**

3. WHICH CLOSE - This close uses opinion-gathering questions which cannot be answered with a mere yes or no. A Leasing Consultant can use this close even if the prospect feels he is not ready to lease. This close narrows the focus and encourages the prospect to make a minor commitment.

EXAMPLES: **"Would you prefer an upstairs or downstairs location?"**

"What color scheme do you feel would best complement your furniture, the grey or the beige?"

If you have demonstrated more than one floor plan, it is best to use this close after demonstrating the second floor plan. The prospect may need to browse through the apartment one last time before making a decision.

EXAMPLE: **"Which apartment home do you like best, the luxury one-bedroom study, or the unique one-bedroom loft?"**

"Would you rather move-in on the first of July or would the weekend before work better?"

4. SUMMARY CLOSE - After the demonstration of the apartment, recap the advantages and benefits you know the prospect values. From the GUEST CARD, note the prospect's original needs and other concerns that were discussed during the presentation. Summarize these advantages remembering what the prospect said was important to him. Make this an even more effective close by summarizing the important benefits in writing on a piece of your community letterhead.

EXAMPLE: **"John Richard, this apartment home is perfect for you. It has the vaulted ceilings to create the spaciousness you want and the grey color scheme is the one that you liked best! The large window will provide lots of light for your plants. Best of all, it is available for an immediate move-in since your current lease is up."**

This Summary Close is an effective prelude to asking the prospect to complete an application for rent and write a deposit check. From the Summary Close, you can go right into the **"Double OK" Close**:

"All I need now is your OK, OK?"

5. ASSUMPTIVE CLOSE - This technique is based on assuming the prospect is going to lease. Rather than asking him or her to lease, assume the lease! Continue your presentation as if there is no question about leasing and calmly hand the application and pen to the prospect.

EXAMPLE: **"Phillip, while you're completing this rental application, I will be preparing your lease. Then you will be all set to move in this weekend."**

IF YOU DON'T LEASE THE APARTMENT ON THE PROSPECT'S FIRST VISIT... **FOLLOW-UP!**

Despite your efforts to lease the prospect now, some individuals will still leave your community without making a decision. **DO NOT GIVE UP!** You have not necessarily lost the lease. Many prospects just will not commit on the very first visit. **Follow-up** is imperative to secure a lease from this kind of prospect.

Regardless of the exact procedure you use, your **follow-up** goals are still the same:

- Contact the prospect by phone before the end of the day.**
- Immediately after the prospect's visit, get a handwritten postcard or note in the mail to him or her.**

Your objective in re-contacting the prospect is three-fold:

- 1.** Let the prospect know that you sincerely care about his or her rental needs and want to help the prospect find the right place to live.
- 2.** Attempt to make an appointment for the prospect to come back and see the apartment and community again.
- 3.** Determine any of the prospect's remaining concerns and offer to help him or her make a decision.

Be courteous and professional in your follow-up efforts but remember, the prospect called or visited your property first. You have a right (and obligation to the property owner!) to follow-up aggressively and persistently.

Keep the prospect's GUEST CARD until you know for sure he or she has made another community their home. In that case, file the prospect's GUEST CARD in a "tickler file" and plan to re-contact the prospect 60 days prior to his or her next lease expiration.