

# TLofts: an urban success story

By **Scott Posner**

Principal, red rocket LA Marketing & PR

This past February our client, urban developer Lee Homes, asked red rocket LA to lead the marketing and PR for one of its most ambitious projects yet, TLofts, a new eco-friendly loft community in the heart of Los Angeles' trendy Westside.

Here's a look at how we approached the marketing and PR, and how those strategies helped to make TLofts one of the nation's 10 best-selling communities as recently reported by BuilderOnline.

## who are we and what makes us different?

Down market or up market, every community benefits from having a unique position within the market; an identity, benefit or reason that differentiates it from other communities. Our first priority with TLofts was finding that positioning as this would serve as the springboard for the entire strategy.

## the critical insight

After much research and brainstorming, we realized that buyers who were interested in true urban loft living were, for the most part, restricted to choices in and around the downtown Los Angeles area. This takes a large group of people out of the consideration process, especially Los Angeles Westsiders who are traditionally loathe to move out of this affluent urban area. TLofts, however, offered an authentic urban loft experience in the heart of the Westside. Most importantly, we were the only game in town that could make that claim and back it up. That led to this simple, yet powerful positioning statement:

**TLofts brings the excitement of urban loft living to the Westside.**

## the target audience

Our positioning gave us the "what", next we had to determine the "who" as in who was our target. The nature of the product itself helped us narrow this down. Lofts are generally not

avored by families with young children. They appeal more to singles, the newly married and some empty nesters. And, as we determined in our positioning, we would be speaking to Westsiders.

Additionally, since select units were designed as work/live lofts, we knew we also needed to reach out to creative types such as designers, photographers, yoga instructors and architects capable of working out of a home studio set up.

## building demand

With the project still under construction and the opening six months away, our immediate goal was to begin building an interest list of potential buyers by driving people to the website and/or the temporary sales office.

This is where PR played its first critical role. Pushing the urban loft living in West LA angle, we were able to generate positive press, both online and in print, that drove people to the website where they were asked to provide information and register. Many did.

Concurrent with the PR push, we also launched an online campaign using a combination of targeted keywords and web banners. This, too, succeeded in bringing leads directly to the website.

## traditional media

Our database growing, it was time to launch the fully integrated marketing campaign. In addition to placing ads in local papers and entertainment trades, we gained access to local health clubs, giving us another point of contact with potential buyers. Local cable TV was also included in the marketing mix with a schedule that ran only on the Westside. Like the building itself, the creative we produced had a contemporary, hip feel and spoke to dynamic urban lifestyle TLofts offered.

## online

While traditional media played a key role in promoting TLofts, the online component would prove to be the most critical. Understanding that the majority of buyers prefer researching new homes online, we augmented our web presence and regularly evaluated and optimized our key word buys.

To remain in contact with our interest list, we initiated an email campaign with regularly scheduled sends to keep them apprised of the construction progress, preview opportunities, model tours, grand opening and subsequent events. We

launched a similar campaign targeting the broker community to generate interest among their ranks. Both campaigns yielded high open and click through rates with very few unsubscribes.

## the power of social media

If marketing plans had MVPs, ours would surely have been social media. Our PR department established an aggressive social media presence for TLofts that utilized Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube and blogging. Not only did these efforts help us add to our database and promote events, but it created positive word-of-mouth that spread across other people's or company's social sites as well.

For example, seizing upon the new local trend of gourmet street food trucks, we partnered with the popular Kogi Korean Taco Truck, which had built a large and loyal following on Twitter by using the service to publish its whereabouts and scheduled stops. Arranging to have the truck at the sales office regularly, we were able to create a buzz on Twitter that marked TLofts as a hip destination, bringing added traffic and interest to the project.

Whenever the truck visited, people would line up down the street and wait for over 30 minutes to get their food. While in line, they would text and email friends to let them know where they were, creating a viral component to the marketing that resulted in blog posts, articles and positive press. Most importantly, the presence of the truck directly increased the number of qualified prospects that visited the TLofts sales center.

## grand slam grand opening

With our marketing and PR machine running smoothly, a growing awareness among our target, plus and a healthy database containing over 900 names, we were well positioned for our grand opening.

This event was going to be our best opportunity to prove to buyers that TLofts offered the urban lifestyle they were seeking along with the Westside conveniences they had come to know and appreciate.

Rather than promote the opening as a party with the usual food, drink and model tours, we billed the event as an Urban Block Party and Grand Opening. The idea being that we would make the local neighborhood part of the opening. To do this, we convinced a number of local merchants to set up tables in the courtyard area and provide free samples or discount offers to these potential future customers. In a nod to the building's eco-friendly features, we asked that the items have some relationship to sustainability. The final roster of participants included Bed, Bath & Beyond, Best Buy, Ralphs Supermarket, Trader Joe's, Time Warner Cable, a major wine shop, a spa, an animal hospital and more.



TLofts Urban Block Party and Grand Opening was a huge success. The event drew more than 300 people, ultimately leading to over 20 sales in just two weeks. Since the opening our momentum has remained steady. Sales have continued at a healthy pace with more than 30 percent of the units sold in just over two months.

While our success with TLofts can be attributed to many factors, there are two areas that made all the difference. One: The message never strayed from the positioning. We figured out what TLofts was about and stuck to it. And two: Marketing and PR worked hand-in-hand to achieve synergy across all media. And that's what made all the difference.

