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Welcome to the Contributor Wednesday series on the Bridge the Gap Network. This series is sponsored by Peak Senior Living by Functional Pathways. Each week, you'll hear from a thought leader, discussing topics that are relevant and impactful to the senior living industry.

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Hi, this is Christy Van Der Westhuizen, Vice President of Sales and Marketing at MBK Senior Living. Now during today's Bridge the Gap podcast, which I'm lovingly calling *Sales in the Fast Lane*, we're gonna discuss how to keep your sales team in the fast lane, the important roles community executive directors and apartment heads have in the race and how to stay ahead of the pack and win.

So to me, a senior living community team is a lot like a car racing team. So if you think NASCAR or Formula 1, if you were to look at the similarities of these winning racing teams, you'd see what they have in common. So they all have clear direction, good communication, solid strategy, and efficient ability to complete tasks, and oh yeah, very fast and very good, talent, and a winning attitude. So with all of those things, they achieve great results. They break records consistently and win. And so while the race car driver may be the one behind the wheel and the one most recognizable or famous, I think the fact is that there's a whole team of individuals that make the win possible. And that really is our community team that we're gonna be talking about in a little bit.

So again, the same thing could be said for a senior living community. So while the face of a community may start with a sales director because of outreach or prospect calls or tours or ongoing touches with seniors, families, referral sources, there is a whole team of operations department heads that have a big part of the race and responsible for getting the driver to the finish line. So are you ready to start your engines?

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Let's go. So in today's analogy, we're comparing race car drivers to sales directors, so skilled race car drivers, they operate at a very high speed. They're able to maneuver very quickly. They can overtake competitors all while monitoring their vehicle's performance. They're also communicating often with their pit crew, and they're keeping focused on the checkered flags. So I wanna ask you, do you have the right person behind the wheel at your own community?

So a couple of things to think about on the sales driver, the sales director. So I wanna note is your sales director able to drive the sales process, identify drag and communicate with the crew chief to fix issues, trust their pit crew, to get them back on track quickly, stay focused on their role in the fast lane shift gears to navigate obstacles in their way, outpace the competition and pick up speed and finish the race first.

So a little bit about MBK senior living. We, last year, one of our Southern California communities, the Montana in San Diego area, had an extremely great banner year. And it started off the year in the low 60% occupancy and finishing above 90 in the high 90% occupancy, all while having a lot of moving parts yet they never lost their focus on sales. They kept driving. So to me, this community is made up of true

sales drivers. So again, when you're listening to this, I want you to think, do we have the right driver, driving the car?

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So number two, I think in senior living communities, executive directors are like crew chiefs on the racetrack, and they are the ones that are really calling the shots. They are pivotal to the success of not just the driver, but the whole race team. So like great crew chiefs, the best executive directors do this.

They maintain healthy relationships with their sales directors and operations team. They keep drivers focused and on track, they oversee pit crews to ensure quick turnovers that get the drivers back in the race. They make tough strategy calls that help drivers navigate the course and finish ahead of the pack.

So what does that look like in senior living communities? Again, you're thinking, okay, Christy, you like car racing, that's great. But how, how does this affect senior living? And I think it has a lot to do with each other. Executive directors and sales directors should meet daily to discuss hot leads, upcoming tours, outreach, and so much more. And then I also think that executive directors should meet at least weekly to discuss sales and marketing strategies with their director of sales. So again, it's not necessarily the task oriented items, it's much more strategic and looking at not only the big picture but staying focused on what the ultimate goals are.

And I think executive directors as leaders for their communities should keep an very, very open line of communication with prospects, so that when they become residents the executive directors have already created the relationship and can seamlessly release the sales director to move on to converting the next prospect. So at MBK, our executive directors make every effort to meet every prospect that tours and make a follow up call to every prospect after their tour. And so that really is setting us up for success when passing the Baton truly from sales to our operations team, and then our crew chief, our executive directors coordinate with the operations team to ensure unit turns are completed as quickly as possible that nurses are doing the assessments and collecting key information and paperwork, maintenance care, and other teams are kept in the loop about the new resident, just to make sure their needs are met before the moving van rolls up.

I think the crew chief is the one really that is orchestrating the success, not only of the car and the car racing team, but again, in our situation, it really is the success of the community, is because the crew chief is calling the right shots, at the right time, with the right team. So as we continue our racing analogy and thank you for hanging in there with me, I promise there is more that connects the dots there is.

When I started watching car racing about a few months ago with my husband. I had no idea the similarities between these teams and our senior living teams as well. So let's talk about the importance of an amazing pit crew. So the best pit crews are known for near perfect choreography, succinct movements, and laser focus. And honestly, if you've watched it, I think it's an art form. When a pit stop is happening and the way the pit crew works together, I think is a great analogy for how businesses should run and more specifically, senior living communities should run.

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So I think that one of the most important parts of having a really great pit stop, and by the way, a pit stop is extremely crucial to the success of the car and the team. So one of the most important parts of having this amazingly fast near perfect pit stop is that each crew member is certain about their role. So as you can imagine, joining a pit crew team which is made up of 22 individuals is an extremely prestigious job. So bear with me here. So during a pit stop, there are 36 tasks that need to be completed in two seconds and in a certain sequence. So each member of this pit crew has a specific set of tasks and only several

tenths of a second to complete them. They don't have time to check to see that someone else did their tasks and they did it well.

It's about simultaneous delivery, and the pit crew needs complete confidence that the other pit crew members have carried out their task correctly. And have you ever watched a pit stop at the end where the car is somewhat speeding away? Have you ever watched the reaction of the pit crew. Now, next time you watch some kind of race, look at it because you will see these pit crew members high-fiving each other and giving each other pats on the back and truly it's a, "Hey, you did your job well, you did it perfectly." And I think that it's really important to remember that the success of that pit crew and that team and that car and that driver is extremely dependent on each of those 22 individuals doing their job well. It's not pointing fingers. It's not looking to make sure the other person is doing their job. It's you are doing your job, and you trust that the other 21 team members are doing their jobs. It's about simultaneous delivery. And again, I think that has so many similarities to senior living.

So if a team, or more specifically, any individual on a team has a, well, it's my race, it's my pace mentality, that person clearly doesn't have a sense of urgency, nor do they understand the impact their role plays on the sales cycle and community occupancy. And I think that's really where a great crew chief, so that's our executive directors, can help focus a team and help map out the course so that everyone is headed in the same direction and able to cross the finish line together. So again, a crew chief, our executive director, is the orchestrator. They are the visionary, but also they can course correct as well. So think of your department heads as part of your pit crew, what areas may need to be tuned up to run more efficiently.

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And remember our goal is for the pit crew to get the driver back in the race and to get the car back into the race functioning efficiently and properly and faster than the next racer. So that may mean realigning your team and helping everyone understand how their role plays an important part in the sales process.

One thing I want to let you know is when professional car racing really started, in the forties and fifties, an amazing pit stop was about 60 seconds. And again, in 60 seconds, I think that they were really able to change one or two tires max in 60 seconds. So if you think about where we have come from a 60 second pit stop to an under two second pit stop, now with 36 tasks. I want you to think about how that relates to senior living.

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So senior living, as we know it, is about 40, 45, 50 years old. How far have we come in those 40, 50 years? How far can we go and improve even more? Because if you think 60 seconds, that was unreal back then for a pit stop, that was probably so fast. And now we've gotten it to two seconds. I'm sure you can imagine that what that trajectory looks like in your head, in a graph. That's the way I see senior living too, is we started truly as an alternative to skilled nursing facilities, and we have improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, over the years. What's going to get us to that two second mark? What changes do we need to make in the industry to hit that two second or under two second mark in the industry?

So having everyone on the community team, understanding how their role plays a part of the overall big picture, I think is critical for our success as community leaders as senior living leaders as well.

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So think of, executive directors if you're listening, think about this, how committed is your team to helping collect and complete paperwork for new move-ins, turning apartments quickly, and ensuring their rent ready, staying in communication regarding unexpected delays, jumping into the driver's seat

once a prospect is moved in and is a new resident, and to be the point of contact allowing sales to move on to the next race?

So are you ready to rev up your engines and get your team moving into the fast lane? Hopefully you can implement some of these ideas that I shared here to sync up your team, prevent drag, and work together as a well-oiled machine to attract prospects, increase occupancy, move in new residents with ease, and cross the finish line ahead of the pack. I look forward to speaking with you all again very soon. Thank you for listening. Have a great day.

16:34

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