00:09 - 05:01
Christy Van Der Westhuizen
Welcome back to the Bridge The Gap podcast. I'm your contributor host, Christy van der Westhuizen. So let's get started. Today, I want to ask you a question. If I watched your last three tours with three completely different prospects, how different would these tours actually be? Different route, different conversations, different people. You introduce them to different things you spent time on?

Or would I basically watch the same 2 or 3 times? Because if every prospect gets this, gets the same tour? I would really challenge whether we did enough discovery in the first place. Let that sink in. Think about it. If one family is here because mom is incredibly lonely, another is here because dad has had two falls, and another is completely overwhelmed because they have seven days to make a decision and mom's going to be discharged from the skilled nursing facility in seven days.

Those three families have completely different needs and different stories, so why in the world would we give them the same exact experience? And so I think that a great tour should be a continuation of discovery. And so before you ever stand up to start walking through the community, you should really understand why this family is here, what has changed, what matters most to them, and what they're hoping life could look like differently, perhaps with a move to your community and then your tour should be built around just that.

So let's say you learn that mom is living alone and becoming increasingly isolated. Her daughter isn't necessarily looking for a beautiful apartment. Maybe she is, maybe she isn't. But she's looking for her mom to be her mom again. She wants her to have friends, have plans, and a reason to get up in the morning. And that should completely change your tours and your tours out and who you introduce her to.

So yes, you show her the apartment, but you spend more time where life is actually happening, and that's not in the apartment. You introduce her to residents. You invite her to participate in an activity. Maybe you introduce her to someone who might naturally connect with her because they have similar stories or similar backgrounds. So if Dad loves gardening and talks about how much he misses his yard, take him outside.

Do some amazing discovery all about his favorite flowers to grow or maybe his favorite vegetables that he's grown. Show him where residents garden and talk about what he could do there. So that's very different than simply saying And this is our courtyard where people garden. I hope you understand that it's not necessarily the physical space that needs to be changed.

It's what the meaning of the space is and what it means to that family. And so that's what personalization does. And so the same thing applies when an adult daughter tells you she's worried about mom falling, managing medications, or maybe being alone at night; her biggest concern probably isn't whether the apartment has a walk-in closet. Maybe that's important to her, but I don't know if that's necessarily driving the decision.

She needs confidence, so maybe part of your tour includes introducing her to your clinical leader. Maybe you explain how residents receive support and yet maintain their independence at the same time. Maybe you intentionally point out something that directly addresses the concern she shared during discovery. And so that's also why I don't believe that every tour needs to follow the same route.

Come on, you've heard it. Tour route. Everyone follows the tour. No. And you definitely don't have to show every single thing to every single tour in your community. And sometimes we get so focused on completing our tour route that we don't. You want to see all these beautiful spaces that we actually forget. There are human beings standing next to us.

05:01 - 10:19
Christy Van Der Westhuizen
Maybe if you've heard some of my most recent podcasts I've talked about when I got started in the industry about 20 years ago, and I used to be really proud of saying that I was a tour guide. Okay, I'm totally cringing now, and I'm completely embarrassed that I used to say that because our goal as sales professionals in senior living isn't to check every box on the tour.

The goal is to connect what you've learned about this person with what your community can offer them. We connect. Not show, not point, not guide as a tour guide does, but we connect. And so one of my favorite ways to do that is to use the prospect's own words throughout the tour. So I'm going to show you how to do that.

So if someone tells you My mom has coffee every morning by the window, I want you to remember that. And then when you walk into an apartment with beautiful natural light, instead of saying, and this is the living room, you say, remember when you were telling me about your mom having coffee every morning? I could completely picture her sitting right here and soaking up that morning light.

Do you see the difference between those two statements? One is pointing out a feature, and the other is talking about how it benefits her as a potential resident. Now they're not just looking at an apartment. They're starting to picture Mom living here. And that emotional connection matters, because moving into a senior living is rarely just a logical decision.

It's not. There are so many emotions wrapped into the decision. You've heard me talk about them before. Fear, guilt, possible relief, excitement, uncertainty, and sometimes even grief because things are changing. And so our job is to understand those emotions, not rush past them so we can get to our next stop on the tour. Oh, look, the dining room.

Let's just mosey on over there. So remember, discovery does not stop when the tour starts. In fact, some of your best discovery may happen while you're walking through the community. And so I want you to pay attention. What does the prospective resident gravitate toward? Are they looking at something specifically? What questions are they asking? Where do they slow down and mosey around and look around?

How about what makes them smile? Or where do they hesitate and have a funny look on their face? So if you can walk into an apartment and mom suddenly gets quiet, don't immediately start explaining, " Oh well, the TV goes here because the cable hookup is here. Give her a moment and then ask her what she's thinking, what she's feeling right now.

And so that moment probably tells you more than anything you learned sitting in your office or sitting in a discovery room asking questions. So I want you to continue asking questions throughout the tour. Questions like, could you see yourself spending time here? Or how does this compare to what you pictured? That's a really good question, because sometimes people visit thinking that where they're the skilled nursing facility for their moms nursing home.

So asking them to reframe what they thought and what they're actually experiencing is extremely helpful. Maybe you say you mentioned this was really important to you. How are you feeling about it now? And one of my very, very favorites. What haven't I shown you yet that you are hoping to see today? And that, my friends, is a wonderful question to ask to see.

Are there barriers, or are there things that you haven't said or haven't shown or haven't asked that are really, really important to them in their decision? And so a great tour should feel like a conversation, not a presentation. And again, 20 years ago, I think we used to call it a presentation. I've seen that written on some of my weekly sales reports.

10:19 - 14:17
Christy Van Der Westhuizen
How many presentations did you give? Yikes. Not anymore. Friends, we have evolved. And so there's one more piece of personalization that I think we sometimes overlook. The people they meet should be personalized to. And so we talk a lot about making introductions during tours. And I totally believe that. But don't just introduce prospective residents to people just for the sake of saying you did it.

Think about who you could introduce them to that can create a meaningful connection, a sense of belonging, a sense that there might be a new friend just right after you move in. If Dad is a veteran. Is there another veteran in the community he could meet? If mom loves playing cards, introduce her to the group that plays every Tuesday.

If the daughter's biggest concern is care, then maybe the most important person she meets that day is your clinical leader. And so every introduction during your tour experience should help answer the question. Can I see myself or my loved one belonging here? Is every person that you're introducing them to helping them feel a sense of belonging? Because that's ultimately what we're trying to accomplish.

We're trying to connect and help them have a sense of belonging. So before your next tour. I want you to do something really simple. I want you to write down the three things that matter the most to this specific prospective resident. Not just their care level, not just their budget or their

age or their diagnosis. Not that they just want a one bedroom apartment or a studio or a two bedroom.

What actually matters to them? And then ask yourself, how am I going to bring each of those things to life during this tour experience? Who should they meet? What should they experience? What should I absolutely make sure they see during their experience? And just as important, what can I skip? Because it simply isn't important to them? Because the goal of a great tour isn't to show someone everything your community has to offer.

It's to help them see the parts of your community that could change their life. That's the difference between simply showing a community and creating a truly personalized sales experience. So before that next prospect walks through your doors. Resist the urge to go on autopilot. And I know you know everything about the community, and you're so excited to show every single part of it off to your new friend.

But I urge you, resist the autopilot mode. Do the discovery. Listen, and you're going to personalize that experience. And so give them their tour, not the tour, their own personalized tour experience. Think so much for joining me today on the Bridge the Gap podcast. I'm Christie van der Westhuizen and I will talk to you next time. Have a great day.