



Prudential Waterfront Properties: “Check Our References” Campaign

BACKGROUND/RESEARCH:

Prudential Waterfront Properties is a division of The Willard Companies and the premier real estate company at Smith Mountain Lake (SML), Virginia for over 20 years. As a result of economic and real estate industry struggles, the company did very little branding initiatives during 2009. The 2010 strategic plan called for a fresh campaign to launch on Labor Day prior to the fall season. The company’s most recent branding campaign, “101 reasons”, had been in the marketplace for well over two years. In order to reach the ideal new campaign theme and message, Prudential Waterfront Properties narrowed down its marketing goals. The company thought it wise to build on the brand equity that had accumulated with a consistent overall look and feel of campaigns over the years, especially with regard to the signature aerial landscape photo that had been its trademark image for over a decade. All other aspects of the new campaign needed to be fresh, positive and urge a call to action, while at the same time adhering to the identity standards set forth by the national Prudential corporation. Research was conducted on Prudential’s rules and regulations as outlined in the Identity Standard Operations Manual. An internal survey of closed customer real estate transactions revealed that the word of mouth “referral” was the number one motivating factor that led them to use Prudential Waterfront Properties over all other advertising mediums. Based on this response, the team decided that a successful campaign must include customer testimonials. In addition, research was conducted on competing local real estate companies as to how they were branding their products and services in the Smith Mountain Lake market. Competitors evaluated included Century 21, REMAX, Coldwell Banker, Long and Foster, Lake and Land, Keller Williams, Weichart Companies, and others. A new campaign that emphasized the company’s “rock solid” strength in the midst of a challenging real estate market was imperative. To secure and implement a fresh campaign they turned to long-time advertising partner, GO Agency.

PLANNING: In partnership with GO Agency, Prudential Waterfront Properties pursued testimonial-based marketing as its campaign foundation. One particular obstacle was to secure a variety of clients who would be willing to participate in the campaign and provide consent to use both their name and image. Another challenge using testimonials was length. The partners had to figure out a way to shorten the testimonials for limited advertising space such as billboards and small online ads. The solution was to display short testimonial plugs that would drive the audience to one measurable location where they could get more information. The result was the “Check Our References” campaign theme. This confident and proactive directive could be used anywhere in the campaign to send traffic to Prudential Waterfront Properties website and social media sites where the testimonials worked as positive references for the company. What’s more, using testimonials as the core of the campaign gave it an opportunity for longevity. By continuing to collect new testimonials every few months, the advertising could be easily refreshed and last longer than the company’s previous campaigns, which typically ended after a period of 12-15 months. Once the campaign theme was established, the company decided to gather customer testimonials that would specifically emphasize the strength of the company in a down real estate market, along with professional photos to correspond. A launch date of Labor Day was set along with creative budget of \$3,500. In addition, a \$20,000 marketing budget was allocated to promote the new campaign.

EXECUTION: Prudential Waterfront Properties turned to its REALTORS to solicit customers (real estate buyers or sellers) to contact and secure rights to use the families’ testimonials and images in the campaign. Getting customers to agree to have their stories and photos featured in the campaign was a challenge. After contacting many families, the team was able to gain permission from and interview six. With the testimonials ready and professional images by David Hungate at Dominion Images, GO Agency designed the campaign advertising including print, billboard and signage, online and social media ads. The ads consisted of the trademark image and established look with new “Check Our References” slogan and images. A custom slide show including the testimonials was created to add to agent presentations to further incorporate the campaign in company business. The agency also added a “Check Our References” custom landing page featuring the six testimonials to the

Prudential Waterfront Companies website where all resulting traffic would be driven and measured.

EVALUATION: Campaign success was measured by an instant increase in website hits, call-ins, and walk-ins. In addition, the campaign launched on time and under budget.

Prudential Waterfront Properties REALTORS have also incorporated the elements of the campaign into their listing presentations that have resulted in a number of new property listings. Prudential Waterfront Properties and the families featured were extremely pleased with the resulting “Check Our References” campaign. The families whose testimonials were used expressed being impressed with the professional and creative way their stories and images turned out. As a thank-you gift, each family received a CD of the professional photography for their use.

Prudential Waterfront Properties even received a letter from the president of the Roanoke Valley Association of Realtors complimenting the ingenuity of the campaign.

Prudential national was so impressed with the creative approach, they have requested to adopt the “Check Our References” into a prospective national campaign in which affiliates across the network could localize for individual markets.

The Prudential Waterfront Properties sales office has received 2,535 inquiries via a special 800 tracking number and unique contact form on the website.

Dashboard

Aug 1, 2010 - Sep 21, 2010



Site Usage

9,079 Visits

36.28% Bounce Rate

25,039 Pageviews

00:02:29 Avg. Time on Site

2.76 Pages/Visit

67.40% % New Visits

Traffic Sources Overview



[view report](#)

Content Overview

Pages	Pageviews	% Pageviews
/	10,308	41.17%
/property.htm	3,519	14.05%
/check-our-references.html	2,353	9.40%
/elite.htm	1,184	4.73%
/watersedge.htm	707	2.82%

[view report](#)