

Small Community, Hard-to-Fill Units = No Problem with Apartment Guide



Merrit Development is a small local apartment community owner and operator located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The company owns and operates four apartment communities representing 222 units in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area. In October 2012, Merrit Development began using Apartment Guide's listing service to generate leads for one apartment community that was having some difficulty renting apartment homes. The results of that effort led to Merrit choosing to list its remaining market-rate communities on Apartment Guide.

The Challenge | In Need of Leads for Last Vacant Unit

It's one thing to have empty units when you're a national property management company with 20,000-plus homes. It's a completely different situation when you own and operate four communities, and one of the communities has only six units. The percentage loss in revenue is substantial when one of those six apartments is empty.

That's exactly what Merrit Development was facing with Merrit Commons, a high-end apartment community in Moon Township, Pa.

"It was a challenge leasing the one vacant apartment home," says Diane Meyers, director of marketing for Merrit Development. "We were literally getting no leads using the apartment listing services we were using at the time."

But the challenge wasn't exclusive to just the one community for Merrit Development. Whenever a property has an open unit, Meyers needs to fill it fast to maintain revenue from their limited base of units.

"We like our communities to be 100 percent occupied, so when a unit becomes available, we like to have leads that we can turn to immediately to fill it," Meyers says. "But some of our properties have more trouble garnering leads than others because of their locations."



The Solution | Advertising That Leads to Leads

Although Merrit Development was using several Internet Listing Services, it was struggling to garner leads for Cliffside Manor. That’s when Meyers turned to Apartment Guide Sales Executive Nicole Swierczyk, who had reached out to her numerous times before.

“Nicole had come to our offices several times before we decided to list with them, because we just didn’t need any more advertising at the times she visited,” Meyers says. “But then she caught me on a day that we weren’t getting enough leads, and I decided to see what she had to offer.”

Most importantly, Meyers was looking for a solution that was focused on generating leads from digital advertising sources rather than print. Merrit Development’s print advertising sources were not producing many leads, let alone high quality leads.

“When Nicole did the presentation, I was just impressed with how Apartment Guide focuses on digital ad sources, not print,” Meyers says. “Not many people look at print ads these days. Some of the other listing services out there put more emphasis on print ads, and those aren’t doing much. Over the last year, I think I’ve received four leads from print guides. That’s in an entire year.”

Other factors in the decision process were the service levels of the other Internet Listing Services, as well as the user experiences on their websites. Meyers had some negative experiences with other providers that she did not want to repeat.

“If I was going onto a site as a consumer, I’d want the site to be easy to use and provide important information about the neighborhood, such as schools, restaurants and shopping,” Meyers says. “Apartment Guide’s site provides that information, and if I ever have any trouble, Apartment Guide fixes it immediately.”



The result of Meyers’ conversations with Apartment Guide was Merrit Development listing Cliffside Manor, a community in Emsworth, Pa., and Sharon Park Manor, a community in Moon Township, Pa., on Apartment Guide, and later listing Merrit Commons.

The Results | Fully Occupied with Leads in the Bank

The decision to advertise on Apartment Guide gave Merrit Development the quality leads boost it needed to fill the available units at Cliffside Manor and Merrit Commons. “When we started using Apartment Guide, I loved it because we were generating a lot more leads than what we had generated with what we were using,” Meyers says. “And we’ve stuck with it because the leads keep coming in.”

When Apartment Guide made Merrit Commons a premium listing, the six-unit community went from receiving zero leads to receiving more leads than Meyers needed. And the one remaining unit that was vacant for months was leased within days.

Cliffside Manor experienced similar results. For the three-month period between June 1, 2014, and August 31, 2014, Cliffside Manor’s Apartment Guide listing has garnered 221 leads for the community.

“Honestly, we get more leads than we need,” Meyers says. “What happens a lot of times is I get so many leads that I don’t have enough apartments for prospective renters.”

Having extra leads prevents significant revenue losses due to vacant units at Merrit Development’s smaller communities. Whether small or large, protecting and growing revenue is vital, and Apartment Guide is proving to be a valuable tool to do just that for apartment companies and communities of all sizes.