

# *One Up on Follow-Up!*



*Leasing Through Persistent &  
Effective Communication*

*The Apartment Guy*  
Professional Seminars Property Marketing

## ***One Up On Follow-Up!***

Many leasing consultants believe their job is done when the prospect leaves the leasing center. Successful leasing consultants know that is where it begins! In order to be successful, increase your closing ratio and your commissions you have to develop outstanding follow-up skills. The most challenging step in any sales cycle is “follow-up”, those contacts you have between the property tour, the trial close, and the actual Close. Very few leasing consultants know how often to contact their prospects, and fewer still know what to DO and SAY with each of those contacts.

### ***Why is Follow-up So Important?***

Let's do the math. You will close \_\_\_\_\_% of the prospects who come in and visit you, just because they are interested in your product and you didn't convince them otherwise.

You can close an additional \_\_\_\_\_% of your prospects by your professionalism during the tour, establishing good rapport and working to find solutions to objections or problems.

You can close an additional \_\_\_\_\_% through your effective use of follow-up.

Wouldn't you like to earn 25% to 30% more?

To get there, you need to get yourself on the path to good follow-up. It is a change in focus and work habits. But anything that can improve your success, take your closing ration from less than 40% to nearly 60% is worth the effort.

### ***In this session you will learn:***

- How many more leases are POSSIBLE through effective follow-up.
- The Importance of developing strong follow-up techniques
- How to start-out your tour with a plan for follow-up
- How to discover “personal interests” of your prospects and why it is important.
- Ways to get Organized
- Methods of follow-up to utilize

## ***The Importance of Developing Strong Follow-Up Techniques***

Succeeding in our competitive rental markets can be as effortless as making a phone call. The "follow-up" is a crucial element in helping prospects recall both your community and the solutions that you provide. The art of perfecting your follow up strategy can also assist you in the success of your professional career. Persistence teamed with a concrete and organized follow-up plan can help you lease more apartments and ultimately make more money.

### ***Actions Should Follow Your Words***

If you specified a day in which you will be following up with a prospect, do not forget! Remembering to call advertises your dependability, helping in you become as good as your word in the eyes of the prospect - which is a great professional advantage. After specifying a day and/or time that you will call, be sure to write it down so you won't become sidetracked, missing your mark and, most likely, the lease.

### ***Organization is a Key to Success***

#### **"To-Do" List**

It is easier to follow up if you keep yourself organized. Try using a paper based or computerized "to-do" list. This list will aid in reminding you when it's time to make a call. Taking the time to create a list is a much better alternative to not writing it down and suddenly recalling you should have phoned last week. That prospect will lease somewhere else.

#### **Calendar**

In conjunction with your "to-do" list, keep a calendar. If you have more than one calendar, try to condense them into one. This way, when you begin each day, all of your to-do's will be in the same place, reminding you to check back in with a prospective renter or renewal.

### ***Stay on Top to be on Top***

If you contact a prospect and they inform you they will not be renting for another few months, don't just give up and forget about it. Instead, contact them after the given time period. Again, penciling this into your calendar is an excellent way to make sure you don't forget. By staying on top of your game you can stop competitors from snatching prospects that were sold on you.



## *One Up on Follow-Up*

How many of you have second-guessed your presentation with a prospect, as soon as they walk out the door? “I should have asked them this, I should have shown them that?” This is very common – but is another way to use your guest card. Make a note of anything you have forgotten or didn’t cover – these are the things that will help you get in the door with your prospect during your next conversation.

### *Utilize the Magic of 3*

Many times, we ask enough probing questions to uncover one thing that is important to the customer, and then we spend most of the sales pitch and demonstration concentrating on that one thing. We feel somewhat confident that we have met that need and we are sure that the customer will be back with there check – but then, they are a no-show and there dodging your calls. That is because we only found out one thing, not enough to get to the bottom of things.

The Magic of 3 will help you uncover three important details that this prospect needs in order to close deal. When you walk the property with your prospect, have your guest card and your leasing book, plus a clipboard or some sort of writing tablet. On the top of the page, write this down:

- 1) Most important feature / need:
- 2) Secondary feature / need:
- 3) Secondary feature / need:

Then get the answers! Use these throughout your sales pitch, and mention the solutions in your follow-up contact. This gets the people back in your door, reminds them why they should lease with you.

### *Get Agreement / Commitment on Timeframes*

Many times we get the sense that a prospect will be back “right away”. What does “right away” mean to you? Write down your definition of right away:

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You have to start out by understanding how quickly the prospect has to make a decision. You get confirmation throughout your selling process by using your trial closes.

## *One Up on Follow-Up*

During your property tour and conversation, let your customer know that you will be following up with them soon regarding availability, pricing, specials or some other good reason – such as an answer to a specific question that you may not have had an answer to. If they know to expect your contact, it will be much more likely to be read and well-received. Also, if they agree to this upfront, you are further along in the sales process. If they try to avoid it or tell you they don't want the follow-up contact – they aren't leasing from you. They are not sold and you may want to regroup to figure out what went wrong.

Use this time-frame to plan for your follow-up contact. Not the default, programmed time-frames that we are used to. If you have a client that needs to make a decision by the “end of the week” – you should contact them later that same day. But that would totally backfire on you for a prospect needing to make a decision in the next 45 days.

Write down what you think would be the appropriate time and method to contact each of the following prospects:

- \* Sally and her husband have just accepted jobs in your town and are moving here from Phoenix. They need to get an apartment chosen this weekend, before they fly home to pack up. What would be the best way to follow-up with them? How quickly?
- 

- \* Jimmy is moving to town in the fall to attend law school. He likes your apartment community but this isn't his biggest decision to make right now. Would you contact him right away? How would you contact him?
- 

- \* The Martinez family is moving to your neighborhood from the central city in order to enroll their daughter in a better school district. School starts in 4 weeks. What would you do to follow-up with this prospect family?
- 

- \* John is a busy doctor who needs to get a place while his home is being totally remodeled. Price isn't an issue, but he doesn't want to waste a lot of time. He sent his office assistant out for initial information, and only spent about five minutes with you in the model when he came out to visit. How would you follow-up with John?
-

## ***Set-Up to Follow-Up***

Let your customer know that you will be following up with them soon regarding pricing, specials, availability or some other good reason. If they know to expect your contact, it will be much more likely to receive a reply or response. Plus, if they agree to this up front, you are further along in the sales process. If they say no, they are not sold and you may need to figure out what went wrong.

## ***Get Organized***

Use your property management software or a CRM program such as Act! or Goldmine, or even your e-mail server like Microsoft Outlook has features you can use to keep track of your contacts with prospects. Successful leasing consultants will be on top of these features and will make sure they utilize any tool to keep them in constant contact.

An old-fashioned “tickler” file does the trick in a low-tech office. This is an accordion file with slots for each days of a calendar month. You place reminder notes in each of the days where you think a contact would be needed, and then you check your file as you begin each day. This has been used by salespeople for decades with lots of success.

## ***Follow-up After an In-Person Visit***

### **Thank you Notes**



Following the initial visit from your prospect, a thank-you note should be sent out \_\_\_\_\_.

Handwritten notes that include certain individual and unique details make the greatest impression on your prospect. This is where you can refer to your notes and make mention of one of those details you picked up – such as the prospect's dog enjoying the doggie park or that the prospect will love gardening on her spacious patio overlooking the pond.

Always include your business card. The note may get thrown away, but your business card is often held onto.

## **E-mails**

While it is acceptable to send an e-mail thank you, it is still too casual of a medium to use **on it's own**. I often suggest that you send out a very brief e-mail thanking the prospect for the visit, using one of the details you picked up from your conversation, and providing them a link to your website or advertisement for additional details and information. A few sentences maximum, with a professional and concise signature is all that is needed.

### **What is a professional signature?**

Christopher Higgins

**WESTPORT ON THE LAKE**  
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14707 "F" Street  
Omaha, NE 68137  
402.895.3221 phone  
402.895.9668 fax  
christopher@westportonthelake.com

[www.westportonthelake.com](http://www.westportonthelake.com)



### ***Follow-Up Phone Calls***

This casual choice should complement the thank-you note, not take it's place or be "instead of". However, when you are working with a prospect who needs to make a decision quickly you would want to follow-up with them by phone within one or two days – much faster than your thank-you note would likely arrive.

Be prepared for the call before you start dialing!

Have your leasing book, unit status and availability, a site plan, room measurements, pen and paper and anything else that might be needed ready to go so you can have a successful phone call.

Always be sure you are a good \_\_\_\_\_ and you are letting your prospect do more talking.

What if you reach voice mail?

That doesn't count as contact. Plain and simple. But that doesn't mean you cannot use it to your advantage. If you "tease" the prospect and provide them with a reason to call you back, that can be to your advantage. Always be sure when leaving voice mail that you speak clearly, speak your phone numbers twice and slowly, and refer to the prospect by name.

## *One Up on Follow-Up*

Some sample phone messages appear below. Choose which one sounds both professional and most likely to get you a response.

- “Hi Jane, this is Sarah. We talked the other day about the apartment. I just wanted to check in with you to see if you had made a decision. Have a nice day!”
- “Hello Ms. Michaels, this is Sarah Pauley with Mountain View apartments. It was a pleasure meeting you on Monday and I am excited about you joining our community. Just to remind you, we have a terrific special on the two bedroom apartment home you were interested in but it expires at the end of this week. I also have some great news on the pet situation, so be sure to give me a call when you get a chance. I can be reached at 406.545.0220 or by e-mail at [spauley@mountainviewapartments.com](mailto:spauley@mountainviewapartments.com). Again, this is Sarah from Mountain View 406.545.0220. Thanks Ms. Michaels!”

### *Follow-up Letters*

You may choose to write a follow-up letter – more formal and structured than a thank-you note and with more information. They are written for a variety of reasons, but usually for four main purposes:

- 1) Provide further information and show continued interest in the prospect
- 2) Recap important points or decisions made at your initial contact
- 3) Reiterate the benefits of the move to your community over another they may have considered
- 4) Remind the prospect of the time-frame and process for moving in

Follow-up letters can be very important to help you accomplish what you want or need to. For one thing, follow-up letters show to the recipient of the letter your interest in a particular subject or position or your dedication to a responsibility or cause. Furthermore, when written correctly, follow-up letters can be effective tools in closing your sale.

### ***Follow-Up Letter After an On-Site Visit***

When writing a follow-up letter after an on-site visit, you should:

- \* Thank the prospect and briefly remind him or her of your name and what your community offered.
- \* Reiterate your available apartment units that met his or her needs.
- \* Add important information that did not come up during the visit.
- \* Remind the interviewer of some aspect of the tour that they responded to positively, a feature they showed specific interest in.
- \* Answer questions or send additional information the prospect may have asked you to provide during the tour.
- \* Send the follow-up letter within 24 hours. Sending a follow-up letter will show that you are courteous and professional, and it will give you an edge over communities who do not send thank-you's or follow-up letters (many do not).

### ***Follow-up Letter to Reiterate Benefits or Announce a Special Offer***

Writing follow-up letters to customers allows you to:

- \* Establish or renew a relationship with a current or potential resident.
- \* Remind a prospect of your continued willingness to assist him or her.
- \* Emphasize the advantages of coming home to your community and propose a course of action that the prospect can take.
- \* Thank a prospect or announce a special sale or limited-time offer.
- \* Keep your community's name in front of the prospect, and reinforce the impression that you are a professional leasing consultant.

### ***Follow-up Letter to Remind Readers of Important Events***

By sending a follow-up letter, you are able to:

- \* Include reminders about upcoming appointments or their moving time-frame, and that you are available to assist them.
- \* Include in the letter the dates when certain things should take place, such as signing the lease, applying for new electric or cable service, arranging movers, etc. This can be a useful guide for someone who has not gotten themselves organized to move.

### **8 Tips for Writing Effective Follow-up Letters**

- 1) Send your letter promptly, with 48 hours at the most.
- 2) Let the prospect know how they can respond or contact you and provide all of your contact information – e-mail, phone, fax and address.
- 3) Send reminders about meetings and appointments well in advance so that the recipient has sufficient time to prepare or fulfill assignments. You may send other reminders as the need arises. The message of your letter should be brief and clearly stated to avoid misunderstandings.
- 4) Take advantage of follow-up letters to reiterate the positive aspects of your community and what they responded to on the tour, and gently urge your prospect to take the next step in signing a lease. If the reader has already expressed firm interest in your community, give a firm sales pitch. Highlight the benefits of your community, but don't push too hard.
- 5) Don't duplicate previous sales pitches, but offer something new, such as more information or a new incentive.
- 6) When following up after a face-to-face presentation, indicate that you are willing to provide them additional information such as measurements, location maps, copies of policies or anything else that may be left to discuss.
- 7) If you do not receive a response from an initial follow-up letter, you may want to write a second letter. Include a copy of the previous follow-up letter with your new one, or repeat the message. Reiterate the importance of receiving a response.
- 8) Always be mindful of “what’s in it for me”. This is how you have to look at the letter, as your reader will be wondering while reading it. Be sure to make a clear answer to this question – our community will save you money, time, frustration. Leasing today will get you these additional features, this apartment will do this for you, etc.

### **Surveys and Quality Checks**

Other methods that “disguise” as a survey, quality check-up or simply marketing promotions are in fact other methods of follow-up. Many properties are now utilizing mailed or e-mailed surveys to check on a prospect's impression of the community, the leasing consultant, the price and offer available and a whole host of other details. This is another way to follow-up with your prospect, and if they return the survey, this shows their interest.

### **Status report calls**

Your prospects appreciate contact when things have changed. Availability changes, new specials, rent incentives, even changes of policy are all terrific excuses to follow-up with your prospects.

### Referral incentives

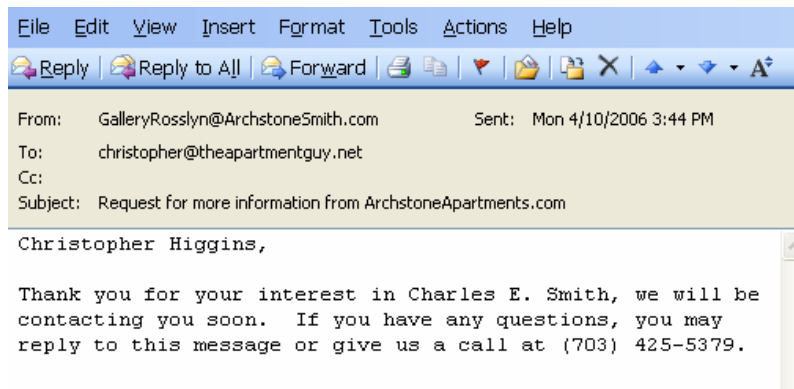
Many properties and management companies in our industry receive a large portion of their business through referral. But 90% of this business is sought-out by utilizing good follow-up techniques with your existing renters and prospects who have visited you.

### *Follow-up After a Website Visit*

It is important to remember that many times a prospect who has seen your company website, or your ad with one of the major ILS services has often gotten more information with more detail than a person who visits you in person. This means that the way you respond to them should reflect this increased knowledge.

### *Auto-Responder E-Mails*

What do the auto-responders sent out by the various ILS services tend to do to our leasing teams?



Customize your auto-responder through your major apartment search sites and be sure it provides additional information, reminds the prospect of the name and website address of your community, and lets them know you will be following up in person shortly. Then fulfill that promise!

An auto-responder from GetResponse.com or another e-mail marketing campaign is a good idea as long as it doesn't keep you from a more personal method and is used to supplement, **not replace** personal contact.

## HTML e-mails

**Mass Court**  
300 Massachusetts Avenue · Washington, DC 20001  
 1-888-694-4422 www.MassCourtDC.com

Dear Christopher,

Thank you for your interest in Mass Court. We are excited that you have decided to consider our beautiful community as your future home! We know you will love all of our wonderful features such as:

**COMMUNITY FEATURES**

- Breathtaking views of the Capitol area
- Jogging path & heated pool with hot tub on the roof
- On site Yoga and aerobics studio
- Controlled Access Gates

**HOME FEATURES**

- Gourmet kitchens featuring all appliances
- Modern 2 level loft designs
- Relaxing garden tubs
- Italian ceramic tile foyers and kitchen

**INFORMATION REQUESTED**

Regarding your new home, market rent for our 2 x 2 is \$ 2384 - \$ 3014.

Due to our homes leasing so quickly, we do not have any two bedroom homes available for the June move date you indicated. If you are flexible with your moving date, we do have a couple of our spectacular two bedroom homes available for a May time frame, that could possibly work for you. To begin the process to reserve your home, or to be put on our priority wait list, which would ensure you a priority for your requested home in your time frame, simply complete and fax the attached application and checklist to 864-331-4317.

**Please be aware that the lowest price may not be available with short term leases and that all pricing and availability is subject to change at any time without notice. Currently, our availability is limited and we encourage you to visit as soon as possible. Can you come for a**

Another beautiful community by:

**RIVERSTONE**

24/7 Phone and Email Support

Mon:	08:00AM-12:00AM
Tue:	08:00AM-12:00AM
Wed:	08:00AM-12:00AM
Thu:	08:00AM-12:00AM
Fri:	08:00AM-12:00AM
Sat:	08:00AM-09:00PM
Sun:	12:00PM-09:00PM

Schedule a Tour Click Here

Office Hours

Mon:	10:00AM-06:00PM
Tue:	10:00AM-06:00PM
Wed:	12:00PM-06:00PM
Thu:	10:00AM-06:00PM
Fri:	10:00AM-06:00PM
Sat:	10:00AM-05:00PM
Sun:	12:00PM-05:00PM

CID: 805633

## Personalized e-mail messages

**Thank you for your interest in Seven Palms! Welcome Home! - Message**

To: ehhannity@comcast.com  
 Subject: Thank you for your interest in Seven Palms! Welcome Home!

Dear Mr. Hannity -

Thank you for your interest in Seven Palms, luxury living on the waterfront. We look forward to welcoming you to your new home. I am pleased to introduce our community to you and will be happy to show you around once you come to town. I am sure that your move from Philadelphia is going to be hectic - so I want to take a bit of pressure off of you. Look no further, you have found your new home.

As you read in our online advertisement, we offer a fantastic two-bedroom floor plan. You indicated that you wanted two full baths plus a laundry room and storage. This unique floor plan offers these features plus much more. With garden soaking tubs and a large kitchen with eat-in breakfast area, this apartment home is much more like a townhouse. We currently have one available on the third floor with a sweeping view of the Intracoastal Waterway and swaying palms, with the comings and goings of yacht traffic around Palm Beach. This apartment home also includes an attached one-car garage with remote access and a security system.

One last item, we are offering a fantastic special this month on our two bedroom apartment homes for an 18-month lease. The rental rate is \$1290 a month with your first full month's rent complimentary. This is designed to make your first month here even more enjoyable and ease the strain of moving. Please contact me at your earliest convenience to set an appointment for your tour, or to have an application kit sent Priority Mail to you.

Thanks again for your interest and I look forward to meeting you and your family.

Betty Jamison  
 Leasing Coordinator

**Seven Palms**  
 Luxury Living on the Water in West Palm Beach

3617 West Dolphin Cove  
 West Palm Beach, FL 33401  
 561.618.6188 phone  
 561.618.6190 fax  
 bjamison@sevenpalms-wpb.com  
 www.sevenpalms-wpb.com

## Phone calls

The telephone call that follows-up a prospect viewing your property online is much different than the phone calls that follows-up an on-site visit, but it isn't a "cold call". This prospect is well-educated about your community and has gotten many of the details that you can provide on their own. However, this call is crucial because it is the first live person contact they get from your community. The speed with which you follow-up, your professionalism and knowledge, and your willingness to help will all make the difference between the prospect choosing your home and your three competitors.

How many Internet leads never receive a response?

\_\_\_\_\_ %

## *One Up on Follow-Up*

That is an amazing figure! If you figure that on average a prospect sends out Internet leads to 3 or 4 communities, and half never respond or follow-up – this is a lease just waiting to be won.

Be sure to cover new information, and review your web ads regularly to be sure the information is current. Spend more time on things like your customer service guarantee, your community events, the neighborhood – these are all details that are not usually listed on your advertisement but can help make a decision.

### *After the move-in date has passed*

It is a good exercise to contact your prospects and find out why they chose to live elsewhere. This is often good information you can use to sell better the next time around. Maybe there were clues or hidden objections you didn't uncover. Maybe you didn't have the rapport you felt you had.

### *Conclusion*

What role will follow-up play at your community? Do you think it can be a part of your success?

What are some ideas you learned today that you can immediately put to use?

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An effective follow-up plan can be the difference between making a living in leasing, and just barely making it. Yes, leasing apartments is a numbers game, but it's the QUALITY of the numbers that is most important. You can and will close more leases if you make effective use of follow-up.



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