

What Is “Best” Service for Your Residents?

By Ernest F. Oriente

“Best” service, especially in the property management industry, can be deceiving because the needs and expectations of your residents are changing and evolving rapidly. In addition, your residents are comparing your apartment communities to both your competition and to best service with every company, product or service they experience. By reading this article, you will learn the steps for developing a system so your residents can tell you exactly what best service means to them!

Developing Resident Surveys

Start by gathering the leasing teams at the properties you manage and discuss the current level of resident service being given. Also, ask for any feedback or suggestions they have heard or received from their residents. Next, prepare a resident survey that might include some of the following questions:

- Tell us about the best service you have ever received while living in any apartment community.
- Tell us about the best service you have ever received from any company or individual and why this was the best.
- Tell us how we can improve your living experience with our apartment community.

Lastly, ask your leasing teams for suggestions on how these surveys might best be presented to their residents. Many of our property management clients ask their leasing teams to hand deliver these surveys to their residents on Saturday morning for a personalized touch while others give out small prizes to the first 25 survey responses.

Tip From The Coach: Do you want to experience the best service? Take a few hours and visit a high-end retail location like Nordstrom, a Ritz-Carlton hotel or Tiffany’s. When visiting these world-class locations, observe how they greet you, the words they select when assisting you, the types and variety of products or services they provide, the colors and fabrics they use and the quality of their brochures and printed materials. As a side note, any employee of a Ritz-Carlton can fix a guest service problem instantly, for up to \$2,000!

Implementing Resident Surveys

Once you and your leasing teams have received the responses to these resident surveys you can now set your service standards at or above the level of your residents’ expectations.

As a next step, summarize the results from these resident surveys and look for any repeated suggestions or recommendations. Then, design an action-plan with your leasing teams based on the suggestions they are going to implement over the next 30-60 days. Lastly, have your leasing teams share with their residents a written summary of exactly what they will be doing as a result of these resident surveys. Remember, surveys are a great way to get feedback, but these residents will want to know what your leasing teams are going to do with their responses.

Tip From The Coach: Once this first resident survey has been completed, ask your leasing teams to schedule additional surveys every 90 to 120 days for the next 36 months. These future surveys will allow you and your leasing teams to stay current with the ever-changing needs and requests of your residents. In addition, by having your leasing teams ask for this ongoing feedback their residents will know that service at their apartment communities will continue to evolve as a reflection of their expectations.

Learning From Your Residents

An additional benefit to implementing surveys will be the great new ideas or services you and your leasing team will learn from your residents' feedback. Many of these responses to these surveys will include requests to receive something faster, something easier to use, something easier to read/understand or something that is causing a problem or frustration.

Take each of these requests and look for ways to easily and inexpensively implement all of them. In addition, look at each of these survey ideas and see if your property management company can earn new income from any of these suggestions. A great example of this concept is the way many apartment communities are adding a fee-based business center where their work-at-home residents can access computers, fax/copy machines and internet services.

Tip From The Coach: Remember, make it easy to listen and learn from the residents of the properties you manage because their suggestions and recommendations will uncover great new ideas and a variety of ways to set your apartment communities well ahead of the rest. Are you ready to raise service to a world-class level?

Want to hear more about this important topic or ask some additional questions about how to build powerful resident surveys? Send an E-mail to ernest@powerhour.com and The Coach will e-mail you a free TeleForum invitation.

Author's note: Ernest F. Oriente, The Coach is the founder of PowerHour® a professional business coaching/recruiting service and the author of Smartmatch Alliances. He has spent 20,930 hours {since 1988} delivering customized training, by telephone, in leadership, tradition/Internet marketing and sales for property management companies, apartment locator/corporate housing services and multihousing sales/service companies worldwide. PowerHour® specializes in global distance learning by telephone, using their state-of-the-art conference call system for interactive and dynamic TeleForums. Twice-monthly TeleForums link 10-100 executive/professionals/individuals who are geographically dispersed, in a time efficient and profitable format. PowerHour® is based in Olympictown...Park City, Utah, at 535-615-8486 by E-mail ernest@powerhour.com or visit their website: www.powerhour.com. To receive a FREE property management success newsletter, with subscribers throughout North America, send an e-mail to: ernest@powerhour.com. Recent PowerHour® articles have appeared in 5500+ business/trade publications and websites.

Reprinted with permission from El Paso Apartment Association Newsletter.