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# WINDOW

## on rental housing

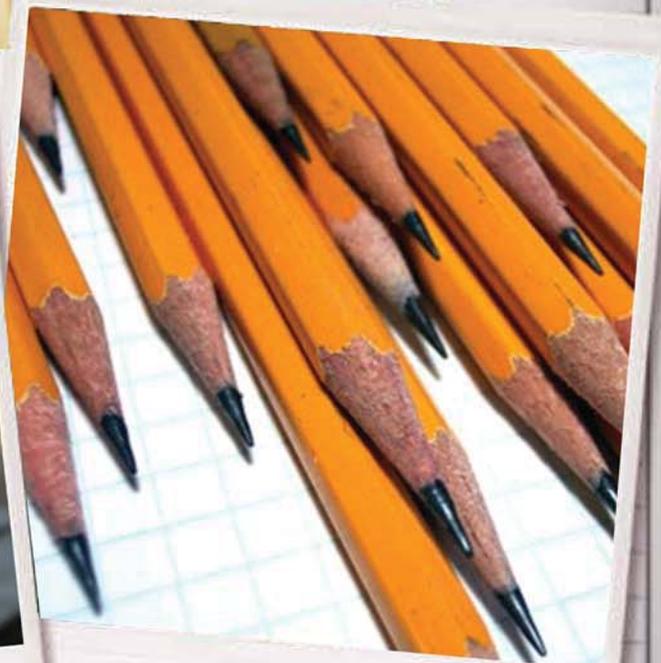
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STUDYING  
STUDENT  
HOUSING



EVENTS

MARKETING



PROTECTED CLASS

Social gatherings are a great way to get to know your residents and for residents to get to know each other. So why is it so hard to get students to attend these parties? Undergrads have a short attention span and what little there is, is consumed by their everyday activities. Today's student demographic is known as the ADHD generation. Author Maggie Jackson describes society and this generation by saying "our techno-dependent, split-focus, hyper-mobile and cyber-centric, multi-tasking culture is creating not just individuals, but an entire society with attention deficit disorder." (Jackson 113) The key to having a successful event is to provide something that will grab the student's attention, that is free, and is readily available."

In order to get a good showing of students in attendance, you must think like a student. What are their priorities? Does the benefit outweigh the costs of attending? The most critical problem is creating an event that is entertaining and appealing. It doesn't matter if they can get there, or pay for it, or if it fits into their schedule; students still will not show up unless it benefits them.

Successful events stem from incorporating general mainstream college student interests. A great example is CollegeHumor.com, a website that is specifically designed to entertain the college student demographic. Granted, there will always be exceptions, but most college students share common characteristics that render them an easy demographic to market to. These characteristics include a short attention span, unintended frugality, and a tendency to follow their hormones. College/youth marketing is no exception to the success of sex appeal in advertising; all you have to do is look at Jersey Shore's skyrocketing reviews.

As always, your budget is a critical piece of your marketing plan. A cost-benefit analysis can help determine if the potential event will be able to yield enough profit to pay for itself. Will this bring a significant number of leases? If so, how many? From



## FOCUS ON AUSTIN

**STUDENT EVENTS:  
GRABBING A BIG PIECE OF  
A SMALL ATTENTION SPAN**

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there, you can determine if your event can afford all the bells and whistles that make it an event to remember.

Even if some students would like to attend, getting there can be a difficult task. Understand that many students don't have cars to get places so make the location within walking distance or near a popular student transportation route. Low-cost or free events will undoubtedly yield higher numbers of attendants, as most college students lack the big bucks to splurge on social events. Students either don't have a job or if they do, it is a part time job. Most students will not attend if it is not free, with the exception of a special event or concert. Also students don't usually plan anything too far in advance without it being a priority to them. Besides festivities that require a ticket purchase or an advanced RSVP you should promote it the week of. It is imperative that you do your homework, so make sure you do your research before solidifying the event date. Check with the University calendar to make sure that there isn't a campus wide event occurring also. Make sure that the date does not conflict with popular student organization dates, such as fraternity/sorority mixers. Make sure you know whom you are targeting and what you want to get out

of this event. Keep in mind that you can't and won't please everyone.

So, how do you get the word out there? Social media is the key to taking advantage of the new hyper-mobile and cyber-centric culture. Create an event on Facebook and invite everyone you can to join. Make sure you have total buy in from your team members and encourage them to help drive attendance. Having a high number of members on Facebook attending, lends credibility and curiosity that will get others to RSVP yes. Have your team members champion the event by expressing enthusiasm on their Facebook wall so that it shows up in the news feed. Students will jump on the bandwagon if you can manage to market the gathering as the "hot spot." Twitter is another key element to event marketing. If your property has a Twitter account make sure to tweet about the event the day before and a few hours before the start time. If your property does not have a Twitter account, consider signing up for one because it is a great way to communicate not only parties, but to talk about leasing incentives and showcase your property to residents and non-residents. It is also a good idea to list the event on your property website to ensure maximum attendance.

You should have a list of your resident's email addresses and in addition to social media outlets, make sure you email them an invitation also. Encourage them to invite their friends so that you are promoting your property to as many people as possible. College students are more likely to attend something if they are able to come in packs.

A way to incorporate traditional and low cost marketing into your planned event is flyer-ing door to door. To conform to the ADD/ADHD-like symptoms many students have, make sure that your advertising is short and to the point so that it adheres to the way the demographic consumes and processes that information. Create an eye-catching invitation that uses bright colors and short concise key phrases. Some guerilla marketing tips are sidewalk chalking and window painting, assuming that the event is not limited to strictly residents. Promotional items are a take away gift that will continue to market the event and your property, long after the party has ended. Students will wear t-shirts around campus as an everyday reminder of what your property has to offer. Get your team members to wear their event t-shirts the week of the gathering in order to rouse enthusiasm.

Promoting a planned event to students can be simple and effective if you understand the demographic you are marketing to. Remember that it can be hard to attract awareness and keep them focused. Keep in mind that students will follow their peers so grabbing the attention of a few, will grab the attention of many. They want to attend something that is free, close in proximity, uncomplicated, and is associated with current pop culture. Once you have them there, make it an event to remember!

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*Citation: Jackson, Maggie. Distracted: The Erosion of Attention and the coming Dark Age. Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2008*