



Internet Lead Services – The Elder Care Matchmaker

For New Englander Bob Brooks, it's easy to remember the day he launched ElderCarelink. October 20, 2004 is also the day the Red Sox beat the Yankees in Game 7 of the American League Championship Series with a stirring comeback that put them in their first World Series since 1986. The Sox, of course, went on to win the Series, but they haven't fared as well since then. ElderCarelink, meanwhile, has taken off, managing to distinguish itself in an industry with almost as many competitors as there are major league baseball teams.

ElderCarelink's formula for success: provide highly-qualified, low-cost leads to private-pay elder care providers. "Providers give us their profile of a qualified prospect and consumers give us their care requirements, and we match 'em up," Brooks told *ALD*. Consumers who visit ElderCarelink's website are asked to complete a detailed "Needs Survey" indicating not only the type of care being sought (e.g. independent living, assisted living or skilled nursing) but also the services that are required (e.g. monitoring, personal care, transportation), the primary funding source (e.g. private pay, Medicare), and the amount budgeted per week (from \$250 to \$1,500).

There is a \$150 set-up fee for an ElderCarelink account and a charge of between \$11 and \$15 per lead depending on volume. "A backward look at activity gives new users a good estimate of the anticipated lead volume for their profiles," explained Brooks. There is no time commitment or contract period. "We retain clients through success; they are not locked in. When they reach capacity they can suspend the service, and then resume it when vacancies occur."

Jen DeLuca, vice president in charge of sales and marketing for The Village at Waterman Lake, a 288 resident senior community offering assisted living and Alzheimer's care in Greenville, Rhode Island, has been using ElderCarelink's lead service since December, 2005. She is impressed: "We received about twenty leads the first three months and we're tracking about ten of them as highly qualified. So far we've had one move-in – that's a pretty good return already."

Pricing models for internet lead services run the gamut from those who charge a placement fee (such as A Place for Mom and Total Living Choices) to those who negotiate provider discounts (like CareScout) to the web-based yellow-pages type directories that charge annual fees and offer links and email contacts.

ElderCarelink surveyed its users and found that many providers generate new revenues of 10 to 30 times their spending on ElderCarelink leads, according to Brooks.

DeLuca, a former skeptic in the value of internet leads, has become a true believer. "Our local paper charges \$400 for a 2" x 6" ad that has zero shelf life," she explains. "We have expanded our web presence and my goal is to triple our internet leads. I'm in eight or nine web directories – a lot of them are not expensive – but it's all about the quality of the lead. I'm constantly 'googling' search terms that my best prospects might use to find residential care and, whatever term I used, ElderCarelink was right there among the top paid listings. Joining ElderCarelink was not a tough economic decision."

For more information about ElderCarelink visit: www.eldercarelink.com. ■