



Volume 53, Number 1

APARTMENT *News*

18TH ANNUAL

AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE PRODUCTS & SERVICE SHOWCASE



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AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

PRODUCTS & SERVICE SHOWCASE



Using Quick Response Codes for Apartment Communities

by Marketing Geek, from Apartment Marketing Tips



You might be surprised to learn that Quick Response Codes (QR Codes) were originally created in Japan in the mid-90s to track Toyota auto parts. Today, they are everywhere from a soup label to a movie advertisement poster. Potential customers can use their smartphone's QR Code Reader application in conjunction with their built-in camera lens to scan the code and find out more information about the product or service advertised.

As an apartment marketing manager, you can use the popularity of these codes to promote your property. Creating your own QR Code will more than pay for itself in the long run, and you can place them on each advertisement you have, including brochures, email marketing, outdoor signs, and mobile ad banners.

Know your customer base – We cannot stress enough: Know your target audience. If you own an exclusive high-end property, you will not focus advertising inside a public transit bus or train or in discount stores. Additionally, for a blue-collar environment, you won't want to waste time advertising in designer shops and centers. Design a succinct call to action – Once you determine your target audience, your next step is to develop the world's shortest sales pitch. You will only have a few words to capture enough attention to want the potential customer to scan your code. This usually involves giving them something for free. For example, you can use something like, "Scan this code for a week's free rent," or, "Scan me for a 50% savings on your deposit."

Your best tip here is to design a QR Code that works. Don't waste time trying to make it fancy. You want the scan to quickly hyperlink your guest straight to the good information.

Have a mobile-friendly website landing page – Once you have

captured the scan, you have to be sure that scan is going to take them to a landing page that is functional and readable on a small smartphone display. You'll lose them right off the bat if they cannot navigate or see what it is that you offer.

Side note: Developing a helpful application that your current residents can use for further ease of your services will promote retention, which every apartment manager want to see. You can integrate payment services, scheduling services, and a number of other amenities to your residents that will make their lives easier.

Know What To Track – The most helpful tool that comes with QR Codes is market tracking. It isn't the amount of hits that is as important as the length of time those hits linger on your site.

Imagine what that will do for making the most of your advertising dollar! You can pinpoint very accurately where you can increase effective advertising.

Don't miss out on this inexpensive apartment marketing strategy. Make no mistake: QR Codes generate interest. In June 2011 alone, approximately 14 million users scanned these codes to obtain more information about a product or service according to one study. Put the power of QR Code marketing in your hands and increase your occupancy rate. ▲



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THE MAINTENANCE TEAM: YOUR RETENTION RINGER

From Satisfacts

In the 2011 research study, “Getting Inside the Head of the Online Renter,” when apartment residents were asked what factors have the greatest impact on their decision to renew, the highest ranking factor was, “Quality of Maintenance Service Provided.” And in all of our research, time and again, the issue of “customer service” in general always ranks above what we might believe is most important to residents, such as the appearance and condition of the home, parking or resident perks and parties.

Knowing that ‘maintenance service’ is so critical to the resident’s renewal decision, here are some strategies to set up your maintenance team for consistent success:

- As an entire team, sit together and identify the 10 most common service requests at your community. For each of those 10, identify if there is a troubleshooting tip the office can suggest to the resident to see if they can resolve it on their own (i.e. reset button on garbage disposal or outlet), and define 5 key questions the maintenance team would like you to ask regarding that service request to get the best detail possible.
- Follow-up on every completed service request, whether by phone, email, or follow-up survey. Be sure to ask, “Did we complete everything to your expectation?” and “Is there anything else we can do for you?”
- During tours, if you see a maintenance team member, introduce

them by name to the prospect and give some highlights about them such as, “Joe’s been taking care of this community for 9 years now!” or “Jackie and her team are usually able to resolve any service request within 24 hours!”

- Nurture constant communication between the maintenance team and the office team. The better the communication and respect within the entire team, the more comfortable and secure the residents feel about the service they are receiving.

Some maintenance team members may feel more comfortable working behind the scenes and just taking care of their service requests, but the fact of the matter is that their work and resident relationships are the cornerstone of any property’s success! Celebrate their impact on resident retention and leverage their importance at every opportunity! ▲



Why You Should Increase Marketing When Fully Occupied

Marketing Geek

I love when I talk to a perspective apartment community about their marketing efforts and I get the response, “Well, we don’t need any marketing, we’re 100% occupied.” Yes, it’s an accomplishment to reach and maintain full occupancy, but you may want to re-think the idea that you can then cut marketing for the property. The part I love when I hear this from them is helping them see why their marketing shouldn’t be cut but increased.

A fairly new concept in the multi-family industry is a practice called revenue management. This is the same strategy that airlines and hotels use to price their seats and rooms in an effort to optimize their pricing and ultimately their profit. Additionally, crucial to all revenue management strategies is marketing. You can actually increase your Net Operating Income (NOI). One key to implementing a revenue management system at a property successfully is to make sure you continue to have a consistent and predictable sales pipeline. This means that even though the property may be fully occupied you want to continue to market your units. Over time this will ensure that you can slowly increase your rents over time and in turn increase your NOI for the property.

So, as the saying goes, don’t be penny wise and pound foolish. When you reach your full occupancy turn up your marketing so you can focus on increasing your rents!

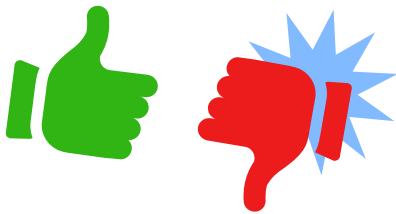
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FROM NAA THE INDUSTRY INSIDER

JUDGE RULES ON NEGATIVE POSTS ON POPULAR REVIEW SITES

Digested From "Judge Says Homeowner Must Delete Some Accusations on Yelp, Angie's List" Washington Post (12/05/12) by Justin Jouvenal

A judge ruled last week that Jane Perez, a Virginia woman being sued for defamation over negative reviews she wrote on Yelp and Angie's List, must delete certain accusations and is prohibited from repeating them in new posts. Contractor Christopher Dietz took the woman to court claiming that her Internet-based reviews of the work he did on her townhouse were false and cost him at least \$300,000 in business. He is now suing her for more than twice that sum. Perez hired Dietz to perform cosmetic improvements in the summer of 2011 on her home, but she quickly soured on Dietz and gave him scathing reviews on Yelp and Angie's List. The list of accusations included damage to her home and charges of stolen jewelry. Dietz has denied the claims. The judge has barred Perez from implying in any future posts that Dietz stole from her home. Dietz has not been charged in connection with the missing jewelry. Attorneys say legal actions regarding online reviews are increasing, as the various websites like Yelp continue to grow in popularity.



AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY RECOGNIZES SMOKE-FREE APARTMENTS

Digested From "More High-Rises in New Jersey Going Smoke-Free" New Jersey 101.5 (12/05/12) by Kelly Waldron

Apartment high-rises that prohibit smoking anywhere in the building are eligible for recognition by the American Cancer Society's Healthy High-Rises program, which allows them to display the Healthy High-Rises decal in the front window to advertise they are smoke-free. "Smoke-free buildings are cost effective because they require less maintenance and result in happier renters," says Dr. Fred Jacobs of the American Cancer Society of New York and New Jersey. Of the 125 apartment communities run by Related Management that have implemented the company's Smoke-Free Initiative over the past three years, 16 are in New York and New Jersey. ▲

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Can You Afford To Lose 67% Of Your Residents?

By Lia Nichole Smith from Satisfacts

Did you know that 67% of customers who stopped patronizing a business did so because an employee treated them indifferently? And of that 67% here's an even more startling breakdown:

- 96% will never complain
- 91% will never buy from that business again
- 100% will tell at least 9 other people
- 13% will tell at least 20 more people

So how exactly does this relate to the multifamily industry? Well, residents are customers and many of the actions they take towards businesses such as retail stores, banks and other services translate over to our world as well. Imagine losing 67% of your resident population, 67% of your occupied apartments. That's a staggering amount of lost revenue and will surely turn your community into a ghost town.

Making sure your community never suffers a significant loss starts with the people hired to manage and maintain it. In "Customer Astonishment, 10 Secrets to World Class Customer Care", Darby Checketts outlined some ready to implement steps that every community will find useful. First things first, start at the employee level.

- Hire the right employees
- Train employees to deliver superior service
- Treat employees with respect
- Show employees how valuable they are
- Measure performance daily
- Reward superior service

Establishing superior service begins by understanding what is most important to residents. Surprisingly enough, what matters most to residents has little to do with price or amenities. According to the 2011 SatisFacts Index, these are the top 5 renewal drivers (in order of importance) when it comes to a resident's overall likeliness to renew:

- Promptness of response to calls and emails
- Follow-up on completed service requests
- Responsiveness and dependability of the office staff
- Courteousness and professionalism of the office staff
- Apartment appearance and condition

Residents do not choose not to renew their lease purely based on a rent increase. In fact, most apartment renters are conditioned to expect some type of an annual increase. What residents are most concerned about, as our research has shown, is the level of service they are receiving for the amount they are being asked

to pay. When these two things are out of synch, residents are more inclined to spend their rent dollars elsewhere. By focusing on what matters most to your residents, and not what we think matters most, will ultimately make the difference in the amount of renewals you are able to secure each month. Here are some best practices your team can execute as they relate to the top 5 satisfaction topics:

Promptness of response to calls and emails – Each community should have a "communication standard" in place. A communication standard is simply a timeframe for responding to residents. An example would be "all calls and emails received by 3pm are responded to by the end of the day and anything after 3pm will be returned by 10am the next business day". Once your community has established this standard, be sure to include it in your outgoing voicemail and auto-responder for emails so that residents are aware of when they can expect a response.

Follow-up on completed service requests – According to the 2011 SatisFacts Index for Annual Surveys, only 47% of residents said they received a follow up call after a completed service request. That leaves 53% of residents out there that could potentially have outstanding or unresolved issues. Having a standard in place for 100% call backs will ensure you are able to catch any problems before they become bigger issues.

Responsiveness and dependability of the office staff – Trust goes a long way when it comes to resident retention. Residents need to feel and believe that their concerns will be addressed and resolved once the office has been notified. Meeting expectations and deadlines are vital to establishing that much needed trust.

Courteousness and professionalism of the office staff – There is a big drop in overall performance residents feel as a prospect then when asked again at time of renewal. According to the SatisFacts Insite Unclosed Prospect survey, apartment hunters scored the office staff a 4.55 on a 5 point scale; this number dramatically dropped to a 4.07 on the Pre-Renewal survey. Remembering to do all of the little things such as greeting from a standing position, using the resident's name and comfortably establishing a rapport goes a long way, even with existing residents.

Apartment appearance and condition – At every interaction with a resident, asking the question, "How's everything going in your apartment home?" can make all the difference here. Oftentimes, residents simply forget to notify the office about small maintenance issues, as demonstrated in the 2011 SatisFacts Index for Annual Surveys. 24% of residents had outstanding maintenance issues the office was not yet aware of. These issues can be as simple as a broken window screen to something more extensive as a leaking kitchen sink.

Residents have spoken and clearly identified what matters most to them. The good news for us is the top 4 factors have absolutely no financial impact on our budgets. These factors have everything to do with hiring the right people, establishing and adhering to set standards, and maintaining a high level of service every day and with each resident interaction. ▲

Superstorm Sandy:

What Happens When It Happens to You?

By Mike Beirne, Executive Vice President -
The Kamson Corporation

What if you weren't simply a voyeur to a tragedy, but instead were living it first-hand?

What if you were a field general and you weren't afforded any weapons?

How would you react when Armageddon actually happened? What would you do?

This is what happened to us in New Jersey recently as a result of Sandy.

Like many of you in this industry I am a take-charge guy. But what if there is nothing to take charge of? You see folks, planning for both before and after an emergency striking is so vitally important.

I wrote hypothetically in the first few lines above, but the "what if" does actually happen. Superstorm Sandy destroyed my state. Not just the coast--the entire state. You saw it on the news. And for us, we became the news.

What lessons can I share with you about this experience? First, you have to focus on the human element--business becomes very secondary. My office manager lost her home, her cars and all of her worldly possessions, and she is still coming into work every day. That, in and of itself, represents a profile in courage. Mind you, she did not live at the beach--if anyone thinks this disaster is strictly a beach event they are sorely mistaken. Some of my regional managers cannot see their homes because the National Guard won't let them.

I have a community on the Raritan River, a good five miles from the Hudson Bay. In another clear profile in courage, my manager hauled 107 new appliances up to the second floor in preparation for Sandy because we had lost 48 units during Hurricane Irene in late August 2011 and they were just rebuilt.

This same manager anticipated the storm surge, and put generators on stilts. What brilliance and forethought. But it was to no avail--the waves that came and landed five miles inland were higher than the stilts.

Less than two weeks after Sandy, we were hit by a Nor'easter and got a foot of snow. The damage has doubled. So for now, since this all started, our situation hasn't gotten better, it has gotten worse.

By nature, we are problem-solvers. What do you do when the problems are so ominous, and the best of us simply do not have answers? You learn, you adapt and you overcome. I have seen people become desperate. Over the past few weeks, I have seen the best of human kind and the worst. When an emergency hits your area, which side will you fall on?

Do you in your business include worst-case scenario planning?

My suggestion is you should. I have been reminded of them many times over the past few years. Tornados, earthquakes, hurricanes, blizzards: the worst-case scenario does happen--and never so as starkly as in this most current event.

Where do you start? And once you start, what are some really important things you learn? How can you infuse them into your business plan? We thought we were smart and had portable generators everywhere, ready to go. But are they useful when you cannot get gas?

Folks, it's not all about business. First and foremost, it's about human beings. You have to adjust your decision-making to comprehend and understand that it's for both your residents and your employees. ▲



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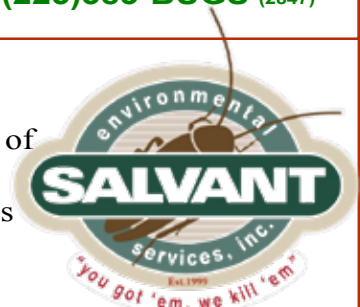
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Superstorm Sandy:

What We Learned

By Mike Beirne, Executive Vice President -
The Kamson Corporation

My previous article focused on what happened in New Jersey as a result of Superstorm Sandy.

The event was devastating, and served as a reminder to the entire industry about the importance of having an Emergency Preparedness plan in place in the event that such a disaster strikes your area.

Following are a few “lessons” we learned during this recovery process:

- **Make sure your communication network is well defined; and ensure that you have redundancy in that communication.**

Cell towers can go dark or have reduced signal just like any other technology. When that happens, mobile phones and email does not work very well. Texting seemed to, and it became my lifeblood for 10 days. Make sure you know your options.

- **There are people who will take advantage of you.** Because for them, pardon the pun, disasters can bring windfall. So, pre-approve a disaster recovery contract with a nearby service provider so that you have one if you need it. Hopefully, you never will. But at least you’ll have one written in stone.

- **Be compassionate.** Your employees and your residents are at wit’s end. You need to be the voice of reason and care.

- **It’s not about property management, it’s about human kind.**

If you manage that way, people will respond that way.

- **Don’t ever lose your sense of humanity.** People count on you, understand their conundrum and show them how you and they can prevail--even if you don’t believe it yourself.

- **Realize the proverbial stuff happens.** It isn’t going away, work it, think it and solve it.

- **Anticipate ancillary damage.** Freezing pipes, compromised gas lines and lack of any vital resources. Be better than the captain of the obvious.

- **Use your friends in our NAA network.** That is what association membership is there for. I had a very informative conversation with NAA-member industry professionals from New Orleans. Their wisdom guided me. Greater New Orleans AE Tammy Sponge and



her group had developed emergency recovery “best practices” based on what happened to them during Hurricane Katrina. It was great. But even better--and most comforting--was to be able to hear from her the progression of events and how they sounded very similar. She has been through this. She was able to help me see the proverbial “light at the end of the tunnel.” And that can really help.

- **Understand the psychological impact that this will have on your staff members.** They have been dealing with all of your residents’ problems and their own. You reach a breaking point. I know I did. I have to assume all your people did, too. Be prepared to counsel this. And again: be compassionate, no matter what the bottom line is.

In the end what I learned is that most of us are very vulnerable. Your title or signature does not draw lines. Collective thought prevails.

You have a lot of very good people on your staff who have learned in their worlds how to adapt and think. Realize how fortunate you are in your life to be part of that very special group of people. Hug your friends, your loves and your best work companions. They truly could be gone tomorrow.

We often watch what happens in the world as if it’s a video game. The next disaster that strikes could happen to you. And when it does, it will dramatically change how you view your responsibilities and your perspective. ▲

Mike Beirne is Executive Vice President of The Kamson Corporation, based in Englewood Cliffs, N.J.

Kamson operates approximately 90 communities and more than 15,000 units, throughout New Jersey and the Northeast.



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Five Home Security Musts for Apartment Renters

by Kevin Raposo, SimpliSafe

Here at SimpliSafe Home Security, we think apartments are a great living choice - they're space-and cost-efficient, they boost community, and they tend to be in awesome locations. Sadly, there's another group of people who love apartments, too: burglars. According to the National Crime Prevention Council, apartments are 85% more likely to be targeted for burglaries than single-family homes. You can make sure your home stays off the statistics list by following a few simple tips.

1. Don't make it easy. Burglars are always on the lookout for an easy mark - an apartment with no people, lots of valuables, and a way to get in and out quickly. If yours doesn't visibly fit these criteria, he'll probably skip it. Switch a low-energy light on when you go out so it looks like someone's home. If you live alone, consider adding a fake name or two to your mailbox or door plate - burglars target solo nesters. Keep valuables like TVs, sound systems and computers away from windows, and ALWAYS lock your door when you go out, even if it's "just for a minute." In the time it takes you to buy that bag of chips and chat with your friend from across the street, a burglar can clean your whole place out (that would really give you something to talk about).

2. Keep a lookout. That peephole is on your door for a reason! Never let someone into your apartment, or even into the building, if you don't know who they are and why they're there. If you've called a repair professional, ask for ID and a work order

before you let him in. Use a site like Neighborhood Scout to become familiar with your neighborhood's crime patterns, and stay a step ahead.

3. Use your neighbors. You all have the same goal - to stay safe - so help each other out! Get to know the people in your apartment, so you'll recognize it if there's someone hanging around who doesn't belong. Make an agreement to tip each other off about suspicious activity (make sure you tell the police and your landlord, too). If there's a neighbor you really trust, and you're going out of town for a while, ask her to collect your mail, babysit your most valuable possessions, and check up on your place occasionally. You can return the favor when she goes away.

4. Run a tight ship. Keeping up with apartment maintenance not only makes your place look spiffy, it makes it safer, too. Trim overgrown shrubbery around the building so that burglars have no place to hide, and replace burnt-out bulbs and outdoor lights quickly. Ask your landlord to rekey all the apartments between tenants. Most importantly, make sure all of your doors, strike plates, and locks are quality, heavy-duty, and professionally installed. Seventy percent of apartment break-ins involve the perpetrator forcing his way in at a weak point: strengthen those weak points, and you can prevent a breach.

5. Invest in safety. A security alarm is a burglar's worst nightmare - it attracts witnesses and authorities, and destroys the chance of a clean getaway. That explains why most burglars don't bother with alarmed apartments. A wireless security system is perfect for people who want top notch apartment security without permanent installation, a landline, or a monthly contract. They're also customizable, so you can choose the sensors, detectors and features that best fit your space, whatever floor you're on. ▲

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Monday, January 21 - Friday, January 25

February

February Luncheon Five Happiness
Thursday, February 7, 2013
\$27.00 per person

Leasing Seminar
Tuesday, February 19, 2012, 2 PM
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March

Maintenance and Managers –
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Thursday, March 7, 2013
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Cosmopolitan Carpet Cleaning – 225-667-2155

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Servpro of Kenner – 504-275-7309

Contractors/Construction

Grant & Associates – 504-733-2999

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Lake Insurance & Financial, Inc
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Integrity Carpet – 504-712-5485
Sherwin Williams Flooring
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Weiner Cort Furniture Rental
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Fast Trash Service – 504-654-7709
Richards Disposal – 504-241-2142
Waste Pro of Louisiana – 504-392-4619

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Allstate: Kelly Buckwalter
– 504-469-4800
Allstate: Eddie Corcoran – 504-469-6400
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Commercial Coin & Laundry –
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Mac-Gray – 504-813-8789
Pierce Commercial Maytag
– 985-626-7852

Website/Internet/Marketing Apartments

365 Connect – 504-299-3444

Maintenance Product & Service

HD Supply – 504-884-2460
Ideal Appliance – 504-888-4232
Johnstone Supply – 504-733-1495

Multifamily Housing Software

On-Site.com – 214-577-2932

Online Education

CallSource – 818-596-3833

On Site Security Service

Vinson Guard Service – 504-529-2260

Painting Companies & Painters

BLP Mobile Paint – 504-834-5455
Helm Paint & Supply – 504-419-4029
Sherwin Williams Paint – 504-461-0728

Pest Control & Bug Specialist

Colonial Exterminating – 504-443-1016
DA Exterminating – 504-888-4941
Fischer Environmental – 985-626-7378

J&J Exterminating – 504-833-6305
Orkin – 504-464-0073
Salvant Environmental – 225-383-2847

Plumbing

Dr. Pipe Plumbing – 504-833-7072
Roto Rooter – 504-329-9772

Plumbing Parts

The Plumbing Warehouse – 504-378-8300

Property Savings Program (Orleans Only)

Clearesult – 504-523-9788

Real Estate Auction

Gilmore Auction Realty – 504-468-6800

Recycling Services

Phoenix Recycling – 504-322-7551

Resident Screening

Core Logic / SafeRent – 615-595-7337
Landlord Shield – 618-283-7055
Tracepoint – 504-482-2223
Trak 1 Technology – 866-998-7251

Resurfacing

Surface Restoration – 504-231-1871
Quality Resurfacing – 504-432-9495

Roofing

Independent Roofing Systems
– 601-922-4301

Solar Energy

South Coast Solar – 504-529-7869

Storage

Elmwood Self Storage – 504-737-7676

Telecommunications &

Cable Service

AT&T – 504-830-1993
Cox Communications Multi Dwelling
Units– 504-358-6870

Website Marketing

G5 – 541-693-4904

Wireless Internet

Data Shark – 985-373-7452

Utility Management – Submetering

NWP Services – 402-421-1668



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