

APARTMENT

Awards of EXCELLENCE





BANQUET, **PRODUCTS** & SERVICE SHOWCASE

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2014 NOMINEES

Maintenance Tech 151 Units Plus

Desmond Mayfield – Shelter Corporation – 1st Place
Keith Potter – Apartment Homes by Tonti
Martin Tavira – The Domain Companies – 2nd Place
Carl Brown – Latter & Blum Property Mangement
Kerry Ledoux – Apartment Homes by Tonti
Jerome James – HRI Properties
Ramon Coleman – Latter & Blum Property Management

Leasing 151 Units Plus

Victoria Henri – HRI Properties - 2nd Place
Sandra Berlier – Apartment Homes by Tonti
Ashley Chaisson – Asset Plus Properties
Aline Bryant – 1st Lake Properties
Delilah Lombard – Apartment Homes by Tonti –
1st Place

Manager 1-150 Units

Mardell Evans – Latter & Blum Property Management
Lacy Jerome – 1st Lake Properties – 2nd Place
Melissa O'Neil – Asset Plus Properties – 1st Place
Cindy Vallejos – HRI Properties
Misty Munster – 1st Lake Properties

Manager 151 Units Plus

Terrie McCurdy - HRI Properties - 2nd Place

Angela Comstock – Apartment Homes by Tonti –
1st Place
Stacy Becker – 1st Lake Properties
Inika Mitchell – Latter & Blum Property Management
Genevieve Oxford – Domain Companies
Helen LeBlanc – 1st Lake Properties

Assistant Manager 1-150 Units

Ashley Burke – The Lane Company – 2nd Place
Michele Labat – HRI Properties – 1st Place
Assistant Manager 151 Units Plus
Gema Anderson – Asset Plus Properties – 1st Place
Leslie LeBlanc – 1st Lake Properties
Tania Phillips – Latter & Blum Property Management – 2nd Place

Jessica Bridges – HRI Properties

Stephanie Woullard – 1st Lake Properties

Jenifer Deleon – Apartment Homes by Tonti

Resident Service 1- 150 Units

Ramon Lainez - HRI Properties - 1st Place

Resident Service 151 Units Plus

David Dominguez – Apartment Homes by Tonti
Enrique Contrera – 1st Lake Properties
Terrance Evans – HRI Properties – 2nd Place
Anton Osoinach – Apartment Homes by Tonti – 1st Place
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LOOKING AHEAD TO 2015: THREE TRENDS SWEEPING MULTIFAMILY COMMUNITIES

By Nick Alicastro

As the new year approaches, multifamily owners must be prepared for the new wave of multifamily amenities and industry trends that are emerging. As resident preferences and demands continue to evolve, these trends can reveal a significant amount about a property's target market and become vital to ensuring a community's long-term success.

In order to stay ahead of the curve, a multifamily community needs to understand the wants and needs of its residents and future residents, as well as what its competitors are offering. In doing so, owners and investors can ultimately add value to their communities, maximize revenue, drive traffic and reduce turnover.

1. COMMON AREAS THAT BUILD A SENSE OF COMMUNITY.

The number of families and young professionals who are residents of multifamily communities is continuing to grow. As a result, younger families are spending a significantly longer time renting, which has led to an increased demand for environments that create a sense of community and "home."

As we approach 2015, the trend of creating large, outdoor spaces and common areas that build a sense of community are becoming more and more popular. These new outdoor spaces include large gathering areas where residents can socialize, as well as bigger clubhouses, outdoor theaters, car wash stations, and dog parks, among many others.

These added amenities establish a sense of "home" for residents and create an environment where they can interact with friends, family and neighbors. By building this added connection, owners and investors are able to deliver a better living experience for residents while also reducing turnover rates by up to 10 percent.



2. MODERNIZING UNITS.

The demand for more modernized units is also on the rise as we move into the coming year. This can include upgrading units with more modern appliances and implementing additional technology features.

These upgraded unit features provide an opportunity for owners and investors to increase revenue while also decreasing maintenance costs. For example, at Western National Property Management the wood-like vinyl flooring being installed in several of our communities presents a higher initial installation cost, but will last twice as long and require less maintenance than carpeted units. As a result, ongoing maintenance costs are reduced substantially, as well as providing the opportunity for higher rental rates and increased revenue.

Another aspect of modernizing units is keeping up with changing technology. This includes items such as installing wall outlets that feature USB ports, as well as upgrading units with energy efficient appliances.

By implementing the latest technology features and energy efficient appliances, owners and investors are able to help drive traffic to a community while also reducing energy costs for owners and residents alike.

3. ENHANCED CONCIERGE SERVICES.

Multifamily communities are also taking convenience to a whole new level in 2015. Many communities are now partnering with third-party vendors to provide added services for residents. This includes partnering with vendors such as Restaurants on the Run, a food delivery service that allows residents to have food delivered from dozens of area restaurants, among many others. These partnerships create an additional level of convenience for residents and add to the overall appeal of a multifamily community. This increased appeal will ultimately drive traffic to a community, as well as provide opportunities for premium rents.

Ultimately, as the coming year approaches it is essential for multifamily communities to pay attention to the changes and shifts in resident's wants and needs. These shifts lay the foundation for a community's success and largely impact its bottom line. The greater emphasis on creating spaces that encourage community interaction, more modernized units, and enhanced concierge services will only continue to gain popularity in 2015, as residents demand these upgrades in their multifamily communities.



5 TIPS FOR A SMOOTH MAKE READY

By Steven Lefkovits

Apartment make-ready maintenance requires some planning and thought. The tasks required generally differ slightly from property to property, and there can be issues between team members when everyone is not on the same page (or even reading from different books.)

Here are some tips that can be used to ease the make-ready process:

- Have a clear organizational system. All people involved in the make-ready need to understand the steps. In other words, if your property is keeping track of the steps on a dry-erase white board, ensure everyone understands any abbreviations, color code, or format. In addition, make sure the whole team is documenting their contribution as required to keep the board up to date.
- Have a "Turn Time Expectation" in mind for all scheduling. We all are aware of the apartments in our communities that will need a demolition crew before the apartment can be painted. Let's be realistic and figure out a way to schedule so that leasing staff can plan a move in date, and the maintenance staff can prioritize tasks. (Most companies I speak with settle on three to five days.) This time can be adjusted if needed if renovations are taking place.

- Don't fix anything you're your first time in the apartment. Use this first inspection to document needed repairs that may be outside the norm. This would be where we take pictures for resident charges, if any, and make notes for any specialty contractors such as tub resurfacing.
- Go left to get it right: Have a plan of attack for the vacant apartment's maintenance needs. I was taught to start at the front door and follow the left wall all the way around the apartment. This way the technician can be assured that once they get back to the door the entire apartment has been inspected and you know what needs to be done to do it the right way.
- List then fix. During that first trip around the apartment, focus on what needs to be done instead of doing it. Make a complete list of parts and tasks that are needed to get the apartment ready. This will cut down the amount of trips to the shop for parts.

The best method to ensure that make-ready tasks are not overwhelming is to keep open lines of communication. The office team should know what stage of the make-ready every vacant apartment home is in, and the maintenance team should always know the top priorities at all times.





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DAMAGE CONTROL

By Lauren Boston

I got out of a real jam last month.

After five years in the same apartment, my roommate and I were moving out. She was recently engaged and moving in with her fiancé. I was 90 percent happy for her, 10 percent being all, 'WHAT IS HAPPENING?!' Fine, 80/20.

Point is, I was more happy for her than I wasn't. But her exciting news meant not only looking for a new apartment of my own, but reconciling any potential damages left behind at the old place.

Now, it's not like the apartment was in shambles. A sweep here, a dusting there—I was no Susie Homemaker, but I had a fairly kept home. But for every clean nook and cranny, there was a large Proactive stain on my roommate's bedroom carpet, a spaghetti sauce "incident" in the living room and a grease situation in the oven that can only be described as unsightly.

Like it or not, I was bracing myself for a few budgeted charges at move-out. And then, by some miracle of miracles, my final bill came in the mail two weeks later and it was ...nothing. Do damage fees, no spaghetti subtractions—nada.

This was great (if not surprising) news for me, as well as my former management company, who didn't have to pester me for any additional payments. But what's a collections department to do when it's not so simple?

When it comes to the status quo on rent collections, apartment managers no longer have to accept skips and evictions due to non-payment of rent as an unavoidable blight on the leasing cycle. In fact, a rise in "anti-collection" rent payment strategies and technology solutions promise to alleviate property managers not only from chasing down bad debt balances, but also from having to collect monthly rents at all.

Rent from payroll, in particular, enables residents to self-select automatic payroll deposits to an FDIC-insured account administered by an independent rent assurance provider, which then delivers a lump sum rent payment to the property on time every month. Since residents' employers automatically forward funds from payroll every pay period, there's no chance of funds becoming discretionary income and spent elsewhere.

Like on Etsy. Hypothetically.

Even if a resident faces job loss, the accrued balance in rent from payroll accounts often cover additional rent payments. Anti-collections technologies and strategies like rent from payroll also alleviate the friction in the leasing office between managers and residents when it comes to paying rent, and provide ongoing assurance for predictable cash flow.

'Cause despite what you've been told, mo' money, less problems. A



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THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKPLACE PRIORITIZATION

By Arletha Grandison

Are your employees engaged? Are they truly motivated to achieving your property's goals and objectives? Are you sure?

Only 29 percent of North American workers are engaged in their work, according to the State of the Global Workplace, a 142-country Gallup study. And when you look at the worldwide stats, this number drops to a measly 13 percent.

Thus, the bulk of employees worldwide—63 percent in fact—are "not engaged," meaning that they lack motivation and are less likely to invest discretionary effort in organizational goals or outcomes. Additionally, 24 percent are "actively disengaged," indicating they are unhappy and unproductive at work—and they're liable to spread negativity to coworkers.

This translates to roughly 900 million not engaged and 340 million actively disengaged workers around the globe. Wow. That's humbling.

But don't assume this lack of engagement is simply due to bad employees. In fact, it's often the CEOs fault if workers aren't engaged, posits Stephen Meyer in this Forbes article. Meyer writes:

"A friend of mine named Don Rheem runs a company called Engagient, and he has a counter-intuitive approach to employee engagement. 'A lot of CEOs think high employee engagement is something they have to program into people,' he says. 'That's not true. All the so-called triggers of engagement are hard-wired in the brain at birth, and the neurological default setting is to be a valued participant in the workplace tribe. The real challenge facing CEOs is how to avoid the life-sucking influences from a toxic culture or manager that suppress these intrinsic motivators."'

So as a leader, what can you do to boost employee engagement? One thing is to create a culture of recognition. While giving praise for a job well done is important, it's just the beginning. Meyer says the best leaders understand the "why" of recognition because they frame it through the lens of employee engagement.

"They understand that employees have a deep psychological need to perform their jobs well and to help their organizations succeed," he says. "Smart leaders don't just tell people, 'Nice job' and walk away. They personalize praise. They take the time to map an individual success to the innate talents and qualities that enabled that success. Ultimately, the message they communicate is 'I get why you're good.' That's the most deeply satisfying thing employees can possibly hear. They won't remember the words you said. But they'll remember the 'feeling' that you, a person with high standards, know good work when you see it, and take the time to notice."

There are so many ways to build recognition programs that it would fill a series of articles. But one thing is consistent with any kind of program—cash isn't the motivator you think it is. Research has found that employees work harder for noncash tangible incentives and appreciate these gifts more because of the emotional pull tangible rewards possess. (For more insight, check out this Inc. article.)

Beyond sales incentives, corporate events that thank and recognize employees for their contributions are also a means of boosting morale and overall satisfaction. Think of ways you can incorporate celebrations throughout the year. Did you know that 94 percent of employees would be disappointed if there were no holiday festivities at their workplace? But to make the event meaningful, more goes into it than reserving a venue and hiring a caterer. Check out this previous post for ideas.

Depending on the size of your staff, consider an annual employee awards program that recognizes outstanding performance for sales, customer service and any other measureable metrics you can build into the program. Commemorate achievements with an award that can be displayed in the winners' offices as a reminder of past accomplishments and a motivator for continued success.

In the spring, give others a hand by doing some charitable work. Bonding during a neighborhood cleanup or Habitat For Humanity project gives employees an opportunity to give back in a meaningful way.

In the summer, host a company picnic. Go to a baseball game. You could even sponsor a local 5K or half marathon. There's something invigorating about working a water station and supporting those running for charity. The point is to get employees out of their workstations to interact on a personal level and develop and strengthen relationships with each other that in no way happens in the

office on a daily

basis.



And don't forget about the little things—welcoming a new employee on his or her first day, celebrating staff birthdays and honoring

employment anniversaries. Giving small, thoughtful gifts—such as these gourmet chocolate chip cookies—throughout the year shows employees that you're always thinking about them.

But the most important ingredient in any recognition program, whether large or small, is sincerity. Design recognition programs around what is truly valuable to employees and you'll reap the rewards.

In fact, increasing employee engagement programs by 10 percent can grow profits by \$2400 per employee per year, according to Workplace Research Foundation via Graziano Associates. And there's more: Increased employee engagement can boost customer satisfaction by 12 percent, which in turn can raise revenue and margins. Improved employee engagement can also reduce annual sick days from 6.19 days on average for disengaged employees to 2.69 sick days for those who are engaged.

The bottom line: Spending time and resources on increasing employee engagement pays off not only monetarily but also in the overall wellbeing of everyone involved. Herb Kelleher, co-founder and chairman emeritis of Southwest Airlines got it right: "Your employees come first. And if you treat your employees right, guess what? Your customers come back, and that makes your shareholders happy. Start with employees and the rest follows from that."

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YOUR ROAD MAP TO EXECUTING PROMOTIONAL MARKETING STRATEGIC PLANS TO PERFECTION

By Valerie Hayman Sklar

This is the final blog in a three-part series on planning for success in your marketing strategy. Be sure to catch up on parts 1 and 2.

What's the cornerstone for any promotional marketing plan? A sound strategy. Without a strategic plan, it's impossible to accurately determine budgets, select branded merchandise, assess what's worked in the past...and what hasn't. (Check out the 10 ways strategic planning will benefit your marketing programs in Part 1 of this series.)

Strategic plans are the road maps for your marketing campaigns, and they're essential for knowing where you're going. To make it to your destination, every strategic plan must contain five building blocks: Beginning with the end in mind; thinking outcome, not product; putting your audience first; thinking about packaging and distribution; and building in ROI. (For more on the essential building blocks, see Part 2 of this series.)

So once you have the strategic plan complete, you're done...right? Wrong! In order for your ideas to truly come to life, you must execute your strategic plan.

Your Strategic Plan: Executing It To Perfection

To get the most out of your strategy, follow these seven tips for successful implementation:

1. DEVELOP A COMMUNICATIONS & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

While some communities have the authority to develop marketing plans on their own, most are receiving directives from the property management company. Unfortunately, some things get lost in translation. Here's why.

Let's say the corporate vice president of marketing develops the strategic plan and orders the appropriate branded merchandise to support it. These promotional products are delivered to the individual property managers who, in turn, give the items to leasing consultants for distribution. The problem: the leasing consultants have no idea what to do with the merchandise so they either give away the promotional items incorrectly or don't give them out at all—resulting in a failed promotion and waste of money.

Thankfully, there's an easy fix. Develop a communications plan that



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complements the promotion. Include written directions on the items included in the promotion (from promotional gifts to interior signage and support materials—and everything in between), the criteria for who qualifies to receive the branded merchandise and how these items are to be distributed. Work with your promotional consultant to make sure there are instructions for each item in the promotion to ensure nothing gets missed.

2. DETERMINE A SCHEDULE

Part of the written documentation should be a schedule and timeline of how the promotion will work. You may want to email this out prior to the promotion start time so the properties allocate any necessary staff time to prepare.

For finite promotions, there should be a start and end date. Include any steps to be done or accomplished at interim intervals. For ongoing promotions, include reorder instructions if more items are needed. Provide a timeline on how long reorders take so staff can plan accordingly and not be left empty handed.

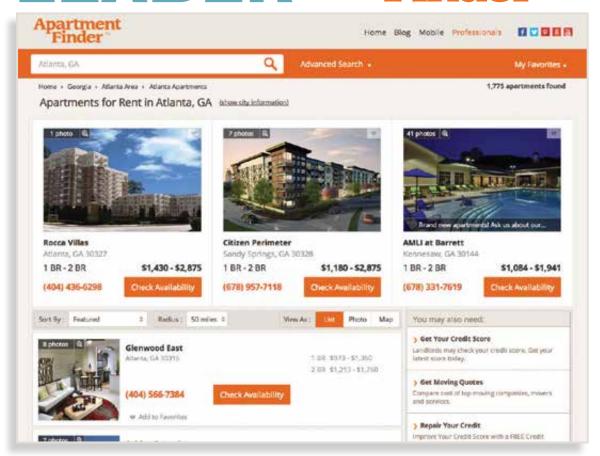
3. LOOK FOR WAYS TO CONSOLIDATE ORDERING

For property management companies, you have options when ordering items, especially staples that each of your locations use. Depending on the type of product and order quantity, you don't simply have to order branded merchandise with the corporate logo. You may be able keep the economies of scale of a larger order and be able to imprint individual property logos by grouping them together and doing a simple copy change.

Branding the actual property name (rather than the management company) goes a long way with attracting local prospective residents, so work with your promotional consultant to see what options are available.

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4. ALLOCATE ASSEMBLY TIME

Many promotions consist of multiple items that must be packaged together prior to giving them to recipients. For example, let's say you're attending a housing fair. To entice booth visitors to share their contact info to build your prospect list, you're giving away t-shirts.

Rather than reaching into a cardboard box and handing them out (not a way to make a good first impression), you want a way to package them to increase the perceived value of the gift, plus you need a way for the tees to be displayed neatly on a table to spark up conversation in the booth.

One way is to consistently fold and roll the t-shirts so the logo is visible then secure them using a ribbon imprinted with the property name. Additionally, you can include an information card by punching a hole in the top left corner and then threading it through the ribbon before the bow is tied to complete the assembly.

While this is simple to put together, you can't wait until the night before to start. Allocate staff time to complete the task, or work with your promotional consultant to have the assembly taken care of prior to delivery so all you must do is unpack the box at show time.

5. FACTOR IN SHIPPING TIME (AND COST)

One way to quickly derail a promotion (and you budget!) is expediting freight to ensure delivery. Plan well in advance and work with your promotional consultant on the production schedule. Always add in a couple extra days for unforeseen delays in production or transit interruptions due to inclement weather.

Additionally, look at the logistics and how it relates to shipping. If you're ordering a product in bulk that will in turn be delivered to numerous individual properties, can the shipments be split at the manufacturer and sent directly? Work with your promotional consultant to determine the options available. It takes some planning at the beginning, but this will eliminate the need to ship goods to the headquarters and then reship to each community—in effect, doubling your shipping costs.

6. HAVE A 'PLAN B'

Even with all the planning in the world, unforeseen things can happen to impact the effectiveness of your promotion. Here's an example:

A property was hosting a resident appreciation event by having a coffee giveaway. Staff was to set up a coffee station at the property entrance and offer on-trend travel tumblers filled with a favorite locally roasted coffee to residents as they left the property in the morning to go to work.

Unfortunately, the day of the event was much colder than forecasted. The staff moved the event inside the leasing office, but in doing so, only saw about 1/3 of the traffic from residents. All communications about the event indicated the coffee station was going to be located at the property entrance, and even though the staff put up some impromptu signs inviting residents to come inside, the majority didn't have time to stop. As a result, the promotion didn't go over well, there was product left over and residents didn't feel appreciated.

Lesson learned: Always include a contingency plan with promotion instructions so staff can act according to your wishes in the event of something unexpected.

7. TRACK & MEASURE ROI

How do you know if the promotion has been successful? This goes back to building metrics into your promotion (read Part 2 for details) and then using the communication plan to explain how you want the properties to track the data and report back.

The leasing consultants and community staff must know what to do when they give out the branded merchandise. Whether it's sending an email to a designated person at the time of giveaway or making notes in a spreadsheet to be submitted at program completion, clearly define expectations in the communications plan.

For example, perhaps your property offers online rent payments but few residents are taking advantage of the service. Conservatively, let's say that having a resident use the online service saves five minutes of staff time per unit when compared to processing traditional paper checks. With 12 residents signing up for the online service, that gives staff an extra hour a month or 12 hours a year. With 24, you gain an extra two hours a month or 24 hours annually and so on. Of course, you'll want to look at your own processes to determine the actual time spent/time saved.

When staff have to manually process payments, you're not only losing

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those hours but also incurring the opportunity cost to take advantage of staff being able to tackle other tasks on property. And you can assign a dollar amount to these costs by multiplying what you pay your staff per hour by the number of hours it takes to process payments. Take the total cost and then divide it by the number of payments processed, and you have the cost per resident.

Looking at this figure, you can determine how much you want to spend per resident to get them to change their behavior (move from traditional payment by check to online transactions) and then work with your promotional consultant to select branded merchandise within your budget parameters to not only promote the program but also reward those who make the switch.

With all of these calculations described above, you can also determine ROI based on the number of conversions and total overall spend to conduct the promotion.

Regardless of the campaign you're conducting, metrics are essential to be able to measure effectiveness so you know what programs to repeat, which ones to course correct for next time and which ones to avoid altogether.

YOUR SUCCESSFUL MARKETING PLAN

As we've talked about in the previous installments of this series, the goal of any promotional marketing plan is to get your property name into the hands of your intended audience. Branded merchandise, when

used correctly, with purpose, can enhance the experience residents have with your brand so they think positively of your community and want to live there year after year—and tell their friends to live there, too.

Use the building blocks in Part 2 and follow the implementation tips above. Combine these with your own experience, trial and error—tailor the plan to your specific audience and goals. You have all the tools necessary to work with your promotional consultant to build amazing promotional programs together.

Best of luck crafting and implementing your promotional marketing programs based on a foundation of sound strategy. The road map is before you; are you ready to take the trip? Here's to your success!





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Maintenance persons will have the option to take all five courses for \$125.00 and receive a certificate of completion at the annual Awards of Excellence or pick and choose classes they would like to attend for \$30.00 per person. Each person will receive a certificate that they attended each class. However the only way to have a certificate of completion is to attend all five classes.

Should a management company register a maintenance person to attend all five courses and that person leaves the company the management company will be allowed to replace that maintenance person.

Below are all the topics that will be covered in 2015:



If you are interested in registering maintenance persons for the entire BATT course fill out the registration form. Flyers will go out before each course takes place. If a maintenance person registers for the full course they will not have to register each time for the class. If you have any questions contact Tammy at 504-888-2492 or email tammyesponge@aagno.biz.



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Sneak Peek for 2015

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Apartment Association of Louisiana Fall Education Conference September 17 Apartment All Stars with special guest, Jackie Ramstedt

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