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How to Navigate Heightened Emotions During Sales Calls

For families searching for care for a loved one and individuals exploring care options for themselves, sales calls can bring a range of strong emotions, including grief, fear, and frustration. Senior care sales teams must be prepared to respond with empathy and understanding, often before they have a full picture of the caller's circumstances

Tori Weil, director of sales-community relations at [Christian Health](#) of Wyckoff, New Jersey, frequently encounters callers who feel anxious or fearful about transitioning to senior care. Many worry that moving will mean losing their independence and control over their daily routines.

Alicia Brown, ASB, LPN, is marketing director at [Everlasting Services](#), which specializes in traumatic brain injuries and serves residents ranging in age from their 20s to their 90s. She notes that parents can experience strong emotions as they adjust to stepping back from their caregiving role and entrusting their child's care to others.

"Sometimes we find, after a brain injury, mom and dad have cared for their injured son or daughter at home," explains Brown. "Now, mom and dad are aging and are considering assisted living. That's when I see the most emotion, because they've been caring for their child since their accident at 17 years old. Now, the child is 47 and mom and dad can't care for them anymore."

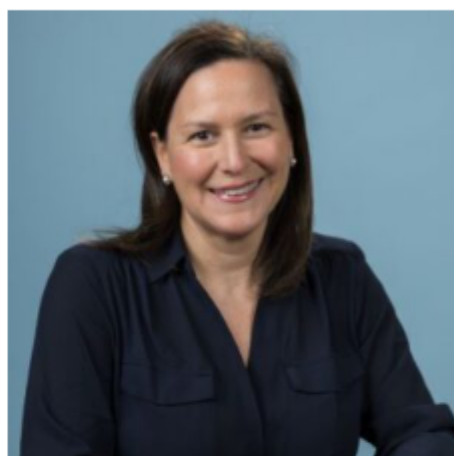


Alicia Brown, ASB, LPN,
marketing director at
Everlasting Services

Here, Brown and Weil shared some of their top tips on how to best navigate sales calls when emotions run high.

Focus on Understanding the Cause

As emotions arise, staff members should focus on understanding their root cause. At Christian Health, staff ask about a prospective resident's daily routine and the areas of the home they use the most. With that understanding, they can explain how life in the community will allow the resident to maintain the routines and activities they enjoy most. "We also explain that many of our current residents are relieved because they no longer have to worry about the maintenance and upkeep of their homes," says Weil.



Tori Weil, director of sales-community relations at Christian Health

Deciding to place a loved one in senior care can be difficult, and families may need support as they navigate the decision. When family members disagree about their loved one's care needs, those differences can lead to conflict and heightened emotions during sales calls and throughout the decision-making process.

Finances can also trigger strong emotions. This is especially true if expectations around the cost of care diverge from the actual cost of care. Brown has heard from families who said they aren't concerned about costs because they believe Medicare will cover their long-term care. Another father once told her that he knew care for his son would be expensive, and "if it is \$1,000 a month, it's \$1,000 a month."

"It's very difficult to have that conversation with a family who has already lost so much in the last month. The future they envisioned for their child is now completely different – and you have to be the one to explain to them that assisted living rates are \$5,000 and more a month," says Brown. However, understanding the cause behind the emotion is the first step to a successful call.

Position Staff for Success

Training and preparation may help staff better navigate these calls. Christian Health trains sales counselors to listen more than they talk. Weil says sales counselors meet callers "where they are," validating their feelings when they become tearful or upset. Staff members express empathy and understanding to help build trust. They also create a plan with outlined next steps, which helps offer callers peace of mind.

But training may only go so far. Brown doesn't believe that navigating emotional sales calls is necessarily a skill that can be trained, so she focuses on hiring the right individual for the position. "It does no good to hire someone with 20 years' experience if they lack compassion, because that isn't something that is going to change," she says.

Focus on Listening and Providing Support

When engaging with prospective community members, staff must account for the wide range of individual needs, backgrounds, and family dynamics. "You really just need to listen," says Brown. "You need to genuinely care about what they are saying and tailor your approach to meeting their needs."

Brown says the differences among potential community members means that staff can't stick to a "script."

Although Brown is a marketing director, she's a nurse first and wants what is best for potential residents. "I understand that might not always be us," she says. "I do not want to mislead a family or over promise something." Instead, she focuses on understanding what is important to potential residents and their families, then helps guide them through the process. "The family does all they can to advocate for their loved one, and soon realizes, even though I represent the community, I am advocating for them as well," explains Brown.

Avoid Adding Pressure

There might be moments during a call when emotions escalate and the conversation stalls. It's important to avoid adding pressure during those moments. Weil encourages staff to build relationships with families, listen to their concerns, and give them time to make decisions without rushing them toward the next step. "Applying pressure can undermine a relationship that may potentially last for years," she says.

Staff should also recognize when to pause a conversation, as giving families space can be both respectful and productive. If a prospective resident or family member becomes overwhelmed, staff members can step back and offer to reconnect when they feel ready. "Our role is to be a steady resource, not to push someone before they have had time to process the decision," says Weil.

Provide Undivided Attention

“The best sales counselors make their prospects feel like they are the only ones they are working with,” Weil explains. Sales counselors should provide prospects with their undivided attention. They should quickly respond to inquiries and provide adequate guidance and a personalized plan based on the individual’s needs and wants. “This makes the prospect feel a sense of partnership in achieving a goal together, rather than their sales counselor filling a quota.”

In turn, the sales counselor becomes a trusted partner, which can make all the difference when emotions run high.



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