

Ask Dr. Ca\$h Flow
by Nick Sidoti, R.A.M.

Q: Dear Nick, The rental season is upon me and I feel like I'm being flooded with vacancies and a tremendous amount of the usual repair work that goes with turnovers, like painting, installing new kitchen floors and carpets, cleaning, and minor plumbing repairs. I can't do it all myself, and I can't seem to find anybody competent to help. Do you have any tricks in that bag of tricks of yours for finding someone and telling if they will be any good.

Overwhelmed Landlord,
Minneapolis, MN

A: Dear Overwhelmed: You and I and many other landlords are faced with this same situation. We have two things working against us, especially trying to find someone in the summertime. The contractors are overwhelmed this time of year. They can pick and choose their work and name their prices. The second problem is that for those who are handy and work a full time job, they are reluctant to give up their evenings and weekends this time of year to do the extra work. Everyone gets a little lazy in the summertime (except for us landlords).

Caution: Handymen are fine for duties that do not involve hazardous duties. Avoid or other things that may result in injury or death.

Here are a couple of ideas for how you can spread the word that you are looking for someone. Make up some hand bills like the one below. They work great, especially when you put them in key locations like VFW Post, Bingo Halls, and Senior Citizen Centers. The second thing is to put an ad in the local/community newspaper.

Hopefully, you will get a lot of response to your flyers and ad so that you will be able to pick and choose among the applicants. Here are a few key questions to ask people when they call on your ad.

- Do you have transportation? A truck or car? (Trucks are nice, they are much easier to use to haul materials and tools.)
- What tools do you have?
- How would you rate your _____ skills?
Fill in the blank with painting, hanging doors, installing floors tiles, wall papering, installing carpets, hanging cabinets, plumbing, etc.
- What are your favorite of these jobs?
- How many hours per week are you willing to work?
- How quick can you respond if I call?
- Do you have a summer vacation planned?

These are questions that you can ask in a prescreening interview when they respond to your ad. If you like what you hear you will want to check into personal and work references, meet them, and you may want to do a background check including a credit check and a criminal check.

Caution: Handymen are fine for duties that do not involve hazardous duties. Avoid electrical, roofing, siding, or any other work that involves climbing, heavy lifting, or other things that may result in injury or death.

Nick Sidoti, R.A.M. is a registered apartment manager, licensed real estate agent, investor, lecturer, author of several real estate courses and President of the Western NY Real Estate Investors. For information on his courses or to submit questions for Nick's column, please email drcashflow@adelphia.net or visit www.drcashflow.net.