



# A Business Approach to Landlord Engagement

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Rapid Re-Housing Learning Collaborative

“Ninety percent of selling  
is conviction and 10  
percent is persuasion.”

-Shiv Kiew author of *You Can Win*

# 6 Steps to Selling a “Product”

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1. Identify & Understand Customer’s Needs
2. Plan Your Approach
3. Make the Sales Pitch
4. Handle Objections
5. Close the Sale
6. Maintain the Relationship



**Step 1:**  
**Identify & Understand Your  
Customer's Needs**

# Know Your Audience

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<b>What Landlords Want</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>RENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On Time</li><li>• Reliable</li></ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>RESPECT FOR PROPERTY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No property damage</li><li>• Only lease-holders staying in apartment</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GOOD NEIGHBORS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Get along with other tenants</li><li>• Avoid disputes with law</li><li>• Respect “quiet enjoyment” of others on or neighboring the property</li></ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>NO VACANCIES OR EVICTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avoiding eviction costs</li><li>• Units not sitting empty</li><li>• Consistent income generation</li></ul>

# How Do Landlords Think?

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Rental housing is a **dollars and cents business**. Landlords and management companies are in the business of **reducing risk and maximizing return on investment**.

Accordingly, rapid rehousing providers need to adopt a **business-oriented or market-driven approach** to recruiting and engaging property owners and management companies.

# Appeal or Not to Appeal to the Heart?

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- Some landlords only think in dollars and cents and will not respond well to a sales pitch that is heavy on talking about how they will be helping to end homelessness.
- Some will.
- Be prepared with both the business approach and the heart approach.



# Step 2: Plan Your Approach



# Develop Selling Points

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- Families receive tenant and financial education.
- In-home services are provided once a month. The program can be the eyes and ears for the landlord.
- If challenges arise, the program can provide client-landlord mediation.
- Quick turn around for financial reimbursement.
- What sort of productive activities will families get involved in, or are already doing? (jobs, school, etc.)
- What financial support exists for families who run into trouble?
  - Landlord Mitigation funds?

# Develop Selling Points continued...

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- What is the program's or agency's history of success? Show the program's success rate – returns to homelessness.
- Will the program co-sign leases or master lease?
- Help landlords reduce costs, including fees to advertise vacancies?
- The program can refill any vacancies almost immediately with another client – no loss in rent.
- What other benefits?

# Marketing Materials

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- Agency Annual Report (lists all of the donors who believe in your work – potentially lists many companies landlord knows well)
- Program Brochure/Packet (Includes list of benefits to landlord and program success)
- Social Proof (testimonials from current/past landlords, media coverage of the program, awards or recognition the agency has received, etc.)
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Business Cards
- Client Success Story



# Step 3: Make the Sales Pitch

# Finding Landlords

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- Network - Use it and do it
  - Staff, board members, supporters, and donors
  - References from partners
  - Real estate agents
  - Attend networking events landlords may be a part of such as Chamber of Commerce, real-estate associations, landlord associations
  - Hold recruitment luncheons
  - Ask community leaders/politicians to co-sponsor an event or program presentation
  - Present at churches, local service clubs (Rotary, American Legion, Eagles, Kiwanis)

# Finding Landlords continued...

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- Word of mouth - landlords know other landlords – ask for referrals
- Ads/Listings - Newspapers, rent.com, apartments.com, etc.
- Post an ad on Craigslist
- “For Rent” signs
- Cold calls
- Targeted mailings
- Yellow pages listings of property management companies

# Who Approaches the Landlord?

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- RRH Housing Managers should be the one to explain the program to landlords to prevent mixed messages and misconceptions; not clients or shelter providers.
  - Providers have found the process goes smoother when clients, who are able to help with the housing identification process, do not tell the landlord that they are a part of a specific program. \*some exceptions\*
- Have clients treat the housing identification process like a regular housing search.

# How to Approach Landlords

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- Cater the approach according to the opportunity - Preferably in-person meetings.
- Approach them in a way that comforts them and builds their trust in you. Use friendly and courteous body language, facial expressions and manners.
- Be open and genuine.
- Don't take up more time than you need. Get to the point quickly.
- Be enthusiastic and show your conviction.
- Use examples of program successes.
- Make it clear how your program meets their needs.
- Try to address common concerns before they are brought up and sincerely address them when they do.





# Step 4: Handle Objections

# The Single Story of Homelessness

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Homelessness comes in all different shapes, sizes and situations. Not all homeless individuals are what the landlord may envision when they think of it. The best education in this regard is when you view the unit in person with your client. If the landlord is skeptical even before you view the unit then explicitly state that there is not one story of homelessness.

# The Unresponsive Case Manager

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The fear most landlords have is that in the event of a crisis, they will be left to deal with the situation on their own. By reassuring that you will be responsive in these situations you will be in a better situation to get and keep landlords working with your program.

# Late or No Rent

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Although we can not promise a financial subsidy for the entire time of the lease we can assure that our case managers will be working with the household on financial literacy, budgeting and connecting them to community resources to fill in the gaps within their budget.

# Common Housing Barriers

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- The “anti-Section 8” landlord
- Poor credit
- Multiple evictions
- Teenage children, especially boys
- Criminal record
- Those with very limited resources and/or eligibility for certain types of financial assistance



# Step 5: Close the Sale



# Step 6: Maintain the Relationship

# Customer Service

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## ***AKA: Maintain the Relationship***

- Give them the “special treatment”
- Show that you’re happy to see or talk to them
- Respond to calls/emails within one day – even if you have to get back to them with an answer
- Follow through on promises promptly
- Write hand-written thank you notes after meeting with them
- Cut their checks quickly & always on time
- Mediate disputes between program participants and landlords
- Do regular check-ins with clients and in some cases landlords, to catch challenges before they grow – an “early warning system”



# References & Provider Resources

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## National Alliance to End Homelessness

- **Rapid Re-Housing Core Component: Housing Identification webinar**
- **RRH Toolkit**
- Rapid Re-housing Landlords Benefits Checklist

## Beyond Shelter/PATH

- **Working with Landlords in Housing First/Rapid Rehousing presentation**

## Miami-Dade County

- Landlord Recruitment & Retention Program and Marketing Campaign Report

## Supportive Housing Works

- Perfecting your Pitch Presentation

## Opening Doors Connecticut

- Landlord Brainstorming Meeting Notes

Links to these resources can be found at

[www.cceh.org/provider-resources/rapid-rehousing](http://www.cceh.org/provider-resources/rapid-rehousing)

Thank you!

Any questions?

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