

A less-than-ideal sales environment sends out all the wrong cues. Prospects need a plush setting to help buffer the shock they'll experience when they first hear your prices.



# Information Center and Resources—The Ideal Sales Environment

This chapter is loaded with techniques and tools to create a superb sales environment. It covers everything from where you work to what you show prospects who visit your community. We'll also explore the concept of market-ready units and the essential tools and resources you need to establish an effective sales platform.

Let's start with the practical and easy-to-implement aspects of this critical marketing component and discuss something as simple as what you call your work area. If you use the term "sales" or "marketing" to refer to your office, consider what message that sends to prospects. In their minds, they're entering the sales zone—a pressure cooker where they will be "sold to" by a bunch of hard-driving sales reps. We know that isn't true, so why use phrases that cause prospects to conjure up these images? The phrase "admissions office" is equally alienating. It invokes all sorts of images, from a mental institution to a college campus, neither being a place where a senior consumer wants to reside.

Why not refer to your working area as the "Welcome Center" or "Information Center?" These descriptors are non-threatening to the prospect and do a better job of expressing exactly what transpires in these settings.

Make sure your selected direction is comprehensively applied to all signage and collateral material, and is used by all staff.

Now look at the physical setting of your workplace. Most of us operate out of offices that pull double duty—it's where we work with prospects and at the same time handle all of our behind-the-scenes paperwork and administrative functions. That's a problem from the prospect's point of view. Unfortunately most staff work in very small offices that are furnished with all the wrong stuff—oversized desks, scant seating, and lots of clutter. This less-than-ideal environment sends out all the wrong sales cues.

For example, if you sit behind a desk when working with a prospect, you've created an immediate barrier. How can you build rapport when a prospect feels as if she's addressing a superior instead of an empathetic community representative? Unsightly stacks of papers, boxes, or equipment piled around suggest to the prospect there is not enough space to store these items—and that resident storage space might be limited as well (both of which are often the case). Too many personal nick-nacks draw attention to the staff, instead of putting the focus on the prospect and the community. Uncomfortable seating, inadequate lighting, and poor ventilation or temperature control are additional sensory assaults that can make a prospect want to make a break for the door to return to the comforts of their spacious and well-appointed home.

Most senior adults would probably be willing to “sit on hard chairs to save some hard cash.” However, the cliché doesn't apply to our industry. Prospects need a plush setting to help buffer the shock they'll experience when they hear your high prices. Incorrect sales practices can also compound a prospect's discomfort and disinterest. The biggest sales offense is to work with your prospects in any place other than a completely private setting. If you presently share your office with other staff or with noisy office equipment that needs to be accessed by other staff, or if you use a public place (e.g., the lobby or other amenity area) as your sales office, you're spinning your sales wheels. There's no way prospects are going to be at ease in these environments. Don't interpret their tolerance of the situation as interest in you or your community. They are just being polite while planning an early escape.

## The Single Suite Solution

So how do you create an environment that has you looking at your watch wondering when the prospect will leave, instead of the other way around? The setting you create depends on the number of staff in your department and the office space available in your community. Several options are provided that range from an all-in-one office setting to a full marketing and sales information center.

If you're a solo sales representative working in a community where office space is severely limited, then you'll need to transform your private office into the information center. Here are the specifications.