



CATALYST

YOUR STRATEGIC MARKETING PARTNER

CASE STUDY

WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY

○... THE CHALLENGE

Catalyst was engaged by West Virginia University to assist in marketing and leasing efforts for three on-campus apartment communities that are part of a public-private partnership. Of the three properties, one was complete and two were under construction; all three were to appeal to sophomores and upperclassmen as a better alternative to moving off campus. Due to Catalyst's expertise in off-campus housing and marketing to students, WVU requested consulting for their own marketing team, as well as new collateral that would appeal to the students and their parents.

In the marketplace, students perceived on-campus housing as encroaching on their freedom, and instead, students sought off-campus alternatives. The marketplace has few off-campus, purpose-built student housing options, and many students end up living in older single-family homes and duplexes managed by local mom-and-pop management companies, which do not feature any student life programming to enrich the college experience. This scenario presented the perfect opportunity for WVU to capitalize on their newly constructed, highly amenitized apartment complexes, as long as they were positioned in such a way as to still give sophomores and upperclassmen the freedom they desired.

○... THE SOLUTION

Catalyst team members performed a site visit and, after seeing the different complexes firsthand, found that there were three distinct audiences that the apartments appealed to based on the architecture, location, and amenities offered: one primarily would appeal to international students, one to professional students (attending the medical and law schools), and one for the everyday student. Having identified three target audiences, Catalyst created distinct property profiles to reach each target audience. Each profile included a mood board containing color palettes, lifestyle

FROM CREATIVITY AND STRATEGY COMES INNOVATION.

photography, texture and pattern palettes, and logo treatment distinctions to accompany the messaging for each property's target demographic. Catalyst also performed an audit to the WVU housing website to further improve and clarify the messaging and navigation structure on each property's page.

Additionally, Catalyst performed a social media audit for the WVU properties across social media platforms and provided recommendations to the WVU marketing team. The document Catalyst provided the WVU team included recommendations for immediate implementation such as the 80/20 rule, frequency recommendations for each individual social platform, a sample post calendar, and outlined key events in the cyclical calendar of student housing to focus social media campaigns around. These recommendations continue to serve as a guideline for the university to refer to when posting on social media.

Catalyst also performed a public relations audit looking at past media coverage and room for improvement in the local media. Catalyst recommended pitching positive news, providing consistent construction updates, collecting testimonials, and preparing scripts for staff in the event that the media contacts them.

○... THE RESULTS

To introduce The Marq to the Milwaukee market, Catalyst promoted a VIP party to be held at the property prior to the start of the 2014 school year. The new brand was teased in direct mail invitations, email invitations and reminders, and social media posts, all of which drove traffic to an RSVP landing page for the event. Of the approximately 250 people who attended the event, 51 signed leases and another 87 leases were pending guarantor paperwork at the end of the night. The event allowed The Marq to kick off their leasing season with nearly 21% of their beds leased at the VIP event, an increase of 13% from where they were the previous year at the same time in the leasing season.

Since the reveal party, The Marq has consistently stayed ahead of their leasing goals and out-performed their numbers from the previous year. By the end of 2014 they were 54% pre-leased, compared to only 30% pre-leased in the same time period from the previous year.