



It's more than a name, it's what we do.

White Paper:
**Achieving
Senior Living
Sales Goals
with Short-Term
Sales Specialists**



Introduction

At the mid-year point of 2024, senior living occupancy continues to recover from pandemic lows. The industry average is still stuck in the mid 80% range though. According to [National Investment Center for Seniors Housing & Care \(NIC\) data for Q1-2024](#)¹, “The assisted living occupancy rate improved 0.6 percentage points from the prior quarter to 84.0%, while the independent living occupancy rate improved 0.3 percentage points to 87.1%.”

Getting out of this unprofitable / barely profitable range is becoming increasingly urgent.

Senior living operators seeking improved sales results in their communities are typically faced with the prospect of hiring additional sales team members to achieve their goals. However, the expense of recruiting, hiring, training, and employing an additional full-time employee is costly. In the case of smaller senior living communities, that expense is often prohibitive, leaving the option out of reach.

So, what are the alternatives?

- **Floating sales team members** can fill in at multiple senior living community locations, but there is still the full-time employee expense, plus the additional expenses of travel between locations (including mileage, meals, lodging, and more) which is NOT time selling.

Or,

- **Short-term sales specialists** can meet a variety of sales needs, including:
 - Setting tour appointments with prospective residents
 - Covering for vacations and other absences
 - Cleaning up neglected sales databases
 - Setting appointments with professional referral sources
 - Improving event attendance and outcomes by supporting prospect communication pre- and post-event
 - Providing extra sales team “power” during pre-opening or new acquisition
 - Rebuilding census after a major remodeling project, acquisition, or leadership change

In this white paper, we will explore the short-term sales specialist alternative to improving sales results and growing occupancy in senior living communities.

Executive summary

- Senior living community sales teams face several challenges and problems including an evolving sale profile, demands on salespeople’s time, staffing issues, and changes in the shopping habits of consumers.
- Grow Your Occupancy offers a number of solutions to meet these problems, including Virtual Sales Specialists, On-Site Sales Specialists, SWOT analysis, RDSMs for Hire, and sales training and coaching.

The biggest problems senior living sales teams face today

1. The senior living sale is evolving – and lengthening

The senior living sale is unique compared to other products and services.

The sales cycle can be exceptionally long and involved, taking dozens of touches, tens of hours, and as long as 2 years depending on the level of care to generate a move in. A sale involves multiple phone calls, tours, and nurturing such as home visits to get the prospect to move to the community.

Resident acuity is also increasing, resulting in shorter lengths of stay.

2. The demands on senior living salespeople are increasing

It's not uncommon to find that up to 50% of a senior living salesperson's time is being spent away from income-producing activities, i.e. time spent with prospects and influencers on the phone and in-person, performing outreach to local professional referral sources, planning marketing events, purposefully planning, and more.

Instead, salespeople are often expected to be on multiple company calls and team meetings, covering the front desk, doing new resident paperwork, and even serving meals in the dining room.

3. Staffing issues cause short- and long-term sales team vacancies

There are a number of reasons why the sales seat may be temporarily or permanently vacant in a senior living community:

- Resignations and terminations
- Vacations
- Family or medical leave
- Construction / pre-opening before permanent team members are hired

4. Greater demands on sales coverage caused by changing consumer shopping habits

The days of 9-to-5, Monday through Friday sales coverage are over in just about every consumer industry. According to [2023 online shopping habits research by Klarna²](#), afternoons and well into the evening are the peak hours for all online shopping in the US. Saturdays and Sundays are the third and fourth most active online shopping days of the week.

[WelcomeHome Software's Q2 2024 Benchmark Report³](#) validates that these findings also apply to the senior living industry:

- 10.4% of inbound sales calls are received after 5 p.m. throughout the week
- 9.8% of inbound sales calls are received on weekends

Weekend and evening sales coverage is required to meet consumer demands. Keeping the sales seat covered through 7 days and these extended hours with a single FTE salesperson is not just a challenge, it's almost impossible.

The impact of sales team distractions and vacancies

A vacant sales position can affect the occupancy of a senior living community in several ways:

- Slow lead response time
- New leads go unanswered
- Hot/warm leads go cold due to CRM database neglect
- Loss of local professional referrals due to lack of outreach activities
- Low marketing event attendance by prospects and professional referral sources
- New construction lease-up numbers are low (or zero)
- Low sales / census decline as move-outs outnumber move-ins

Solutions that can keep your sales seat covered

Grow Your Occupancy offers senior living operators several solutions to meet sales goals in their senior living communities. All Grow Your Occupancy Senior Living Sales Specialists are experienced senior living salespeople who focus on selling your community and employ our proven sales processes and procedures.

- **Virtual Sales Specialists:** Our senior living sales specialists for hire help you fill a short-term gap in your sales team. Is your sales director seat empty? Do you need more tours? Is your sales pipeline full of “cold” leads? Does your database need to be scrubbed? Would you like to connect with more of your leads? Are your “cold” leads neglected? Our Virtual Sales Specialist is a “plug-and-play” service designed to drive company sales.
- **On-Site Sales Specialists:** Our on-site sales specialists are the perfect solution for the senior living community without a sales director, a lease-up needing an extra sales “boost,” a community with a new sales director who needs short-term mentoring or shoulder-to-shoulder outreach to improve external business development. Contract with our proven senior living community sales experts and see move-ins grow immediately.
- **RDSM for Hire:** Do you have an open Regional Director of Sales and Marketing (RDSM) position? Is your company’s portfolio growing and in need of qualified regional sales leaders? Do you need help short-term? Have you recently hired an RDSM and need someone to mentor for 30 days? Our RDSM for Hire service may be the solution.
- **RDSM Advanced Training:** Our 30- to 90-day mentoring programs for experienced RDSMs can grow your business to the next level. Training areas may include projecting, budgeting, coaching more advanced skills, external business development, creating advanced training, reporting horizontally or vertically, and team building.

Virtual Sales Specialist Results, Q1-Q2 2024		
	Q1-24	Q2-24
Average Monthly VSS Hours per Community	31.8	37.1
Average Monthly Voice-to-Voice Calls with Prospects per Community	49.2	47.3
Average Monthly Messages Left with Prospects per Community	169	169
Average Monthly Tours Scheduled per Community	2.6	2.8
Average Calls per Hour	6.9	5.8
Average Connection Rate	23%	23%

Mini case study: Arbors

- Arbors, a single senior living community, contracted with Grow Your Occupancy to provide a Virtual Sales Specialist for 3 months (June-August 2024), for 2 hours per day.
- Virtual Sales Specialist results:
 - 10 deposits received
 - 30 tours scheduled
 - 80 prospects warmed from cold status in the CRM
 - "Average days since last contact" reduced from 146 to 20
 - Inquiry-to-Tour conversion increased from 20% to 33%

More client results

The Arbors and The Ivy

Objective:	Support existing community sales teams.
Total hours:	84
Warmed leads to tour:	33%
Voice-to-voice connection rate:	30%
Past due tasks completed:	123
No next step tasks completed:	89

Vitality Living

Objective:	Acting sales directors; support existing sales teams; full-scope database work.
Total hours:	184
Warmed leads to tour:	57%
Voice-to-voice connection rate:	25%
Past due tasks completed:	162

WesleyLife

Objective:	Support existing sales teams; work cold leads and past due tasks.
Total hours:	200
Warmed leads to tour:	63%
Voice-to-voice connection rate:	25%
Past due tasks completed:	668
No next step tasks completed:	124

The Aspenwood Company

Objective:	Support existing sales teams; work new inquiries to cold leads.
Total hours:	425
Warmed leads to tour:	57%
Voice-to-voice connection rate:	27%
Past due tasks completed:	385
No next step tasks completed:	41

Conclusion

Grow Your Occupancy offers senior living operators proven solutions to many of the greatest sales challenges they face today. Our experienced senior living sales specialists are an excellent short- to long-term alternative to hiring costly full-time employees. By focusing their efforts on income-producing, sales-generating activities, they work to increase sales and occupancy in senior living communities in a highly efficient and cost-effective way.

Learn more about Grow Your Occupancy's short-term sales specialist programs: visit growyouroccupancy.com for more information and to schedule your free consultation. Or email success@growyouroccupancy.com.

Testimonials

"GROW's Virtual Sales Specialist has been extremely helpful when we have a vacant sales position. Melinda collaboratively worked with each community team to understand where she can help and made positive impact quickly. I would happily use GROW's VSS again!"

– Eric Varin
Sr. Vice President of Sales
The Aspenwood Company

"Lori (Grow Your Occupancy Virtual Sales Specialist) is so incredible to work with, honestly. Her communication is on point. She is very organized, and I have learned so much from her on how to manage a database. Her confidence and comfort with calling folks is something I aspire to match along with training my team to be at her level. Just the way she positions her wording, to come across as an advisor and not come off salesey. It is amazing. I am forever grateful for Grow and having Lori on our team."

– Sondra Jones
Regional Director of Sales & Marketing
The Arbors & The Ivy Assisted Living Communities

"The Grow Virtual Sales Specialists have had a very positive impact on our communities. They are incredibly responsive, professional and productive; making calls to both new and existing leads, schedule tours and aiding with move-ins. It's such a relief to know that every lead is being taken care of, from those at the top of the funnel to those who may be stuck along the way.

At Transforming Age, we're making great use of the VSS teams in multiple communities. They help fill vacant Sales Director positions and provide support to our existing sales teams. Using Grow Virtual Sales Specialists has proven to be a wise investment, as they significantly boost sales productivity and deliver excellent results, giving us a strong ROI.

It's been a pleasure working with Julie, Dresden and their team!"

– Paul Barlow
Vice President of Sales and Marketing

"Vitality Living has been using GROW Your Occupancy to help us deeply evaluate the quality of our sales efforts. We now have the most comprehensive picture of our community sales experiences possible, thanks to their input. Totally love it!"

– Christy Cunningham
Vice President of Sales & Marketing
Vitality Living

"We have had great success with the virtual sales specialists at Grow Your Occupancy. The impact to the communities has been amazing. All the leads in our databases are now getting the attention they deserve, tours are being scheduled and we are seeing a good ROI from using Grow Your Occupancy as a part of our sales strategy. I highly recommend Grow Your Occupancy!"

– Beth Huck
Sr. VP Sales and Marketing

"I am THRILLED to report we have 6 move-ins slated for this month. Of the 6, three are leads I assisted with the process. Only one move-out scheduled, so a NET GAIN OF 5!!! Projected EOM occupancy is 91.95%!!!! So far this month I've made 400 calls and scheduled 6 tours that have happened and I scheduled three tours for the coming week. All leads have been touched within 52-days and the database is back to being "clean". I am trying not to let touches span longer than 30-45 days for cooler leads, unless otherwise requested."

– A Grow Your Occupancy
Virtual Sales Specialist

References

1. "Senior Housing Occupancy Increases for Eleventh Consecutive Quarter." National Investment Center, 28 May 2024, www.nic.org/news-press/senior-housing-occupancy-increases-for-eleventh-consecutive-quarter/.
2. Falk, Jasmine. "Shopping Pulse." Insights, 7 July 2023, insights.klarna.com/shopping-pulse/.
3. "2024 Q2 Benchmark Report." <https://info.welcomehomesoftware.com/q224-benchmark-report>.



Learn more at growyouroccupancy.com/senior-living-sales-specialists-for-hire/

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