



6 Ways Your Dining Program Can Skyrocket Your Marketing Program

By Pam McDonald

“If you are not using your communities’ dining services as part of your marketing efforts, you’re not maximizing your resources,” says RonnDa Peters, Vice President of Marketing and Sales for [Strategic Dining Services](#) (SDS), an integrated, hospitality-based dining management company and Senior Housing Forum partner. She says, “A focused dining program with a well-trained team can give communities a substantial marketing edge.”

Dining is extremely important to residents. It helps them order their day, and of course, provides balanced nutrition. But residents are more likely to look forward to socializing with friends and neighbors over a beautiful meal. “Think about it,” RonnDa urges, “Residents eat in the same ‘restaurant’ every day – sometimes 3 times a day – meals need to be upgraded to a dining experience.”

Hospitality: The Difference is in the Details

As RonnDa notes, “Communities with a hospitality culture know it’s the little things that make the difference – those special touches experienced throughout the community.” She says serving warm scones during a discovery meeting or freshly whipped cream for coffee can create powerful impressions and distinguish the community in a crowded marketplace.

Marketing Messaging/Advertising

Senior living is a competitive industry and some communities struggle to find the right formula for occupancy success. They advertise specials and discounts in hopes of appealing to prospects. “Focusing your marketing message on specifics – like unique creations from your signature recipes – sends a clear message,” RonnDa says. “Your community has something worth coming in for! You can concentrate on your strengths and minimize discounts.”

Enhanced On-site Marketing

Innovative on-site marketing meetings and events – that deliver a “wow” factor – showcase your community. When done with confidence and professional execution, they attract the attention of both potential residents and professional referral sources. “We’re pleased at Strategic Dining to provide ideas and themes to make special events memorable and truly special,” RonnDa says.

Resident Referrals

“When a community builds a reputation for its cuisine and exceptional dining services, it gives residents something to talk about,” RonnDa says. Their praise becomes an invitation to family and friends: “You’ve got to try the fresh bread. And, the soup’s made from scratch! It’s almost as good as I used to make!” Resident referrals increase and census grows.

Sales Appointments and Outreach Opportunities

The Marketing/Sales team works hard to secure appointments for outreach and presentations. All of these are opportunities to tell your story. RonnDa points out, “A tray of donuts or a take-out lunch from the local sandwich shop will not generate heightened interest or commitment to you from professional referral sources.

She notes, “Taking the ordinary to the extraordinary and turning routine presentations into real sales opportunities can be accomplished with exciting menu signature food items that show your commitment to excellence in dining.”

Deal Closer

Similarly meal-based tours can be especially effective as a closing tool, a tool that is unique to each prospect and their family. RonnDa says, “A group tea for potential residents, a theme-based private luncheon or a customized, freshly baked, community-made tour gift presented by the chef show prospects you’re paying attention. They’ll choose to move in to your community because you’ve demonstrated that you know the difference is in the details.”



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