

are making lifestyle choices rather than “needs-based” decisions.

Even through the tough economy, she says, Redstone’s stable of apartments, villa homes, and memory impairment and skilled accommodations have been well-occupied, “95 to 96 percent sold and 93 to 95 percent occupied.”

Dickson says one of her marketing successes has been the use of billboards,

strategically placed to catch the eye of seniors driving in cars. “I was sort of laughed at when we first did it, but now I think people are envious of our billboards,” Dickson says.

She notes that despite the forays into social media, Redstone’s target audience is still newspaper readers, so they do a lot of advertising in that medium. In the end, however, direct marketing brings in the most business.

“Direct marketing helped us to zero in on the group of people we are hoping to see more of,” she says.

The Kindred Campaign

At Kindred, the Continue the Care campaign has boosted business in the Indianapolis and Cleveland markets where the program has first been rolled out, Breier says.

Besides marketing to hospitals and

TECHNOLOGY HELPS REFERRAL PROCESS

A case example of how a Web-based referral management system can build census and increase revenue is the experience of Greystone Healthcare Management of Tampa, Fla. The provider sought out Patient

Placement Systems’ (PPS) Referral Management System for its 25 skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) and has seen positive results from the purchase of PPS software.

Greystone said the system roll-out was swift, as the firm wanted to automate and accelerate marketing, admissions, and business intelligence to boost results for its dozens of users in Florida, Indiana, and Ohio as quickly as possible.

“The system has driven clear growth in census, up 5 percent in the first half of 2010 in comparison to the same period in 2009 when they were not using it,” says Doug Walker, PPS vice president and general manager.

Greystone says the Web-based system has resulted in a 73 percent improvement in referral response times, with the improved efficiency

enabling admissions coordinators to focus more on customer service, such as greeting patients and families, preregistering patients, and ensuring that rooms are ready well in advance of admissions.

Walker says a large number of long term care providers, even large skilled nursing facility chains, are not using new technology to speed referrals.

SCRAPPING THE FAX

“You’d be surprised at how many use manually based processes that are very time-consuming and very inefficient,” he says.

“There is some resistance in health care, particularly long term care, to new technology, but sometimes it is not even the technology that raises fear but the lack of interest in adopting new processes in general.”

By scrapping the fax machine and phone call, Greystone has improved response times to referral tips to eight minutes from 30 minutes. “What you see is more efficiency,” Walker says. Once staff see how quick the learning curve is for the new software, and the corresponding results, it is easy to win them over, he adds.

This echoes what the provider said early in 2010 when it chose PPS. “We had a strong business need for a comprehensive system to automate referral and admission processes across all of our facilities,” says Connie Bessler, CEO of Greystone.

“Without the system, we were spending a huge amount of time and manual effort to capture the business intelligence we use to effectively market our services and maintain exceptional census performance,” Bessler says.

PPS said its product is especially helpful for multi-location nursing facility operators as executive managers get new visibility into sales and admissions performance, with reports on win-loss, marketing effectiveness, referral source analysis, admissions, and conversion rates.

“The solution tracks the life of the referral and all associated data and documentation, arming Greystone with analysis and information that provides a true competitive edge in our census,” Bessler says.

Greystone notes that 71 percent of its admissions are Medicare or Medicare HMO programs.