

MRLANDLORD.COM Tips on Management **by Jeffrey Taylor**

Filling Vacancies Now Requires More Than Just a For Rent Sign

Do you have a website to help you fill your vacancies? A few years ago, a website would have been an added attraction that could have propelled you ahead of your competition. Times have changed. Pretty soon, if you do not have a website, you will be so far behind all the other landlords in your area that you won't be able to get your apartments rented. The day is coming fast when most of the renters will be tech savvy people in their 20's, 30's, & 40's who avoid searching for apartments by phone or newspaper when instead it is much easier to find what they need on the internet.

A website is an invaluable tool that can work for you 24 hours a day 365 days a year. If nothing else, you can create a simple one page website that simply lists what you have for rent and provides a telephone number and an e-mail address for people to reach you. You can place the website address on your For Rent signs and at the bottom of your newspaper ads. That will allow people to find out information about your apartment without you having to always be personally reachable.

For the novice who doesn't want to know anything about how a website works, you can hire a company to create your website for probably a couple hundred bucks. For someone who's a little adventurous, but still not overly technical, you can buy a website name and server space from a company like GoDaddy for about \$50 per year and then create your one page website using something you're already familiar with like your word processor.

After you start out simple, you can always enhance your website over time. You can add photos, floor plans, maps of the area, links to other websites that describe your location's schools and recreational centers, etc.

Once your website is in place, you will probably think of more creative ways to advertise it. Some ideas are putting the website on your business cards or a magnetic sign for your car that displays the address. Have key chains made that you hand out. You can make T-shirts or hats for your friends that advertise your website. All these things will drive traffic to your website 24 hours per day. The bottom line is that a website will help you get your rentals rented quicker for very minimal cost and effort. In the not so distant future, your clients will expect it of you – so get prepared now!

Screening is More Than Just Checking What You See

The following is a case study of how one landlord knew the importance of not assuming information provided on the rental application was truthful, and did further investigation. A woman stopped by the house the other day while I was working on it, asking if we will be renting the house. She's moving to town and wanted to move in on Saturday. I didn't have any applications, so she gave me her address and I mailed her one.

I checked online to see who the owner of the house was where I mailed the application, etc. (I'm naturally nosy). Got the application back yesterday and ran her credit. She said she had some credit issues in the past, which was an understatement, but the credit report isn't a deal breaker for me. I did notice, however, that the landlord's name on her application didn't match the county record that I pulled. I did a reverse phone lookup online with the landlord's phone number she gave, and the phone number was listed under her name. Using Zabasearch (another internet resource), I found the real phone number for the landlord and call.

She has only lived there one year and seven months (not nine years like she said) and pays \$1,375 (not \$1,500). She hasn't paid rent yet this month, but the landlord says, "I'm sure she'll pay." I mentioned to the landlord that she planned on moving down here on Saturday.

Then, I called the number **she** gave for the landlord and left a message. A guy returned the call, says she's lived there nine years and pays \$1,500 and he bought the house new (the county records tell a different story). I will anxiously be awaiting the next deadbeat applicant.

Eviction is More Than Just Showing Up in Court

Make sure you know the eviction procedures and the landlord tenant laws, when trying to remove a resident from your house for non-payment. My colleague and one of the advisors to MrLandlord.com shares of one of his first eviction attempts. He went to court to evict a resident who had not paid rent in three months. He thought it was an air-tight case and ended up losing because he had not given the proper Pay or Quit notice to his resident.

In his town, just like many towns in America today, landlords must give a tenant who does not pay rent a Notice to Pay their Rent in full or return possession of the rental unit to the landlord. In many states, there is very specific language or words that must be included in this Pay or Quit Possession Notice. Those states spell out specifically and in important detail how this notice is to be given to your tenant. Some states say certified mail or registered mail. The bottom line is Mike, when he first started out as a landlord, did not follow the Landlord / Tenant law and in his case was unfortunately dismissed! He had to start over! That meant that the resident would be able to get another 30 to 45 days of rent. As a landlord, you can not afford to make similar mistakes. Learn what your state laws dictate. Landlord-tenant laws for every state are available for review at **landlordstatelaws.com**.

Mike was madder than a mashed duck! He was furious! This is not fair he felt. And to his disbelief, he discovered he could not return to the little room in the court house to file for another court date. He would only repeat the same process. Here's what he learned years ago the hard way: If a tenant doesn't pay rent in his town, a landlord must:

- a) Send the Tenant a Notice to Pay or Quit Possession (please note, the time period varies from state to state)
- b) It must include the proper language and some more things specific to my state and county
- c) He has to be able to prove the tenant received the notice
- d) He better not accept any partial payments of rent from the tenant or the eviction process will be thrown out and dismissed (Again rules vary state to state)
- e) Only after giving the tenant the proper days to make their rent current, could he file for and start the eviction process in the court system
- f) Even after waiting several weeks for the court date, if things go my way, the judge still gives the tenant a week or more to get out. And then I have to file for what's called a Writ for Possession or a court order to be executed by the Sheriff's office where they physically remove the tenant from the property and return possession to the landlord.

The point to all this is to learn your eviction procedures and landlord-tenant laws regarding them BEFORE you attempt to remove a resident.

These tips are from contributors to the MrLandlord.com website and newsletter. For a free sample newsletter, call toll-free, 1-800-950-2250, or visit their informative website at mrlandlord.com to register to win a free landlording book.