

00:09 - 05:23

Christy Van Der Westhuizen

Hi. Welcome to Bridge the Gap podcast. I'm your contributor, host, Christy van der Westhuizen. I'm going to say something that might feel a little bold, but I stand by it completely. We don't have a strategy problem in senior living. No we don't. We have an execution problem. So let's be honest for a second. And I'm completely guilty of all of these.

So please know this comes with a lot of humility. And I give a lot of grace, too. We have so many strategies. We have binders. We have playbooks. And ours at Jaybird is almost 200 pages. We have meetings about the meetings, about the strategy. We do look at your calendar right now. We have meetings about the meetings, about the strategy.

So we launched something new. Everyone's excited. We talk about it nonstop for a week. Again, I'm putting my hand up here completely guilty. And then two weeks later, it's like, wait a minute. Did we all just collectively forget and move on to the next new thing? So meanwhile, occupancy isn't moving the way we want to because we're focused on so many different strategies and not enough on execution.

So today, thank you for listening, by the way. I hope you enjoy this chat. I want to talk about what actually drives move ins and where we tend to get in our own way. So let's start here. We are all very busy. Everyone is busy. Like calendar is full. Coffee is cold. Did not even drink it. Didn't eat lunch.

Kind of busy. But busy does not equal productive. So here are some things that really take our time away from productivity. Answering emails. Dropping off muffins. I hope that made you cringe a little bit. It did for me. Posting on social media. Reorganizing the brochure rack. Maybe reorganizing your brochure and collateral packets that you give to prospects and their families.

Maybe even fixing the same flier for the third time, because the font felt just a little off. Okay. And listen, I love a good muffin just as much as anyone but muffins don't move people in. Ouch. They just don't. But you know what? Neither does spending 45 minutes debating a flier. And the font that might feel just slightly off, or maybe slightly in a different color than you wanted while leads are sitting there waiting in your inbox.

And so at the end of the day, if what we're doing is not leading to a tour or moving, it's not moving the business. So it might feel productive. It might even look productive on a calendar. But it's not the thing. Okay, so let's talk about what is the thing. And I'm going to keep this really simple and very real, knowing that I've made all the mistakes in the book.

I hope you realize that I've made all the mistakes multiple times, probably, but I'm still here today. So here's the thing. First, speed to lead wins every time. When a family reaches out, they are in a moment. They're in a certain kind of way. They might feel overwhelmed, emotional, sometimes a little panicked. You know what? Sometimes a lot panicked.

And if we wait, we lose. Not because we're not great at what we do, but because someone else showed up faster. And so I see this all the time. So here's an example. So a lead comes in at 10:02 a.m. and we call at 1:30 p.m. and they're like they didn't answer. Well it's probably because someone else already helped them.

That lead didn't need a call later. They needed a call right then. So that means call text email right away. And I like to think every inquiry call is feel. It should feel like a 911 call. We could be their solution. And I hope we know how important it is that we help them. Right then. Right there. Okay, so here's another thing that can really help us with the execution.

So second, every interaction needs a clear next step. So we can't end conversations with. Let me know if you need anything or I'll be here to answer any of your questions. Let me know. That is the nicest way to go. Absolutely nowhere. Absolutely nowhere. And by the way, remember, I've made this mistake. I've made it ten times or more so people don't know what they need.

Prospects and families may not know what they need, and that's why they reached out. And so at the best, we are guides. We guide people in this decision making process. So we say something like, okay, let's get time on a calendar or I'd love to show you this apartment. How does tomorrow at 10:00 look? Or if you're comfortable, we can hold this so you have time to think.

05:23 - 10:24

Christy Van Der Westhuizen

And here's the biggest mistake I see again. I can think vividly, almost 20 years ago, doing this exact same thing. We have an amazing tour. We connect, we laugh. We may even cry together. We build a trusting relationship. And then we walk them out and say, well, let me know what you decide. Okay. No. That was the moment.

That was that was it. That was the moment. So that's like going on a great first date and saying, text me if you ever want to hang out again someday. So our job is to help with clarity, and clarity creates momentum. And that's a fun place to be. All right. Next thing that I've royally screwed up, I'm sure, is third.

Follow up is not optional. And not just a random follow up. And there's a reason why in my entire career, we call follow ups efforts. By the way, that is F and you for follow up. And it's not the classic just checking in email that disappears in the void, or circling back or bumping this up to the top of your email inbox, or following up to see if you've made a decision.

That's my favorite. Just kidding. It's not. We have to be more thoughtful than that. Because families are overwhelmed. They might be managing work, kids, emotions, finances, all of it. Guilt. All of that. And so silence doesn't mean no. Typically it means I don't know how to move forward yet. Or silence might mean no, not this very minute. So instead we say something like, I've been thinking about what you shared about your mom feeling isolated, or you mentioned your dad hasn't been eating much.

This is something we can help with right away. I have an apartment that fits exactly what you described for wanting. Can we look at it together? And so that's how you stay in the conversation and help guide them to what they're truly looking for. And not using that follow up or again, lovingly calling it the few. Again, few follow up.

Not the other kind. And fourth, big mistake I've made in the past selling features over spending time in discovery. So let's reverse that. Fourth thing to do to help you be more effective in your execution is choosing discovery over features. Now, please hear me when I say we do not sell apartments. We do not sell apartments. We solve problems.

We help guide families in figuring out their own solution for their unique challenge and situation. Because no one wakes up and says, oh, you know what sounds really fun today? Let's go to our senior living communities. Okay, but I wish people did, because you can learn so much by just visiting all of this. Talk about the commonality of people, the public thinking, oh, we're nursing homes or we are the home.

Those can be dispelled by people just visiting us and seeing the lifestyle and seeing the residents and seeing the independence that can be brought within, living in a senior living community. So not only are they just waking up one morning and saying, oh, I just wanted to be in some senior living communities. It's a beautiful Saturday. Let's do that.

They're coming to us because something in their life is not working. There might be safety concerns. There might be loneliness. Care needs family stress. And sometimes we push right past that. We don't focus on that. We go straight into features. Meanwhile, they're thinking, I just want to know that mom is safe or I haven't slept in months because I'm so worried.

That's the conversation. Now, when we slow down and ask, tell me about your story. Or what's been the hardest part of this? Or one of my favorite. What would a solution look like for you? Because if we don't get this part right, nothing else fixes it later. So great sales is not pressure. It's not. How quickly can you list all of the amenities and check off those boxes?

It's clarity. Now let's talk about sales leadership because this is where execution either takes off or quietly breaks down. And as leaders, our job is not to jump in and fix everything. Even though, let's be honest, we can. And if you followed me on LinkedIn or listen to any podcast that I've done, I make it a really big goal of mine to become an obsolete leader.

10:24 - 16:07

Christy Van Der Westhuizen

And what that means is, I would love to create a self-correcting, self-motivating, self-propelling sales team because we can fix everything. But should we? And to be honest, I don't think we should. We should create people who can solve their own challenges and motivate themselves because they have all the tools in their toolbox in order to do that.

So even though we can fix problems, should we? And we've all had that moment where we're like, okay, just give me the phone. I'll make that call for you. Or just give me your CRM login. I'll log those last business development appointments for you. Okay. But that's not scalable and it doesn't build the team. Our job as sales leaders is to coach, to ask things like, okay, what was the goal of that call?

Or what next step did you set? Or what could we do differently next time? But it's also as sales leaders to recognize and celebrate, dare I say, when it's done right. Because what gets recognized and celebrated gets repeated. Because what we tolerate becomes standard. What we allow becomes acceptable. And so if we allow leads sitting untouched with no next step follow up, that never happens.

That becomes your sales culture. And so when we inspect behaviors consistently results will follow. So as sales team members here's the balance we have to get right. And it's delicate. It's urgency without pressure. Families do not want to feel pushed. But they do want help okay. They do want help. They want someone to say you shared that you're worried every night about your mom being alone.

Moving in now means that worry can end. Or you told me your dad hasn't been eating well. This is something we can solve immediately. Or even what would stop you from moving forward today? That's not pressure, by the way. That is care. That is clarity. And that's sales when it's done. Right. So before I wrap and thank you so much for listening.

I want to make this really practical because this shouldn't just sound good on paper. It should change what you are doing today. So here's what you can do today. Number one, call every new lead within five minutes. I would love it if it was five seconds. But if you haven't been doing that, go look at your last 24 hours.

If there's someone you haven't connected with, call them. Even if it feels late. Even if it feels behind, call them anyway. But make the goal to call every new lead within five minutes. Just move forward and that will be your new goal. Number two fix your follow up language today. Open your last few emails that you've sent. If they say just checking in or following up, delete it, or maybe print it and leave it next to your computer.

So you realize, oh, my default language is just checking in or following up, and then you can fix it and you can replace it with something meaningful. Like, I've been thinking about what you shared or you mentioned, and then insert whatever that what they mentioned is. And I have an idea that could help. Okay. Number three and every conversation with a real agreed upon next step before you hang up or say goodbye, what would you like to do next and schedule it because no next step equals no movement.

It equals stagnation or doing nothing. Okay. Two more. Number four do a 4 p.m. gut check every day. Ask yourself, did I talk to people today? Did I set next steps? And did I move anyone closer

to a decision? Not. Do not ask yourself. Was I busy today? So ask yourself, who did you talk to? What are the next steps?

And have. Hi helped anyone get closer to making their decision? Because busyness does not equal results. Connection does. And then number five, here's one thing you can do today is make one more call. So at the end of the day when you're done, you're packing up your stuff. Make one more call. Because more often than not, that's the one that can matter.

That's the one that can make the difference for the family. And so here's the truth. None of this is complicated. None of it is. But it does require intention. It requires discipline. It requires focus. So I'll leave you with this. And again, thank you again for listening. Strategy sets the direction, but execution fills apartments and changes lives. And the difference between a community that's growing and one that's stuck and stagnant is consistency in the right behaviors every single day.

So ask yourself, what am I doing today that actually leads to a move in? And if the answer is muffins, we may need to adjust. Thanks so much for being here and I can't wait to talk to you all again soon. Have a great day!