



Metropolitan Senior Network An Interview with outgoing President, Brenda Suteu

LTC Professional Publisher, Darlene Rominger (above right), interviewed Brenda Suteu (above left), regional director of marketing for Life Care Centers of America, and president of Metropolitan Senior Network (MSN), about the changes coming for the board of the Marketing Association she helped to create.

LTC Pro: Brenda, what is Metropolitan Senior Network, exactly? And what is it designed to do?

Brenda: *It is a Healthcare Marketing Association and Networking group. We also consider it a personal and professional development and business league. These are all terms that describe MSN. Every month MSN holds what we call the "Presentation" meeting. This is the first Wednesday of each month and consists of about 30 minutes of networking and a one hour professional presentation on some aspect of marketing education. The board strives to bring education, support, and resources to marketing professionals to help them grow in their careers. Once or*

twice a year MSN also coordinates a full day workshop on the fundamentals of marketing and in December MSN has an Awards breakfast where professionals in the industry are recognized.

LTC Pro: Are the members of MSN predominantly Elder-care and Long term Care Professionals, or general sales and marketing professionals?

Brenda: *Yes (laughter). The focus of the mission statement is on appropriate housing and long term care for seniors. It has always been our intention to promote successful ethical marketing standards and practices in general. However, we believe that in Healthcare marketing it is even more critical to be impeccable in your marketing practices because you are dealing*

with your client's health and quality of life. The mission statement was created when Jim Norris, Ken Cross, and I noticed that the pressure to keep census high in buildings was causing some marketers to admit residents into buildings that were not appropriate for the health issues of that particular resident. We wanted to create an organization that helped marketing professionals understand that giving a referral away to a more appropriate building was a good marketing practice in some circumstances. That concept helped us to create our core values: Compassion, Accountability, Respect and Excellence. So, to answer your question, yes, the professionals who attend MSN are predominantly elder-care and long term care professionals, but we have many other business professionals attend who are interested in general sales and marketing education such as attorneys, moving companies, financial planners, case managers, real estate agents, magazine publishers(laughter), etc.

LTC Pro: You said that every first Wednesday of the month MSN holds a "Presentation" meeting. What kinds of speakers and presentations do you have at these meetings?

Brenda: *Therese Lambert, Terri Ogan, and Valere Beck, are the "Program Directors" on the board and they have been scheduling really quality speakers from various fields. In January we had scheduled Victoria Johnson, the motivational speaker, trainer and life coach, but that meeting had to be canceled due to the ice storm, so we hope to bring Victoria back next year. We have had presentations on "Basic Event Planning", "Public Speaking",*

“Listening to improve relationships and sales”, “Referral Strategies”, “The Dynamic Laws of Prosperity” and “Branding and the Expression of Integrity” all aimed at helping to improve and strengthen communication, sales, and marketing techniques. We also had a “Media Panel” with Radio, Television, and Newspaper Professionals teaching how and when to advertise. In September the program team coordinated a business fashion show and dress for success presentation; “What does your Non Verbal Communication say about you?” which was hosted by Casual Corner and Petite Sophisticate Clothing stores.

LTC Pro: What is the Board like? Who is on the Board of MSN and what are their positions?

Brenda: Metropolitan Senior Network’s Board is truly a “working board.” There is no doubt about that. It takes commitment, but I have tried to find ways to keep the work load balanced and reasonable. It is my policy that each board member’s first priorities are to their family and to the companies they are employed by. MSN is last on the list and we have learned how to fit MSN duties before and after work, at lunch, and on weekends.

There are ten chairs on the board of MSN. Linda Walker Trenholm is currently the vice president and she has been my right hand. She has been unbelievably dependable, hard working, and supportive. She actually coordinated last years MSN work shop by Bill Raymond, “Taking your Business to the Next Level,” all by herself, as the rest of us were deeply involved in various other projects like creating the website. Then there is the elder-law attorney Garvin Reiter, who has

helped us to adopt by-laws, file the documents for becoming a non-profit corporation, and basically helps us to understand legal issues. Sande Mellinger has been our treasurer and kept MSNs books and accounts. This is a huge task and Sande has been brilliant at it. Kim Case has been the Sponsorship Director and has done a wonderful job bringing more sponsors to MSN. Darrin Buckner is the operations director and has been invaluable in creating a database and helping to clean up some administrative systems that keep MSN running. I already spoke about the excellent Program team (Therese Lambert, Terri Ogan and Valere Beck) and then there is the artistic genius of Jane Larsen who is our Media Director. Without Jane’s publishing talent and esthetic sense with the MSN newsletters and flyers MSN would not have the polished professional look that is absolutely crucial in excellent marketing. The MSN Board always maintained that the success of the organization was an indicator of how good we actually are as Marketing Professionals. If we can’t successfully market MSN, then what are we doing in the marketing and sales business?

LTC Pro: You announced at the October 6th 2004 MSN “Presentation” Meeting that you would be stepping down and passing the torch to Krista Davis. How do you feel about leaving the organization you put so much into?

Brenda: At first I was sad and felt like I was giving a child up for adoption, but Valere Beck said to me, “Think of it as sending a child off to college instead,” and she was absolutely right. In my role as founding president I have strived to make MSN strong so that it could survive and even thrive without me.

To me that is the measure of a successful leader—if what they leave behind still stands, grows, and evolves. I am proud of what we have created as a team and I am so grateful for the education. Krista was on the original founding board and understands the struggle we went through in the beginning. In fact, it was Krista who created the MSN logo. I know that she will take good care of MSN.

LTC Pro: If you could sum up your leadership strategy in one sentence, or even one word, what would that be?

Brenda: That’s easy. It is a scripture from the Bible. I use this scripture everywhere in my life and it has never failed to help me understand what has to be done. It is Mark 3: 24, 25 “And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.” Horrible problems arise from division—division weakens—but if you can inspire people to focus on staying united there is nothing they cannot accomplish.

LTC Pro: Brenda, Thank you for this interview and for your professional contribution to the healthcare and long term care industry with Metropolitan Senior Network.

Brenda: It has been my pleasure, Darlene