



Prudential Waterfront Properties “Community Newsletters” Campaign

Research: Waterfront Properties has developed several of the premier communities at Smith Mountain Lake (SML). Year after year, they have been recognized locally and nationally for their golf, lake properties and amenities. The Water’s Edge Country Club, The Waterfront Country Club and The Westlake Golf & Country Club have been well-publicized in Waterfront Properties ads, however, little has been done to reach those who are already part of the community. After doing several targeted focus groups and polls, Waterfront Properties discovered that many residents were not happy with the current communication newsletter for residents. The research elicited a concern that a premier development should offer premier communications for residents, guests and those interested in what goes on in the development. The current newsletter was produced in-house with Microsoft Publisher, and was basic black and white text with occasional clip-art. The polled-residents stated that they were interested in a piece that would focus more on their community, could generate interest through photos and personalization, and would truly represent the prestigious quality of their community. They were also concerned about the difficulty to navigate through the newsletter to find their interests. Without the ability to invest considerable time and money into new programs or outsourcing the newsletter, Waterfront Properties was faced with the difficult task of finding a reasonable means for significantly improving their newsletters for each community.

Planning: While Waterfront Properties couldn’t have each newsletter outsourced, it was decided that a professional design team should create templates for each newsletter that would enhance the visual appeal while allowing the updates to remain in-house. The GO Agency was brought in to create the templates and provide photography that would highlight the beauty of each community. The agency was presented with a list of topics and forums that each newsletter would cover. In designing the new newsletters, they had to create a document that was simple enough to be changed monthly, yet well-designed to be visually and functionally appealing. The agency was limited to using Microsoft Publisher so the in-house team would not have to purchase or learn a new program.

Execution: Three newsletters were created using consistent fonts, title bars, graphic elements and spots for color photos. The “Navigator,” provided residents with the quality communication they wanted, yet allowed Waterfront Properties to continue producing each piece. Each newsletter features sections appropriate to the individual community and allows space for highlights on individual members. It features headings and a table of contents for easy navigation. The new templates allow maximum freedom to update the content without altering the design dramatically. The new design also makes it

possible for the newsletter to be sent electronically. The new format is printed in full-color on a gloss paper.

Evaluation: The new newsletter has been a tremendous success. Focus groups and community polls have shown a considerable increase in resident satisfaction. Success has also been measured in terms of an increase of attendance at community events; and through the increased use of amenities featured in the newsletter. The new electronic format has also increased readership and allowed part-time residents to keep up with their community when they are out of the area. The vibrant colors and professional design have allowed the newsletters to be simultaneously used as sales pieces for each community. While production costs have increased from \$350 per newsletter to just under \$1,000, the benefits of resident satisfaction and the marketing potential for each community has made this communication piece a success.