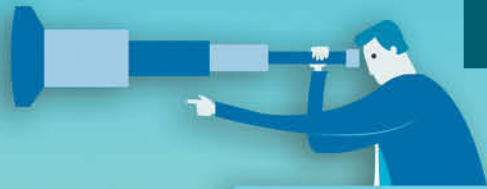


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FALL 2015

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Targeting Your Market



ALSO INSIDE

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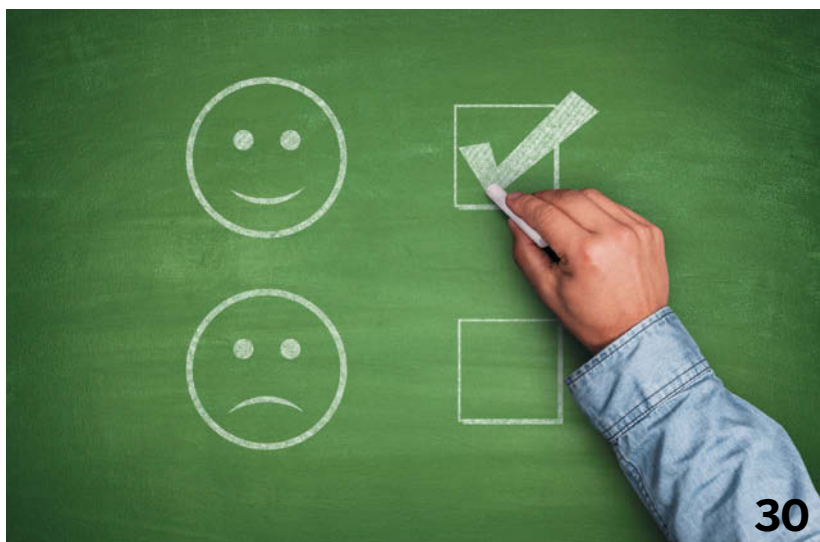
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Published for
Florida Apartment Association
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www.naylor.com

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PUBLISHED AUGUST 2015 / FAP-Q0315 / 1206

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Rewarding Reflections

BY **RON WENZEL**, BH MANAGEMENT

Leave this world a little better than you found it.

— *Robert Baden-Powell*

As I look back on my year as FAA president — the culmination of a number of years as a volunteer leader with FAA — I can't help but think about all the people who have helped me along the way, from when I first started in the multifamily industry, what seems like a lifetime ago.

There have been a few influential leaders in my career starting with my very own sister Linda M. Nunn, a former regional property manager (RPM) with Mid-America Apartment Communities (MAA), a real estate investment trust in Austin, Texas. I learned much from my former bosses, Mike A. Wells, Alan P. King, and Gary Parrett. From my good friend and former association executive John Mitchell at the Apartment Association in Tarrant County (AATC) in Fort Worth, I learned about what it takes to be a good leader in terms of association involvement and volunteerism.

Among the lessons I take with me from those early interactions, I learned you only get out what you put in. I also think it's important to allow our association executives the freedom to run their local affiliates and teams the way we expect or want our leaders to manage us. This practice or philosophy holds true in anything you do or get involved in or with. I gladly give up my time and knowledge back to the people of an incredible industry that has done so much for me both personally and professionally.

As president of the Florida Apartment Association, I was fortunate to have Josh Gold at the head of the FAA staff team, and the growth and successes we have experienced are largely due to his leadership. Josh has been an amazing leader and addition at FAA and he has kept the staff engaged and motivated. He has given the staff a real sense of belonging and pride. But, more importantly, he brought the staff together as a productive, inclusive, and cohesive team. He has allowed each of them to become creative and a real contributor. He has empowered them to be a part of the team and to be heard and included in decisions. Each staffer

at FAA — Ralph Robinson, Courtney Barnard, Rona Long — now has his or her own areas of expertise. And, through Josh's leadership, he has done what all great leaders do, and that is to allow them to flourish and do what they were hired to do in the first place and what they are each capable of doing.

I'm also grateful to my local association executive, Chip Tatum of the Apartment Association of Greater Orlando. I think when it comes to Chip all I can say is that he has been extremely resourceful in how well he can relate to our business, having been in it and on-site himself. He is a very understanding, patient, professional, and extremely responsive individual and leader for AAGO, and an excellent liaison for FAA and NAA. The same holds true for Peggy Queen at the First Coast Apartment Association as well. As for Greg Brooks of Southeast Florida Apartment Association (SEFAA), he has a wealth of knowledge about association management as well as hands-on experience as a real estate investor and entrepreneur.

As I'm reflecting back on my contributions to this industry and this organization, I'm also thinking about how I would pay forward what I have learned. If I had the opportunity to advise young people considering a career in the multifamily industry, I would tell them to be committed and patient, and to learn all they can from their leaders and peers. Never stop learning, earn your professional designations, and get involved. Do your best to lead by example, and always treat others the way you want to be treated.

And as I think about the many changes we have seen in this industry in recent years, I encourage the up and coming leaders of FAA to be open and ready to change. What worked yesterday may not work today.

The multifamily market is constantly evolving, and this organization is evolving with it. I have done my best to leave it better than I found it, and I look forward to supporting incoming president Glenn Evers in continuing its progress. ▲



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What's Your Brand?

BY **JOSH GOLD**, CAE, CMP
FAA EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

"We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You."

— Tom Peters, *'The Brand Called You'*

Whether you are a professional in multifamily housing or at one of the companies that provides products and services to the industry, you know that part of your professional responsibility is to present your community or represent your company in the best possible light. Establishing and protecting the "brand" of a company, organization, or community is critical to business success. It's so critical that several articles in this issue of *Multifamily Florida* include ways to help you do that better.

But I also want you to think about your personal brand — what *you* represent and how *you* are perceived. And I want you to think about how the FAA and your local affiliates can help you build and improve that brand.

When you think of popular brands, you probably think of a logo or a slogan, or

both. The Nike swoosh and "Just do it." McDonald's golden arches and "I'm lovin' it." Those are important because they're memorable. But a brand is much more than those external elements. Marketing expert John Jantsch, founder of Duct Tape Marketing, defines branding as "the art of becoming **knowable, likable, and trustworthy**." As you define your personal brand, those are good qualities to aim for.

First, *you* need to know who are and what unique assets you bring to every encounter and business dealing. Start with an honest assessment. "How is your product or service special? For example, what is your personal trademark? Is it speedy service? Is it going the extra mile to exceed expectations?" writes Bruna Martinuzzi, president of Clarion Enterprises Ltd., on American Express's Open Forum website for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

"Whatever distinguishes you, be clear about it so you can articulate it and do it with perseverance." She also recommends creating a brand mantra of three to five words. Think of it as a slogan, but it's only for yourself. It will help you stay focused on who you are and how you want to go forward.

Being likable doesn't necessarily mean in a personal sense, but rather as someone people want to do business with. Do quality work — without exception. Deliver on promises and keep your word. Be consistent. Those practices will make you not just likable but will also go a long way toward making you and your personal brand trustworthy.

Martinuzzi offers a number of specific strategies to improve your brand — some you'd expect, like building your skills so you can own your brand with confidence. Others, you might not have thought of, like "Drop the mercenary approach." She asserts that giving of yourself, doing pro bono work, and sharing your wisdom and

knowledge will give you “a reputation for generosity of mind and heart.”

You also have to communicate your brand, or what good is it? You don’t need the advertising resources that the major national brands have, but you do need to make yourself visible, economist Tom Peters writes in “The Brand Called You.” He offers several suggestions for how to do that. You could take on a new project at work to introduce yourself to new people and showcase your skills. Maybe teach a class at a community college or within your company. Write a column or opinion piece for a local newspaper or your company’s employee newsletter. Make a presentation at a conference or workshop.

I propose to you that the FAA and its local affiliates offer similar opportunities to gain visibility — and at the same time build that reputation of generosity Martinuzzi talks about.

- **Serve on a state or local committee.**

At the state level, there are opportunities to serve on the legislative and government affairs committee, conference committee, APAC board of directors, FAA board of directors, (executive committee and the budget and finance committee), and Product/Service Council (for suppliers). An editorial advisory committee is in the works to help staff identify topics and sources for articles in this and other publications. Local committees vary by affiliate, but many of the same opportunities are available.


- **Volunteer to lead a local event, or at least to help with it.** Lead a discussion or be on a panel at a dinner meeting. Organize a golf tournament or other fundraiser. Propose a webinar that your supplier company can sponsor. Ask your local leaders how you can contribute.

- **Help build the FAA’s legislative platform and participate in legislative days in Tallahassee.** Each year, FAA members, staff, and professional lobbyists identify the issues most important to the multifamily housing industry in the coming year. Position papers and proposed legislation are drafted and then, at the beginning of the annual state legislative session, members meet with legislators and their staff to present the FAA’s position and concerns.

And let’s not forget the importance of networking. A big part of building your brand will be word-of-mouth. Networking is a big component of all of these FAA opportunities and of FAA University, this year’s Annual Conference & Trade Show. There’s no better time and place to share your personal brand and get great feedback from your peers and other professionals.

We tend to focus a lot on our communities or companies and their reputations

and brands. And while that fulfills the commitment to a current employer, keep in mind that a well-developed “you” brand is a win-win. Not only does it help you determine your own long-range career and personal goals, but it also benefits your employer and your community by enabling the best use of your personal strengths. How can your brand and your company’s brand synergize to become a win-win? ▲




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TARGET Your MARKET

Focus Strategy to Fill Apartments

BY LAUREEN M. CROWLEY

So you're feeling pretty good about marketing your apartment community. You have listings online and in shopper magazines, and you have signs inviting passersby to see your model. You've taken some creative approaches, such as working out a deal to distribute fliers at a local restaurant in exchange for promoting the restaurant to residents. You've trained your leasing agents about how to interact with prospects when they call or come in, and how to present your community in its best light.

You've used every marketing strategy you can think of — at least those that fit within your budget. So why aren't potential residents streaming in to see your property? And when they do come in, fill out an application, and take a tour, why aren't more of them signing a lease?

Maybe the problem is that you are using what marketing and advertisers call a broadcast or shotgun approach. If you throw enough information out into the market, some of it will likely find its target, but much of it will miss. Are there ways you could zero in on your target audience more efficiently? Or what if instead of directing your marketing *out* toward prospective residents you were able instead to entice qualified renters to come to you?

"The point isn't to try to find the people that *you* want to live in your community," explains Jacob Gerber, chief marketing officer for Rentping Media, an apartment marketing consultancy firm. For one thing, you'd risk running afoul of federal Fair Housing laws. "Rather, the point is to reach the people who *want* to live in your community, as effectively and efficiently as possible."



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ATTRACT THE BEST RESIDENT MATCH

With the traditional approach of “outbound marketing,” you might identify a general pool of prospects — college students if you’re near a university, Baby Boomers if you’re a 55-plus community, pet owners, people of a certain income level. You make sure your listings and advertisements highlight features you think they’re seeking, and you hope enough of them are looking for an apartment and will consider your community.

“Inbound marketing” starts with really zeroing in on your target — identifying what Rentping Media calls the “buyer persona” for your community. Determining that persona involves asking several questions, writes Rentping staff writer Jake Meador in the e-book *Survival Guide for the Solo Apartment Marketing Team*.

- Who is buying what you’re selling?
- What is their daily routine?
- What problem of theirs can you solve?
- What do they want their apartment experience to be?
- What are their turnoffs?

BABY BOOMERS AND SENIORS

Today’s Baby Boomers and seniors have a longer life expectancy than previous generations, and many of them are considering, not idle retirement, but an active “third act,” either continuing to work past the traditional retirement age or pursuing other passions. Studies show that they’re downsizing and often moving back to urban cores, looking for an active lifestyle with a minimum of maintenance and stress.

People over 55 account for 60 percent of growth renter households, according to National Multifamily Housing Council (NMHC) research. Even if your community is not restricted by age, it’s likely that Baby Boomers — generally defined as those born between 1946 and 1964 — account for at least some of your residents and prospective residents.

Many Boomers and seniors are Internet-savvy and may indeed conduct apartment searches online, like their younger counterparts. But they are also likely to have grown up reading a daily newspaper, and still do consume their news in print, not just online or on television.

That means if you’re targeting the Baby Boomer and senior market, you’ll want to consider including at least some print advertising in your marketing budget. In fact, one community reported a 100 percent increase in visits to its website — immediately after running a full-page newspaper ad.

At the same time, Meador writes, you need to know your value proposition. That includes one or more defining characteristics — location, affordability, luxury — plus the features and amenities that make your community unique.

“Every community has its tightly defined niche market,” Gerber says. Once you have painted a picture of who you are, it’s critical to “tell that story, front and center,” where your targeted audience is likely to find it.



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11:45 am – 12:45 pm	AE Council Meeting
11:45 am – 1:00 pm	Lunch Provided by FAA
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm	Board of Directors Meeting
5:00 pm – 6:00 pm	Reception with Legislators
6:00 pm – 8:30 pm	Legislative Briefing Dinner

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When you post that story on your company or community website, you'll want to include plenty of pictures — they are, as the saying goes, each worth a thousand words. Even better, if at all possible, post videos, especially “a full walk-through video tour so you feel like you're walking through it. Let them see the finishes; let them feel the space.”

You'll also want to include written policies and other details. “The more you put out there, the more it saves staff time,” Gerber says. People shouldn't be calling with basic questions such as whether you allow dogs. And you don't want to waste their time and yours by conducting a tour, only to have the prospect say, “This isn't quite what I was looking for.” By the time prospects call or visit, they should be saying “I love what I see.” [For more on making the most of on-site tours, see *Lease it Like a Lease-Up* by Kate Good, on Page 16.]

It's not true, however, that if you build a fabulous website, they will come. You need to help prospects find your website. One way to do that, of course, is to use an Internet listing service (ILS). But you also need to be aware that Internet-savvy



The point isn't to try to find the people that you want to live in your community, rather, the point is to reach the people who want to live in your community, as effectively and efficiently as possible.

millennials — the fastest growing group of renters, according to several recent studies — are going to search for you in other ways. So how's your SEO (search engine optimization)? Do you know how — or even whether — your community shows up in searches through Google, Bing, Yelp, or Yahoo? If you're not showing up at or near the top in all local directories, it might be worth investing in ad words or other paid online marketing.

Checking your rankings once won't cut it, Gerber adds. “This changes all the time. You need to keep auditing what technologies are out there, and keep auditing who's living in

your community.” And, you'll also want to be sure your website is mobile-friendly, or risk having Google reduce its ranking.

Keeping up-to-date on your community's buyer persona and online presence are not enough, says Toni Blake, multifamily consultant and an Apartment All Star.

“If you're not using research and other resources,” Blake says, “you're making decisions based on your opinion.” Possible sources include citydata.com, the National Apartment Association, National Multifamily Housing Council, and Multifamily Insider. [Read more insights from Blake in *Hyperlocal Mobile Marketing* on Page 20.] ▲

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Lease it Like a Lease-Up

Strategies for Lease-Up Performance and Inside Tips for Apartment Communities Competing With New Construction

BY KATE GOOD

A well-orchestrated and well-executed plan for presenting a new apartment community to the market can build the buzz necessary in today's world of high-tech communication. And what if yours is a stabilized community that has completed its lease-up? It may be tempting to rely more on being able to show an existing community and less on building a well-rounded marketing plan. But if you want to keep your existing community competitive, you'll need to employ many of the techniques familiar to lease-ups. This insider's guide will enable you to create and execute a winning strategy to reach — and maintain — your occupancy and economic goals.

Before considering some specific tips for enhancing your effectiveness on a tour, think about who your customers are and how you are reaching them.

Your existing residents can be a good source of insight into who your future residents could be. Encourage your on-site team to interact with residents as much as possible to learn how your residents spend their free time, where their favorite spot is to hang

out, and what in general what their lifestyle includes. Once these important questions are answered, then use this invaluable information to market in all the right places.

Marketing is no longer about your customer finding you but rather you finding your customer. This is the key differential in using your niche to maximize impact with your target renter. It is up to your brand to cross their path, and your people are a big part of making this happen.

RETHINK MARKETING

Today it is estimated that prospects are already 57 percent of the way through the buying cycle before they ever engage with a human being — proving the power of digital influence. With much of a prospect's investigation being done online, companies need to create an online environment to help customers perceive the product — your community — in an optimum way. Maximize every opportunity to populate all digital advertising with photos. Mix up standard photos by overlaying some witty swag (sayings, quotes, hashtags, and otherwise fun words) and even toss in some short

videos. Don't forget to take pics of the things that drive your niche in the marketplace.

INVEST WHERE THE CUSTOMER LANDS

Creating or revamping your website to deliver real signs of innovation starts with an investment in what you offer residents in their living experience. If you are trying to create something more interesting than your competitors, don't look to your competitors for ideas and inspiration. In fact, don't even look at another apartment community website — it will only taint your opportunity to be unique. Instead, what makes your community unique and special? Leverage technology so those aspects are what your website spotlights. Keep in mind that online consumers are more impatient than ever, and be sure your website is engineered for speed. Design an innovative user experience, but keep it simple, transparent, and elegant.

PREP TO PERFECTION

When you are ready to show your community, focus on creating memorable experiences. Create an interesting environment



that gives customers the feeling of walking into what it is like to live at your community. You want the customer to come in touch with the vibe and be drawn into resident life.

First impressions are big, so there's no excuse for showing space that's looking less than its best. Cleanliness has a psychological component. If prospective residents see a dead bug or a piece of trash, they're going to think the whole space is dirty and poorly maintained. For any models and vacant apartments on your daily "show list," take time to turn on the lights, adjust the thermostat, and run water in the bathrooms to get rid of trapped sewer smells. Freshen up by fluffing pillows, removing yesterday's fingerprints, and vacuuming footprints out of the carpet. For busy days, such as Saturday, place some fresh edible treats on the counter and load up the fridge with refreshing drinks. This will encourage your guests to stay in the space longer and start to see themselves living there.

Today, everyone is in a hurry and everyone's device needs a charge. Use this knowledge to your advantage and create a charging station in the leasing office or

model apartment. This will remove the device from the customer's hand so they will not text or take calls when you need their undivided attention to make a positive impression.

Remember that the tour starts from the moment the guest drives into the property. Ensure that the walking route they'll follow stays manicured, from the "Future Resident" parking space, through all of the amenities, to an available apartment.

Speaking of amenities, plan a route that invites the customer to view features like the pool, parking options, and the clubhouse before showing the apartment. You want the customer to make the buying decision in their potential new home knowing all the value your community has to offer. Discuss in detail a list of nearby service businesses and entertainment options. Selling the area around your community is a solid step to closing the lease.

CREATE A VISION

The ability to help prospective residents see themselves living and working in a space is a major showing differentiator. Floor plans are essential, but there

is nothing like actually walking through the space and helping the prospective residents mentally place their furniture in each room. This cannot be adequately accomplished by sitting at your leasing desk and using your pen to point to things on a paper floor plan.

Update your model with furniture from retailers geared to your prime market demographic, then place the catalog pages on pieces to show prospects how they can get the same look. A less costly visualization tool is a "mini-model," which uses accessories such as towels, wine glasses, or bathroom accessories to create ambiance. To maximize the impact of a model or mini-model, use a theme or have items that the customer will certainly see and remember. Include something unexpected, so that you stand out as they are looking at several rental home options.

Marketing materials are a must on-site, even when prospects have already visited your website or received a mailer. Boards



**APAC is your advocate
and helps to elect
pro-multifamily industry
candidates from across Florida.**



— **Ed Malone**
Regional Vice President
Camden Property Trust



— **Shawn Wingate**
Regional Director of Operations
Carlisle Property Management



— **Bonnie Smetzer**
Partner, Executive Vice President
JMG Realty

APAC, while unknown to many, is one of our industry's strongest resources impacting the good work we do every day in providing living excellence to our residents. Having a voice in governing our industry allows us to set high standards and do the right thing but just as importantly protects us from the unintended consequences of government initiatives targeting "real estate" but not necessarily the multifamily industry.

There is a clear need to have a collective voice in support of multifamily housing in Florida in the political process. APAC raises awareness of critical issues impacting multifamily housing with political leadership in both parties. There is a choice: Either engage in the political process or risk having others' agendas imposed upon us. APAC is committed to ensuring our voices are heard now — voices that will only become louder as our PAC grows.

I believe strongly in supporting APAC because it represents the interest of all apartment owners and managers in Florida. I have worked in apartment management over 28 years in Florida and have seen how important it is to have a strong united voice for the apartment industry. Together we have kept laws off the books that would have negatively impacted our industry and have successfully worked together to change laws that were causing harm to our operations.

**Your freedom to do business
depends on our continued ability
to advocate for your issues!**

This insider's guide will enable you to create and execute a winning strategy to reach — and maintain — your occupancy and economic goals.

on easels can highlight energy use, amenities on-site or nearby, and apartment finishes. Aerial blowups remind prospective renters about valuable proximity to transit, airports, and highways, and to help them calculate drive time to their jobs.

PRESENT THE BENEFITS

Too many leasing consultants just open the front door and step back instead of presenting the space. And you can't present space if you don't understand how it fits a prospect's needs. Understanding a prospect's needs can also help you recognize early if the apartment you intend to show is a good fit. Ask prospects about their interests, what they don't have in their current apartment home, and why they're

relocating. Do this early in the visit rather than at the end of the show, when they are walking out the door because they did not see something that meets their needs and expectations.

Another important question to ask up front is how much time you have to show your community, because you're almost certainly one of several stops today. We find that you can also "earn" more time from customers when you start to show them what they are looking for. Make this tour worth their while.

FOLLOW UP EARLY AND OFTEN

Just as critical as a great presentation during the show is effective follow-up. That should begin the moment the tour ends.

Set up a second meeting with prospects as they leave the property. The Apartment All Stars favor follow-up within the first 24 hours as a way to remind prospects of your community.

Photos are another way to help a prospect keep your property top-of-mind. As part of your follow-up, email a link to a website with pictures or a virtual tour to keep your apartment community top-of-mind. Another low-cost option: Make an on-the-spot video with your smartphone, and e-mail it to the prospect. ▲

Kate Good has worked in the apartment industry her entire life, from a leasing consultant to a developer and owner, and is currently building more than 1,000 apartments in her home state of Texas. She is also one of the most in-demand speakers in the our industry, presenting to over 15,000 industry professionals each year while 11,500 people actively follow her blog and social media interactions. To find out more, visit www.KateGood.com



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HYPERLOCAL Mobile Marketing

Building the Effortless Resident Experience

BY TONI BLAKE

From sipping a Coke with your name on the can to ordering M&Ms with your photo on them for your wedding, it's not unusual today to see marketing that is extraordinarily personalized. Likewise, our residents and future residents want an apartment experience that is customized to their wants and personalized to their tastes. Marketing to a specific niche may not be enough. Your marketing may need to be hyperlocal.

"Hyperlocal" is a relatively new technology buzzword that has multiple meanings. For our purposes, hyperlocal means having an in-depth knowledge about a specific location — the area surrounding your community. It also means you need to know how the area shows up in searches, including on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets.

Researchers from Wearesocial.net reported in January 2015 "mobile penetration" in North America is 101 percent, with a global average of 98 percent. (Many people have more than one mobile number.) Simply put, mobile is having a serious impact on our marketing plans. It's important to know how to access the mobile digital services in your local area. After all, you don't want your customer to be MORE informed than YOU!

Putting digital mobile resources to work for you begins with finding valuable and trusted information sources. This is a critical component in business success, writes Bill Gates in his book *Business @ The Speed of Thought*: "The most meaningful way to differentiate your company from the competition is to do an outstanding job with information. How you gather, manage, and use information will determine whether you win or lose."

If you find the information and deliver it to your customers, that builds their confidence in you and enhances their customer experience. "You need to give your customers fewer reasons to be disloyal," writes Matthew Dixon in the book *The Effortless Experience: Conquering the New Battleground for Customer Loyalty*. "The best way to make that happen is to reduce customer effort." Providing effortless experiences by making valuable information available to your customer could be the tipping point in the decision to lease and, later, to stay a resident of your community.

Be sure to capture screenshots and collect hyperlinks to all the great information you find. Share them with your current residents, on social media, and when you send follow-up emails to potential future residents.

Here are some ideas to get your research started.

GOOGLE.COM

Begin your search in a close radius around your community. American Express OPEN forum reports, "The dynamic digital ecosystem of Google, local online directories, mobile and social media is enabling companies to easily connect with customers in specific areas and allowing customers to connect with local companies on a level never seen before." Simply enter your community's address into Google, and then ask for nearby retail, dining, entertainment, and services.

AREAVIBES.COM

AreaVibes.com screenshots can show future residents important decision-making

information from your hyperlocal area. Walkscore.com scores a community based on what's within walking distance, availability of public transit, etc. AreaVibes.com gives a more complete "Livability Score." The score, up to a maximum of 100, is calculated using a unique algorithm that takes into account dozens of characteristics in seven different categories, including nearby amenities, cost of living, crime rates, education, employment, housing, and weather. The reports, maps, market data and statistics on cost of living and crime are all built into an easy to share report with summarized details in beautiful graphics.

SENIOR HOUSING

A Place for Mom is a fantastic online resource for senior housing. Not only does it help families find the right home for Nana and Papa, it also provides information, guidance, and advice that managers of senior communities can use to build a resource center for residents, their family members, and other caregivers. Don't be fooled by age! Senior living decisions are often a three-generation family event. Grandkids want to know where Nana and Papa are going to be and will look up your community and online reputation. A Place for Mom is the largest assisted living referral service. It is paid for by participating communities and free to you and your future residents.

GRUBHUB.COM

Student housing resources are hyperlocal to the closest campus and city. And



what's more important to students than food? When building a leasing portfolio for a student community, you'll want to include screen shots of great local restaurants that deliver. Enter your property address into **GrubHub.com** and you'll see restaurants that deliver to that locale as well as lots more that let you order and pick up your food. You can search by cuisine, restaurant name, or menu item, and results are filtered accordingly. Orders can be placed online or by phone, free of charge. The site also includes access to reviews, coupons, special deals, and a 24/7 customer care team that tracks each order and makes sure you get exactly what you want.

URBAN LIVING

There are many changes coming our way in urban areas, including some exciting new trends in transportation. The Deloitte University Press produced a report titled *Digital-Age Transportation: The Future of Urban Mobility* that includes fascinating

forecasts for systems, scenarios, and trends that will be important to all of our new urban residents. Today, many urban areas provide shared rides, bikes, and light-rail options. As the community manager in an urban market it is important to be the information leader for your current and future residents to guide, advise, and direct them toward their best urban experiences.

Wherever your community and whatever your niche, start clicking and enjoy these valuable links and resources. Happy hyperlocal mobile marketing!! ▲

Toni Blake is one of our industry's favorite keynote speakers. She tours 50 cities each year and her insight and expertise have been published in more than 48 industry trade magazines. She is a contributing author of the Apartment All Stars Complete Guide to Apartment Leasing. To learn more, visit TotallyToni.com.

DIGITAL BREADCRUMBS

Here are additional links to follow as you explore online.

- Apartments.com's innovative POLYGON search feature: www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUPGY2UBFyg
- wearesocial.net/blog/2015/01/digital-social-mobile-worldwide-2015
- Bill Gates' 10 Rules for Success: www.youtube.com/watch?v=wq-gba5nMrc
- Matthew Dixon's *The Effortless Experience: Conquering the New Battleground for Customer Loyalty*: www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/25119618-the-effortless-experience-conquering-the-new-battleground-for-customer
- American Express OPEN forum article: www.americanexpress.com/us/small-business/openforum/articles/acquiring-engaging-customers-using-hyperlocal-marketing
- Deloitte University Press report *Digital-Age Transportation: The Future of Urban Mobility*: www.slideshare.net/GaldeMerkline/digital-agetransportation

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FAIR HOUSING, FIRE SAFETY, and Veteran Homelessness

BY COURTNEY BARNARD



Although Florida's legislative session has been over for several months, FAA has been monitoring legislative developments from municipal to national levels.

At the national level, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the hotly anticipated disparate impact case, *Texas Housing Authority v. The Inclusive Communities Project Inc.* The court released a 5-4 opinion to uphold disparate impact liability, meaning the court decided that business owners may be unintentionally creating environments of discrimination with regard to fair housing, even though they have not violated federal fair housing law.

Disparate impact focuses on the effects of a business practice, not just the intention. Even a business that follows the law can unintentionally discriminate against people in a protected class, such as based on race, gender, or age. Two previous disparate impact cases had been brought before federal court, but both cases were settled before an opinion was released. This lack of precedent makes the Supreme Court ruling very important, and it will most likely set the stage for how future disparate impact cases are handled in court.

The Supreme Court's acknowledgment of disparate impact may create new legal challenges for those developing and managing multifamily properties across the United States. FAA is working closely with the National Apartment Association to analyze the Supreme Court decision and will continue to update its members on the impact of the bill in Florida.

Looking closer to home, many local jurisdictions in Florida have recently proposed new or increased fire inspection and/or assessment fees. These fees have come up in Leesburg, Gainesville, Haines City, St. Cloud, and others. Many municipalities have faced recent cuts

▼
The Supreme Court's acknowledgment of disparate impact may create new legal challenges for those developing and managing multifamily properties across the United States.

in allocations from the state government and are increasing local taxes and fees to make up lost revenue.

Many local fire departments have seen a reduction in state funding, and this has led to an increase in both inspection and assessment fees. Cities or counties charge per-unit or per-community fees to have a fire marshal or other fire safety expert physically inspect the sprinklers, hydrants, and other features of a property to assess the level of fire safety in place. In addition to the inspection fee, if a community does not pass, it faces fines and the possibility of additional inspections. The fees provide revenue to fund new fire equipment or make up for budget shortfalls.

Fire assessment fees are often based on past use of fire department services. Many cities will levy a property tax surcharge on

single-family residences, businesses, and apartment communities to cover anticipated fire department costs. Apartment communities often disproportionately bear the brunt of these costs and FAA is working with local affiliates to create issue papers to help fight or negotiate these fees. If your city or county has created a fire inspection or assessment ordinance and you need help negotiating this issue, please contact FAA for assistance.

Lastly, FAA has joined NAA in supporting the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program. The initiative, known as HUD-VASH, is a collaboration between HUD and the VA to end veteran homelessness. According to NAA, "Eligible veterans experiencing homelessness receive a Housing Choice rental voucher from HUD, paired with VA-provided case management and supportive services to sustain housing stability, support recovery from physical and behavioral health issues, and address other challenges." The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness estimates there are 41,500 homeless individuals in Florida, including 4,552 homeless veterans. For more information on how you can become involved in solving this critical issue, please contact Courtney Barnard, FAA government affairs director, at Courtney@faahq.org, or Greg Brown, NAA vice president of public policy, at Greg@naahq.org. ▲

Courtney Barnard is FAA's government affairs director.



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Become an Extraordinary Salesperson by

Being Relevant

BY LORI SNIDER

There is always something new to learn when shopping properties. Sometimes, I'll discover a new technique or have the opportunity to see an expert in action.

Recently, I learned there is a big disparity between intent and reality.

Visit 1: Leasing professional shows me a lovely property, but keeps telling me to "Go visit the website" for the daily prices. This is said repeatedly, even though I have indicated that I am looking for my mother, she has just put her home on the market, and isn't even convinced she wants an apartment. There is no attempt to have Mom come in, experience the place, etc. (Though when I suggest it, they say, "Sure! We'd love to show her around.") No, "I will take care of you, and make sure your mother is happy" moment. Just, "Go visit the website for further information. Your quote will be good for 72 hours."

Why would I rent an apartment online at this point? Mom hasn't even seen it.

Intent: "I am being helpful and giving you resources."

Reality: "In this market, all anybody cares about is the price, and I know that. So make sure you see the prices and are OK with them before you waste my time again. Come on back when you're really ready to buy."

Visit 2: While in the golf cart, the bubbly leasing professional says, "I need to tell you about four things, because 'they' will be emailing you to make sure I covered them." She then goes on to tell me about her guarantees, and that part of Mom's rent will be put aside for a home down payment. (Mom is selling her house; she doesn't want to own anymore.)

When I ask, "What do you get for telling me about all this?" she replies, "I get to keep my job."

It gets better. As we leave the apartment, she says, "I know you're not ready yet, but I have to ask, would you like to leave a deposit?" I just look at her.

Intent: I might get shopped and will get in big trouble if I don't hit all the bases, so I am going to say things that you and I know are completely irrelevant to your buying experience and I will cushion the blow by removing myself from the equation. This way everybody is happy."

Reality: I just threw my company under the bus because they have made mandates that you and I both know are irrelevant to your needs. Frankly, I resent it. I will do it, but I will let the client know it's really not me doing the talking, it's the corporate heads. After all, I need to keep my job, but I also need to lease apartments."

Visit 3: I dub her the "speed talker" because I only understand every third word. (Remember, Mom has just put her house on the market, and isn't with me.) I am told about how I can't use the double doors in the fitness center because they don't work, so I am to come in and

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Listen to what your clients are telling you, and be responsible to help them get what they want. Think about what you are saying — does it matter? Is it relevant? What meaning is being conveyed?

out a specific door. And, I pretty much hear every rule and regulation as part of the sales presentation. And this is relevant — how?

Intent: I am funny and witty and keep the tour going nicely.

Reality: I have been here a long time and have my shtick just right, and it ensures somebody is talking. It also ensures I do not have to think.

So, what was learned?

If you are a corporate executive, or anyone that creates policies and guidelines, understand the more you force people to “follow the script,” the greater the chance an irrelevant presentation will be delivered. Seth Godin offers interesting perspective on compliance and innovation. The more we demand people comply, i.e., “You will tell every client about each of our corporate programs,” the less innovative they will become.

There is nothing wrong with mentioning your company and the quality professed. Nor is there anything wrong with talking about company programs — as long as the client cares. Start placing more focus on the result rather than the process. Rather than mandating, focus on hiring the right talent, and teach technique in building trust, listening skills and following through.

Leasing professionals, I think highly of your talents and the profession you have chosen, and I think you work very hard.

That said, it is time to step up to a higher-level game.

First, never throw your company under the bus. It makes you look bad.

Second, listen to what your clients are telling you, and be responsible to help them get what they want. Think about what you are saying — does it matter? Is it relevant? What meaning is being conveyed?

Third, commit to working hard. It’s easy, and often tempting, to fly by the seat of our pants in this business. Shouldn’t it be enough to know your floor plans, pricing, and availability? If you’re really good, you might even be able to describe a specific apartment. The trouble with preparing much beyond that is it takes time, and you have to do it, even if you don’t really feel like it.

Exceptional salespeople work hard to always have the answers and show an alternative perspective to objections. They understand the key to competence is in knowing the details, and being able to communicate them confidently, with conviction.

If you find yourself saying the same exact thing at the same exact crack in the sidewalk during every presentation, change it up! Take a different path, try a new technique, have more fun. Understand the pitfalls and consciously work to avoid them.

The best salespeople are in it, not just for the money, but for the people they can help. By assisting in finding the solution, they build trust and referrals, and go home every day confident they have made a difference. Zig Ziglar used to say, “Help enough people get what they want, and you’ll get everything you want.”

In the end, the one who really suffers, or benefits, is the person looking for an apartment.

Take it up a notch. Choose to be extraordinary. ▲

Lori Snider is a professional presenter, educator, author, and sales and marketing strategist serving the multifamily industry. To learn more, visit www.lorisnider.com.


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CHECKING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: RARE OR WELL DONE?

BY LEAH BREWER



I eat my steak rare. Actually, I order my steak medium; it is just rare that I eat steak. Yet the mouth-watering photos in the menu at the steakhouse showing melt-in-your-mouth beef persuaded me to order the filet mignon, imagining my experience would meet my expectations.

Instead, I remembered why it is so rare I eat steak: I know my experience will *not* match my expectations.

The steak was good. Not great. Just good. Perhaps it was my fault expecting awesome greatness, believing my heightened expectations would actually be satisfied. So when the manager came by our table as is customary

in many restaurants, asking the standard “Everything OK tonight folks?” he got what he expected to get: a weak nod of acceptance from a patron with a mouthful of food. Yet his customer was unsatisfied. His system of checking customer satisfaction failed.

He failed to get good information. He does not know I expected *great* and only received *good*. He does not know I will not return. He does not know I will not refer this steak house. He is happy in his belief that “Everything is OK.”

Successful marketing of our apartments attracts prospects, and then great sales skills turn prospects into residents. These new

residents expect the level of service we touted in our advertising and boasted in our sales presentations. The photos and verbiage in OUR menu — our brochure — defines our customer’s level of expectation.

Do we have a system in place to check our customers’ satisfaction, or have we failed to discover that our residents expected *great*, and received *good*? We often discover we have lost their patronage and their referrals only upon receiving their move-out notice, which is too late. We were happy in our belief that “Everything is OK.”

I am a typical consumer. Unless extremely dissatisfied, I simply accept my unfulfilled

expectations and say nothing. Although I wasn't totally satisfied with my steak and had decided not to patronize or refer this steak house, it wasn't a horrid experience worth verbalizing my disappointment to management.

But what about the management system that failed to discover customer dissatisfaction? The question asked was formulated to get a positive response rather than a truthful answer. To report "95 percent of our guests said everything was okay" doesn't mean you truly have satisfied customers who love your service and who will return and bring friends.

Small changes would have gathered better information. The manager, walking by our table, asked "the question" mid-stride. His feet were pointed in the direction he was walking, not toward our table. His body was turned away from us, and he did not make eye contact or engage us conversationally. He asked "the question" designed to get agreement, and then he nodded and went on. And he only asked once.

Small changes could have made a difference. Suppose he walked up to our table as if we were his destination, rather than

just passing by. What if he had introduced himself and stated his appreciation that we chose to dine in his establishment, giving us time to swallow our food and engage in the conversation. Suppose he asked a question designed to get factual information: "Did the food meet your expectations?"

Suppose he asked a second question: "Would anything improve your dining experience tonight?"

In contemplating how easily small changes would have provided truthful and complete information, I understood how *we make these same mistakes*. A resident drops off rent and we say, with body language still focused on the project in our hands and still seated behind our desk, "Everything OK in your apartment?" We get the answer we expected: a weak nod of acceptance or a standard answer of "fine." We will hear about the major concerns, yet it is often the small dissatisfactions that eventually cause a resident to move out.

Small changes will impact retention and referrals. Stand up and engage residents when they give you the opportunity. Make time for them, and you will let them know how important they really are. Ask

questions designed to get truthful and complete information that you can use to raise your level of service: "Are we meeting your housing expectations?"

Ask a second question in a different way: "Is there anything we could be doing to improve our level of service to you?" Or, "Can you think of one thing in your apartment that our maintenance team could service this month?"

Design your system to check customer satisfaction and get honest feedback and information that will help meet and exceed your residents' expectations. Once you know you have satisfied residents, you can honestly and easily ask for continued residency and referrals ... and know that everything is WELL DONE. ▲

Leah Brewer, NALP, CAM, is known as The Leasing Queen for the creative and compelling leasing techniques she employs to fill apartment vacancies, with 30 years of battlefield experience in multifamily housing, from a leasing consultant to a consultant for leasing. Learn more at www.FullHouseMarketing.com.

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The Marketability of Community

There's More to it
Than You Might Think

BY TRISH HARRIS

Clearly, few things are more important to an apartment manager's success than the effective marketing of his or her apartment community. It's so critical, in fact, that we've devoted this entire issue to the topic. This article, however, is not about marketing *your* community. It refers to the internal and external marketing of *community* — something very different, but also invaluable to success.

Marketing community has a lot to do with creating that unique sense of belonging,

being understood, finding kindred spirits, and knowing you're missed when you are not around. It's about relating and connecting, caring and being cared about, and, essentially, it's about mattering. We all want to matter, and when we are a part of a community, we are assured that we do.

A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

The concept of community has been around for a very long time. In fact, one might trace it back to the days of the cave dwellers, when people formed tribes and lived

together with a shared sense of belonging and of purpose. Since those times, mankind has created countless types of communities designed to bring people together.

In 1974, psychologist Seymour Sarason introduced the concept of "psychological sense of community" as "one of the major bases for self-definition." Among the many related studies to be conducted over the years that followed, the most influential has been McMillan & Chavis's 1986 work.

McMillan & Chavis define "sense of community" as "a feeling that members

have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together." They identify four elements of sense of community:

- Membership
- Influence
- Integration and fulfillment of needs
- Shared emotional connection

THE POWER OF A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

What does a *sense of community* have to do with apartments, apartment living, and apartment management? A lot! After all, an apartment community has all four of the factors a sense of community comprises. Let's examine each element closely from a multifamily housing perspective...

According to McMillan & Chavis, the first element — **membership** — consists of five attributes: boundaries, emotional safety, a sense of belonging and identification, personal investment, and a common symbol system. Each of these attributes can readily be related to apartment communities, with the first four being self-explanatory. The fifth (a common symbol system) includes such things as a property's architecture, signage, and logo.

The second factor, **influence**, is directly related to empowering those who are a part of an apartment community. According to McMillan & Chavis, "People who acknowledge that others' needs, values, and opinions matter to them are often the most influential group members, while those who always push to influence, try to dominate others, and ignore the wishes and opinions of others are often the least powerful members." Apartment managers who listen to their residents create an empowered environment that people don't want to leave.

Element three, **integration and fulfillment of needs**, is about not just talking the talk, but also walking the walk. Apartment managers need to live up to their promises, do what they say they will do, and be attentive and responsive to their residents' needs.

The final factor, **shared emotional connection**, say McMillan & Chavis, seems to be the definitive element for true community. If you consider your apartment community's

DOES YOUR PROPERTY HAVE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY?

- If you took a leisurely walk around your apartment community, could you readily identify examples of each of the elements discussed in this article?
- When you think about your apartment community, do your thoughts elicit feelings of warmth, safety, and connection?
- When you talk with a prospective resident, do you mention things about the environment that clearly reflect a sense of community?

If you cannot answer yes to all of these questions, perhaps it's time to develop a plan for marketing community!

Marketing community has a lot to do with **creating that unique sense of belonging, of being understood, of finding kindred spirits, and of knowing you're missed when you are not around.**

story, you are likely to identify a history of experiences your residents have shared and — in some cases — through which they have grown more closely connected.

INDUSTRY NOMENCLATURE

Multifamily housing has its own market-ing language. It includes such terms as:

- Resident, rather than tenant.
- Owner, rather than landlord.

- Lease, rather than rent.
- Apartment, rather than unit.

Each of the terms used bring to mind warmer, more positive images than does the alternative. Likewise, today's savvy apartment manager always refers to the property as an "apartment community," rather than "property or complex." The reason is simple: The term suggests that the place has a sense of community. ▲

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AAGO FOUNDATION HOSTS JOB SHADOW DAY

Member Companies Share Insights, Opportunities

BY **AMANDA HOANG**, APARTMENT ASSOCIATION OF GREATER ORLANDO

Adozen teenagers who are living in foster homes spent an afternoon July 15 “shadowing” some of the multifamily housing industry’s finest and learning what it means to be a regional manager, property manager, leasing agent, maintenance professional, supplier account executive, entrepreneur, and more. Six companies participated at seven job sites in and around Orlando, including Dominion, King Management, Baxter Restoration, PRG Real Estate, Concord, and Affinity Waste Solutions.

The Apartment Industry Job Shadow Day was the first phase of an initiative by the AAGO Foundation Inc. to train, develop, and eventually place young people who have lived in foster homes into paying positions in the industry.

“The mission of the AAGO Foundation is based on impacting lives and building a better community,” explained Lori Trainer, foundation president. “What better way could there be to do that, than to offer opportunities to our youth? We look forward to watching this initiative grow and to changing the future, one child at a time.”

The AAGO Foundation partnered with Community Based Care of Central Florida and The City of Life Foundation to host the event, which was open to youths 16 and older.

The AAGO Foundation Inc. was established in 2013 with the mission “to educate and empower central Florida’s homeless, veterans, and teens aging out of foster care.” For more information on the AAGO Foundation, AAGO, or the Apartment Industry Job Shadow Day, please visit www.AAGO.org. ▲



Affinity Waste Solutions director of operations Gary Frost and director of sales Justin Frost chat with one of the participants in AAGO Foundation’s Apartment Industry Job Shadow Day.



Yaneira Lopez of Dominion’s Chapel Trace Apartments explains some of the ins and outs of multifamily management to her “shadow” for the day.

Solaire at Coconut Creek: HOMES FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

BY MARY LOU JAY

Maintaining good health through daily exercise is very important to many of the residents of Solaire at Coconut Creek, and the apartment community offers a number of amenities to make it easy for them. There's the resort-style pool where they can get in a water workout; a quarter-mile path around the community's central lake where they can walk or jog; and a gym with a yoga stretching room and fitness-on-demand programming.

"The gym has a very large-screen TV on one wall with a touchscreen panel; residents can come in and select from cardio, spin, dance stretch, yoga — whatever style of exercise they're looking for," said Patti Jourdin, regional manager for ZRS, which manages the property just a few miles northeast of Coral Springs. "They can choose beginner,

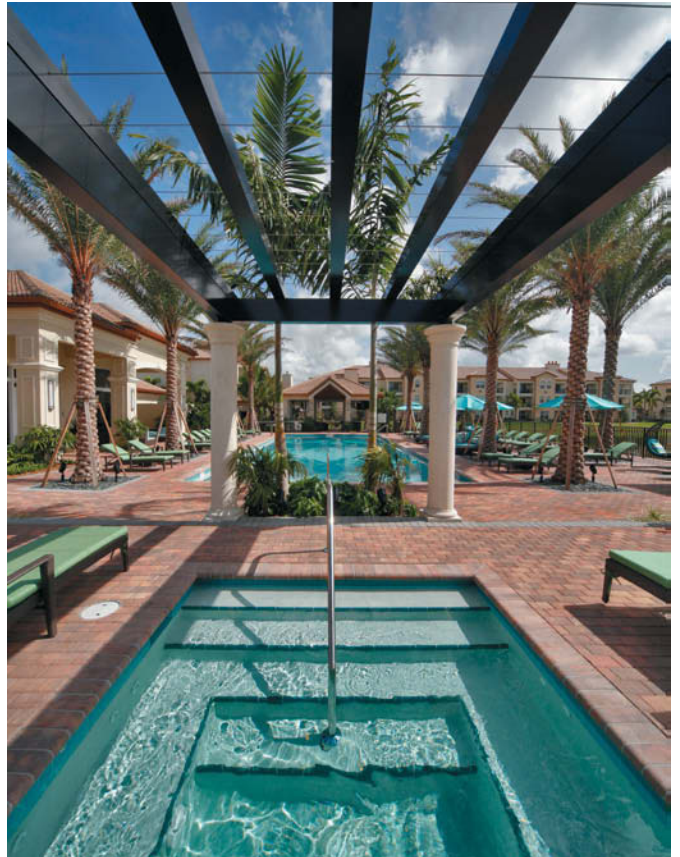
▼ The shared amenities at **Solaire at Coconut Creek** lure people out of their **own comfortable apartments** and into the common areas where they can relax with friends.

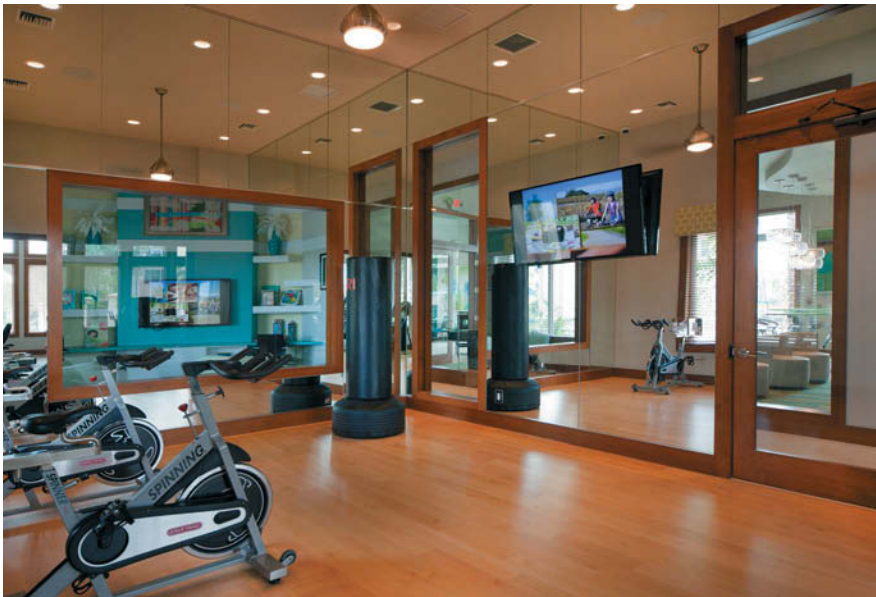
intermediate, or advanced classes, and the timeframe; there are literally over 1,000 different combinations." When residents finish their exercise sessions, they can take advantage of the free, refreshing aromatherapy towel service.

Options like those are appealing to the residents of Solaire at Coconut Creek,

a garden-style, gated community with 270 apartments, each with a private entry. The average size of the apartments is 1,078 square feet; there are four one-bedroom floor plans, and two plans each for two-bedroom and three-bedroom units. Many apartments have vinyl plank flooring in the living room and dining room areas; kitchens







have granite countertops, stainless steel appliances, and flat-top stoves. With vessel sinks in the bathroom and custom-look closet systems in every bedroom, the apartments offer upscale, high-end interior finishes.

All the homes come with balconies or patios and large windows to bring in lots of natural light. Some apartments, primarily the ones with two or three bedrooms, have attached garages; there are also 10 detached garages available.

Since management understands the importance of connectivity in today's world, ZRS provides free WiFi to residents in every unit and throughout the site. Residents of selected third-floor apartments even get a free Fitbit when they move in. "We wanted to point out how climbing stairs to an apartment helps with daily fitness; we tell them that they're averaging this many steps per day just going in and out of their apartments," Jourdin said. "It's a fun way to get people to see living on the third floor as a positive thing."

Residents also appreciate the many special services that the community offers, like dry cleaning pickup at their door and delivery back to the clubhouse. There's also a five-day-a-week, at-the-door trash collection service.

ENJOYING OUTDOOR LIVING

The shared amenities at Solaire at Coconut Creek lure people out of their own comfortable apartments and into the common areas where they can relax with friends.

The main clubhouse, which offers daily coffee service, is a gathering place for residents, who often drop by to read the newspaper or share some conversation while enjoying their morning cup of brew. In the evening they'll stop by to watch favorite programs in the entertainment area or challenge a friend to a game of pool or a shuffleboard competition. There's also a business center with computers and printers for those who need to fit in some work time.

With residents' active lifestyles, the resort-style pool with Jacuzzi gets a lot of use, but so do the shaded resting spots. In the summertime, the community offers a select menu of snacks residents can order up and enjoy without leaving their spot by the pool.

"The poolside entertainment gazebo has a full vent hood, a huge cooking space with grills, large-screen TVs, multiple small seating nooks with lounge seating, and a big,



built-in fire pit,” Jourdin said. People can rent this area for their own special events.

For residents with dogs (up to 75 pounds), Solaire at Coconut Creek has an on-site dog park. It’s equipped with a dog washing station so pet owners don’t have to bathe Max

or Bella in their own tubs. Cats are also welcome in the community.

BUILDING THE COMMUNITY

Solaire at Coconut Creek is conveniently accessible for both motorists and

pedestrians. A half-mile walk takes residents to the Promenade at Coconut Creek, a huge retail and dining destination with a brand new movie theater. It takes less than 15 minutes to drive to the beach, and the location is good for commuters traveling to Fort Lauderdale or West Palm, because it’s close to the Sawgrass Expressway, the Florida Turnpike, and I-95. Two colleges — Nova Southeastern University and Florida Atlantic University — are also nearby.

But residents don’t have to leave the community to find things to do. There are monthly food truck events, community celebrations of holidays, and other planned activities. This summer, residents fielded a softball team for the local recreation league. Staff members have also led health challenges and exercise boot camps for residents who need a little motivation or just enjoy the camaraderie of working out with others.

“The amenities and the events that the staff put together really help create a nice sense of community,” Jourdin said. “It’s nice to have some things to enjoy and look forward to that you don’t have to plan and arrange yourself.” ▲



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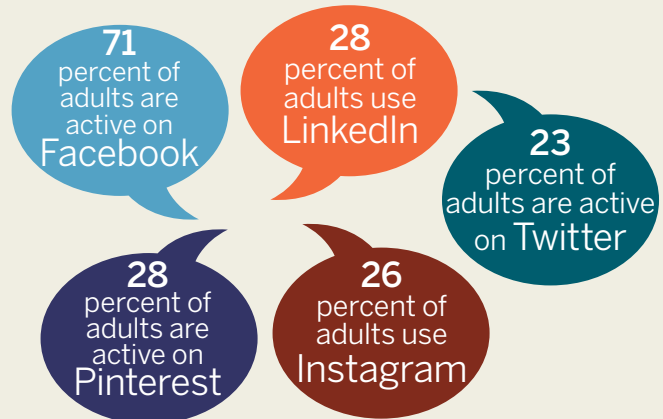
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Nearly all, **97 percent**, of apartment seekers who used a mobile device in their search process considered it a valuable tool, with **48 percent** asserting it as "essential" and **49 percent** stating it as "helpful." The national study of over **1,500 renters** also reveals that mobile leads convert, as **73 percent** of mobile device users contacted someone to view an apartment based on their search.

Source: Apartment Finder

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