Leasing Techniques
Chapter 1

Section 1.1 Leasing Basics

A. First Impressions
   1. When a prospect calls or visits the leasing office, the first impression is the most significant. The Manager must make the prospect realize immediately that he or she is very important. The Manager should make a good first impression by being professionally dressed and conducting themselves in a friendly and professional manner. The leasing office should also make a good impression by being neat, clean and organized. The office should smell good, being free of cigarette smoke (smoking is prohibited in the office) and other offensive odors.

B. Greeting The Prospect
   1. When a prospect (or applicant) enters the office, he or she should be greeted promptly and professionally. The Manager should make the prospect feel welcome and should find a comfortable way to introduce themselves. A quick smile and handshake is a good start. It is very important that the manager stand up when a prospect comes into the office so that they make the prospect feel welcomed. The Manager should then lead them to their office, or a leasing area, and the Manager should fill out a visitor information card for the prospect. This will allow the Manager to find out key information (i.e., name, address, type and size of unit looking for, reason for relocating, etc.).

C. Visitor Information Card
   1. The visitor information card is the primary source for acquiring basic information about the prospect. The visitor info card helps determine both the prospect’s needs and wants and whether the prospect meets our requirements. After the card is completed, the manager should verify the information with the prospect and ask questions about his or her individual needs and wants. This card can also be a great source of information for marketing by clarifying how the prospect learned of the property. It is mandatory that all properties use this card.

D. Determining The Prospect’s Qualifications
   1. Using the information obtained on the visitor information card will help in determining if the prospect is qualified to live in our community or not. You should also ask the prospect questions about their sources of income and types of assistance they may receive. It is important to income qualify a prospect early on in the initial visit or telephone conversation so that you do not waste the prospect’s time or your time. Refer further to the community Guidelines sheet, and the state manual (i.e. IHFA, IHDA, OHFA, etc.) or compliance section for qualification guidelines.

E. Showing a Vacant Unit
   1. Once it is determined whether the prospect is qualified, invite the prospect to look at a ready vacant unit. From this point on, it is the manager’s job to be the prospect’s “advocate” by doing everything possible to find an apartment that will meet their needs and make the prospect happy. When showing a prospect a vacant unit, you should only show a unit that is in move-in
condition. The vacant unit should have had all the punch-out items completed: painting, cleaning and carpet cleaning. Never show an unready unit. The unit should also smell good; plug ins can be used as well as scented furnace filters. If there are no ready units available, the manager should make another appointment with the prospect when one will be available.

F. The Presentation

1. The leasing presentation should begin in the leasing office. Information should be shared about the apartment community features and benefits the prospect will gain by living there. The visitor information card should be carried with the manager to the vacant unit and referenced from time to time. The information on the card can be used in conversation with the prospect. You should point out the features of the apartment community as you walk to the vacant unit with the prospect. Some important community features to note are:
   - Parking spaces close to the apartments entries
   - Carport/Garages/Storage Units (if available)
   - Playground Areas
   - Storage Closets (if available)
   - Community Laundry Facilities
   - Vending machines on the property
   - Exterior patio and balconies
   - Convenience of the community’s location (close to shopping, schools, etc.)
   - Convenient access to public transportation (if available)
   - On site management and or maintenance (if applicable)
   - 24 hour emergency maintenance
   - Location of mailboxes and dumpsters
   - Beautiful pool with sundeck (if applicable)
   - Fitness center (if applicable)
   - Internet / Business center with free Internet access
   - Entertainment room at clubhouse for parties

2. When reaching the apartment with the prospect, you should unlock the door and let the prospect enter the apartment in front of you. Be sincere and enthusiastic, don’t stand at the door and let the prospect tour the apartment by him/herself. Take control of the tour by leading the prospect from room to room. It is good to use hands on demonstration methods, i.e. open the closet doors, open blinds, open cabinets, etc. Make sure to point out features of the apartment. Here are some examples of apartment features:
   - Spacious cabinetry
   - Dishwasher
   - Garbage disposal
   - Built in Microwave or Microwave shelf
   - Large walk in closets
   - Central heating and air conditioning
   - Water/ sewage and trash removal paid (if applicable)
   - Washer / Dryer hook ups
   - Large units
   - Large patio or balcony
- Two full bathrooms in 2,3,4 bedroom units
- Newer construction with good insulation for lower utility bills
- All electric units, no gas bill!

3. The above list is just an example of some of the items that can be pointed out to a prospective resident. You should get to know what the prospect’s needs and wants are in their new apartment so that you may highlight those features that will appeal to them most while you are touring the vacant unit.

G. Handling Objections

1. Objections should be a welcome response from a prospect. This proves that the prospect has listened to the presentation and that they are interested in the apartment. Once objections are raised, you need to completely understand the concerns and then truthfully, positively, and confidently answer them.

**Objections can be handled with confidence if these guidelines are followed:**

a. Be prepared for standard objections – you should begin to recognize that certain objections (size of apartment, lack of microwave, etc.) occur quite frequently. A response should be prepared for these objections (i.e., the bedroom will accommodate a king or queen size bed, and our closets are so spacious, you can put your dressers in there!).

b. Respond to all objections. You should never avoid or ignore a negative comment. If it goes unanswered, the prospect will leave the community believing it is true and may choose to rent elsewhere. Again, if you cannot answer a question, tell the prospect that you will find out and then be sure to follow up with the answer.

c. Answer objections by providing accurate information, offering alternative solutions, or present counter-balancing benefits that will outweigh the objection.

d. NEVER argue with the prospect. This is a “no-win” situation.

H. Closing The Sale

1. Many people believe asking the prospect to lease an apartment is the most difficult aspect of the job. However, if you have been doing everything properly leading up to this final point, the close should come naturally. In actuality, the close began as soon as the prospect walked into the office and was enthusiastically greeted by you. Having someone fill out an application is the ultimate goal of the leasing presentation but it takes several positive steps along the way to reach this point. Just telling someone about the community and apartment is not enough. You must sell the prospect on your community, and show them why your product and service is better than your competitions!

2. There are a variety of closes. More than one may be necessary depending on the prospect, and the leasing professionals techniques.

a. Trial Close: This close can be used throughout the presentation. As features and benefits are demonstrated you may add a phrase such as, “Would this space fill your needs?” or, “How do you like this (feature)?” The trial close is especially important if a prospect appears to be undecided, or gives no indication that they like the apartment.
b. Final Close: If trial closes are used throughout the presentation, the final close may take on the following forms:
   i. The Assumptive Close: is when you assume from the reaction of the prospect that he or she likes the apartment. “I can tell you like the apartment. Let’s go back to the office and start the application process.”
   ii. The Summary Close: is when you summarize all the positive aspects mentioned by the prospect throughout the presentation.
   iii. The Urgency Close: “This is the only one bedroom apartment we have right now that is on the first floor.” (Make sure the statement you use is TRUE!)

3. These are commonly used closes. Whether presented separately or combined, they will help the prospect make a decision. A closed question such as “Do you want to fill out an application?” should not be used since a prospect can simply say “no”. Keeping these questions open ended and assuming the prospect is ready to fill out the application will result in success for your property. Remember, asking the prospect to lease the apartment is the ultimate goal, and this also tells the prospect that you would like him or her to become a resident of your community.

4. Closing Lines That Work:
   - I have just one (beige carpet, pool-side, upstairs, etc) apartment left. Will you be deciding today?
   - Do you like the first or the second apartment best?
   - Before someone else reserves it, would you like to put a hold on it?
   - We can guarantee the rental rate for 6 or 12 months.
   - Don’t you agree that this apartment has most of the things that you wanted in your new home?
   - Would you like to reserve it today to take advantage of our special offer?
   - We’re only offering this special price (this week, or to new resident, or on this floor plan, etc.)
   - Rumor has it rents are going up soon. Will you be deciding today?
   - I don’t have any one-bedrooms available. But I do have a lovely two bedroom for only $_____ more a month.
   - If we make you happy here, will you recommend us to your friends?
   - If you want to save (time, money, etc.) this is the apartment for you!
   - You are making the right decision. This is the best apartment in the area!

Section 1.2 Telephone Techniques

There are many reasons that individuals call the office. Some callers will be prospects looking for information about an apartment and what your community has to offer; others may be current residents with questions, concerns, or a maintenance request. Most callers will be pleasant and friendly, while others may be upset or irate about a particular situation. No matter what the circumstance is, you must be prepared to handle each call in a professional and business-like manner.
Often, the first contact with a prospect will be on the telephone. Effective use of the telephone leads to visits to your community and rentals of your apartments. Poor telephone techniques will lead to lost traffic, lost opportunities and low occupancy.

A. The following guidelines should be used when answering the telephone and dealing with callers:

1. Answer the phone between the second and third ring. The phone should never ring more than three times. If you will be out of the office, make sure the answering machine is turned on and that it contains a professional sounding message, which should include the office hours and a telephone or pager number for residents to call in case of emergency.

2. Answer the phone in a positive, friendly and professional manner. Use a greeting such as “Thank you for calling ____________ apartments this is ____________, how may I help you?” Also, remember to thank every caller for calling at the end of each call.

3. There should always be a telephone prompter pad and a pen near the phone. The telephone prompter contains the major items that could be brought forth in an initial phone contact. Become very familiar with the telephone prompter form and use it for every call!

4. Try to get the caller’s name and use this early in the conversation. Hopefully the caller will offer his or her name after your introduction. A technique that may be helpful is to say “By the way, my name is ________; and you are …..?” Having the telephone prompter pad available will remind you to get and use the prospect’s name.

5. The next step in the conversation is to determine the prospect’s needs and wants by asking them open ended questions. Five key questions to ask are:
   a. “What size apartment are you looking for?”
   b. “Is the apartment just for you, or will someone be living with you?”
   c. “How soon will you be needing the apartment?”
   d. “Is there anything in particular you are looking for in an apartment?”
   e. “May I get some income information from you?”

6. Once the prospect’s needs, wants, and income qualifications have been established, try to get the prospect to visit the community on a specific day by setting an appointment. The end result of every inquiring telephone call should be a visit to the community. This can be accomplished by using the following questions:
   a. “How soon can you come in? Would today at _____ work ok or tomorrow at _____ be best for you?”
   b. “Would it be convenient for you to come at _____ or _____?” (Always offer the prospect two possible times. If a prospect can’t make either time offered, suggest an alternative day or time.)

B. The ultimate goal of the prospect call is to GET THE APPOINTMENT. Answering the telephone in a timely, friendly manner, and knowing your product and community well are the best tools to convert that call into a visit!
Section 1.3  The Apartment Shop

A. The apartment shop is a tool utilized by management to determine the leasing professional’s (Leasing Consultant, Assistant Manager and Manager’s) technique, and their ability to properly show and sell our apartments and communities.

B. The frequency of which this tool will be used will be determined by the District or Regional Supervisor. At least once a quarter, each team member (of management) will be ‘mystery shopped.’ This will include both a telephone performance shop, and an in person performance shop.

C. The apartment shop will evaluate everything from the telephone techniques, to leasing techniques, closing techniques, and a final evaluation of the leasing agent and the appearance of the community.

D. A copy of the apartment shop will be given to the District and Regional Supervisor, and a copy will be in the employee’s permanent file. No employee is permitted to have more than one poor performance evaluation in their file. If more than one poor shopping report is on file, the employee may receive a written warning, and or termination of employment.

E. It is imperative that every employee of Herman & Kittle Properties understand that every prospect represents the success of our business. Every person that calls and visits our community can provide future business. Management should treat every call and visit to the community as a ‘mystery shopper.’ Review Telephone and Leasing Techniques to insure success when anyone calls or visits our community.

F. A blank copy of the apartment shop follows this page for review and future success in leasing!