

Four Easy Ways to Keep Your Tenants Happy **by Jackie Ramstedt, CAPS, CAM, CAS**

Everyone wants to be accepted for who they are. The very nature of a human being is based on wanting to be a “part” of something; to belong. As we go through our lives, at various stages, we can remember certain people who “stood out” among the crowds we encountered; a comforting friend, an inspirational teacher, or a friendly neighbor.

The multihousing industry has many “moments of truth” that directly touch people’s lives that can make a significant difference. We are dealing with their homes; their “sanctuary”. When a person has a rough day at work, they look forward to coming “home” to a place where they feel comfortable and safe.

“The best angle to approach life’s challenges is always the TRY-angle!”

This is why the relationships between our on site personnel and the residents are so vital to the overall success of our industry. We are interacting with people in the most important aspect of their lives in their home!

Let me give you a scenario to show you what I mean. It goes like this. Texas is well known for having brutally long, hot summers, but relatively short, mild winters. Because of our milder temperatures, many commercial buildings as well as some of our apartment communities were built with little or no pipe insulation, as, quite frankly at the time, there really was no need.

However, during that short interim generally during the month of December, the temperatures dip below freezing and sometimes stay there for several days. In this case the pipes begin to freeze and as they freeze the water in them begins to expand bursting the pipes. As the water thaws.... flood city!

If you happen to come to work one day and your office is “floating”, it isn’t too bad, cause it’s not your stuff! But if you go HOME to your apartment or house and the same thing has happened, VERY different story! Your furniture has “sucked up” the water and all the legs are swollen, your \$500 ostrich skin boots are ruined, and that afghan that Grandma crocheted on her “death bed just for you”, is completely soaked! And to add to it, you have no Renter’s Insurance!

The point being that ours isn’t just a job.... it really is so much more. We have such an important and influential effect on our people. We wear many hats while working at our apartment communities; councilor, teacher, nurse, attorney, judge, psychiatrist, friend, and MORE!

So how can we build “long lasting” relationships with such “short term” people? Start by remembering that you could be one of those “special people” that come into a person’s life that changes them forever.

It is very simple....basically there are four main thoughts to always keep in mind when dealing with our residents.

1. ***Remember the Golden Rule.*** We sometimes forget just how stressful it is to pack up everything you own and move to a strange, new location, especially if you don’t know anybody. Take the extra effort to introduce people to each other. Follow up especially after they first move in to check and see if everything is alright. And keep in touch with them periodically. It makes people feel like they really do belong to the community, and not just another apartment number.
2. ***Don’t forget about the other 80%!*** Did you know you spend 80% of your working day on 20% of your residents? Yes, most of your efforts is dealing with only a “handful” of the overall population of your entire community. How about shifting your efforts to those 80% who are TERRIFIC residents and give you no problems whatsoever! Tell them how much you appreciate them and do something nice and “memorable” to show them.

3. *Practice turning a “negative” into a “positive”!* Most of our day is spent dealing with problems to solve. People needing a place to live, not enough places to park, landscapers mowing at 6:00 AM by the building with “day sleepers”, and neighbors playing their stereo too loud at night. Instead of just “solving” problems, take those opportunities to go a step further, to help prevent any future problems, and to reassure them that this is still the best place to live.
4. *You’re a person too!* We are always thinking of others and how they would feel about an issue. Don’t forget about yourself! Are you taking care of yourself? Getting enough sleep, enough to eat? Is your “stress showing”? Your attitude is like a “virus”...it really is contagious! So what are you passing around? Take care of yourself FIRST, then you will have the patience and strength to take care of others.

We ALL have an “emotional bank account” within us. When it is “overdrawn”, we lose patience easily, our performance focus goes down, and we get “overwhelmed” with absolutely everything. And so do our residents! And for that matter...our staff and coworkers as well!

Relationships take time to build, nurture, and grow, especially the long lasting ones. But just think of how many opportunities you have on a regular basis to be that “special person” in someone’s life. Make it memorable for them and remember ...

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