

Residential Resource

February 2004

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The Mission of NARPM is to support professional and ethical practices of rental home management through networking, education, and certification.

Customer Service Is Dying, and I am Not Feeling So Good Myself

by Garrison Wynn

Have you ever called a company and been greeted with the phrase "Hold, please"? How do they know you can hold? They do not even know who you are. Maybe you can not hold; maybe you have 10 seconds of juice left on your cell phone and your hair is on fire. Then you finally get someone on the phone, only to be told, "I can not actually help you; I am just paid to apologize, and I am really sorry about that."

Being frustrated by a lack of customer service is nothing new. It just seems that in the last few years, companies have become more innovative when it comes to not helping you solve your problems. I recently asked a hotel employee to help me with my luggage. He told me to hold on, and he would have someone look into it. I thought, "Hey, you are someone—why can you not look into it?" I realize that we are as busy as we have ever been and that many younger people were not brought up in the traditional culture of customer service. But none of these excuses will protect your business in today's challenging economy, where customers are questioning value even with companies they have known for years.

Maybe it is time to get back to basics and make service a real priority. Sure, plenty of

companies claim to offer great customer care. But raising your service standards requires more than a promise; you need to set concrete goals and establish effective procedures to meet them. Whether you own the company, handle key accounts, or just accidentally encounter your customers, you will reap huge benefits by applying the following customer service goals:

ON THE PHONE

- Be friendly! No one wants to send a check to people who seem to be bothered by their call.
- Ask permission before putting a caller on hold. If a customer is greeted with: "Hold, please," what the customer really hears is "Hang on! Someone much more important than you just called in."
- Keep it professional. Smoking cigarettes, slurping a drink, and playing the drums on your desk makes callers feel like they are getting advice from a guy in a bar.
- Make sure that callers do not have to repeat themselves. Someone who has explained a problem three times to three different people hangs up angry, whether or not the problem is solved.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Fellow NARPM Member,

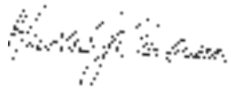
Whew, "Opening New Doors" is proving to be an amazing journey! I can hardly believe that it is only February and we have so many firsts and so much excitement.

It was so thrilling and stunning to install officers from 33 chapters at the Leadership Symposium in Austin, TX, last month. It was also humbling to be installed by the revered Steve Urie, MPM®, who told an amazing story of starting chapters from which grew national presidents. While in Austin, the national board of directors approved NARPM's newest chapter (first in 2004) who joined us with 69 members after meeting Melissa Prandi, MPM®, our own membership guru, and who was ably assisted by Bill Ramsey, Mary Love, RMP®, and Helen Baptiste, RMP®. The Leadership Symposium was exceptionally well received. Attendees raved about specific skills acquired from the variety of presentations. Thanks to Wendell Davis, MPM®, Erika Green, MPM®, and Sylvia Hill, MPM®, the exceptional team who produced this event and brought us more firsts—as an example, the Past Presidents' Round Tables where members received four opportunities to interact with the top leadership and walk away with much shared wisdom and inspiration. This was the bargain of the century for only \$50!

Your leadership team met in several intense sessions planning the year with a noted expert in the field (as hands-on as we are, we still are wise enough to accept more knowledgeable sources than ourselves!). Please note that you will begin seeing your national board of directors soon at the chapter level, as each has committed to visiting a chapter at least 500 miles from his/her home. The board members will come armed with facts, figures, and plans for NARPM's future, which we believe is well defined. Please do your best to welcome them in the best of NARPM's warm tradition.

It is always so inspiring to have the opportunity to meet with so many of you at any one time, one cannot help but feel awed to be president of the giving, open, and genuinely caring group that NARPM is. My travels this month include the Big Island of Hawaii, our newest chapter in Oahu, and Denver for the Colorado State Conference. I am looking forward to being with you all again, and I thank you once more for allowing me to serve in this capacity and for joining me in the journey of "Opening New Doors." The vision through is stunning!

Andrea G. Caldwell, MPM®



NARPM President



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Customer Service is Dying

ALL THE TIME

- Create a positive image to attract business. Remember that squirrels are just rats with good publicity.
- Display compassion for people who are upset. People who do not think you care will not value your solution.
- Be very clear when you explain a process. When customers do not know what you are talking about, they assume you do not either.
- Do what you say you are going to do. When you do not follow through, people do not think you have forgotten. They think you do not care.
- Know when to bring in someone else. When it becomes clear that the customer thinks you are the problem, set your ego aside and send in a fresh face.
- Establish a simple, easy-to-implement, customer service plan. When something is really complicated, it is hard to tell if it is working.

Well, I think customer service will survive—and I feel better now that I have written this article—but it is important that we help nurse that ailing customer service to a full recovery, ensuring a healthy prognosis for today's businesses. The companies that attract and keep the best customers are usually the most effective at managing expectations and emotions. Successful companies train their people to anticipate customer needs and to solve problems before the customer knows they exist. But before you can do any of this, you have to start with the basics. If you really want customers, set customer service goals. Remember, if you do not know where you are going, any road will take you there.

Garrison Wynn is a nationally known speaker, trainer, and coach. He is the president and founder of Wynn Solutions, specializing in the truth about success.

As a speaker, advisor, and entertainer, Garrison has worked with some of the world's most effective corporate leaders and salespeople, from multibillion dollar manufacturers to top New York Stock Exchange wire houses. He has a background in manufacturing, entertainment, telecommunications, and financial services. An experienced actor and former professional stand-up comedian, he has hosted PBS television specials and national radio programs. garrison@wynnsolutions.com



Ambassador Program

The Ambassador Program was designed a few years ago to reward our current members for referring new members to our organization. Who better to spread the word of the benefits of NARPM than its members? If you refer five new

members in one year, you will receive an award certificate that may be used toward your next year's dues or for events for the coming year. When you achieve ambassador status and receive your \$195 NARPM credit, it can be used toward your annual dues or registration at a NARPM National Convention. It is flexible! Just follow the simple steps outlined here:

- H** Call NARPM Headquarters at 800/782-3452, and request membership application forms. Headquarters, upon request, will mail the application directly to the prospective member but will not fill in the "referred by" line.
- H** The 12-month membership period for the five new members starts the day your first new membership application is approved by headquarters.
- H** When Headquarters receives the fifth new membership, an Award Certificate will be issued and dated. A recognition certificate will also be issued, and you, as the "Ambassador," will be recognized in the *Residential Resource*.
- H** The Award Certificate can be used to pay NARPM annual dues, or like amount can be applied toward National Convention.
- H** It must be used in full at the time of use and attached to your dues or registration for Convention. The value of the Award Certificate is equal to what the national dues were at the time the Award Certificate was issued. It also must be used within 12 months of the issue date.
- H** A member can earn more than one Award Certificate per 12-month period.

Ambassador Program

December 2003 New Members

New Member

Tina Burns

Manuela Hill

Nora O'Brien

Richard Bieker

Wendy Kramer

Josy Haggard

Billy Ray

Leslie Feldkamp

Cary Efurd

Lori Fisher

Kathy Lewinski

Melinda McKenna

Lynn Smith

Craig Mau

Lisa Cramer

Mike Baxter

Mary Ann Crumpton

Ambassador Member

Darren H. Burns

Tina M. Burns

Wanda Franklin, RMP®

Tamara J. Welliver, MPM®

Sally Backus, MPM

Lindsey Green

Randy Segner, RMP®

Rose Ann Duffy, RMP®

William Ferguson, RMP®

William Ferguson, RMP®

David Kidd, MPM®

Jim Smith, RMP®

Chuck Warren

Tracey Jenkins

Dennis Rossman

James Wyatt

D'Ann Harper

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome new NARPM members! The following is a list of new members who joined NARPM from December 1 to December 31, 2003.

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Coldwell Banker, D'Ann Harper
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Tom Stokes
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What Bad Guys Hate

by Robert L. Cain, Copyright 2000 Cain Publications, Inc.

Drug dealers, burglars, robbers, muggers, rapists, murderers—as landlords we hate them. We do not want them living in, visiting, or illegally entering our rental properties. We want them to feel absolutely unwelcome.

Trouble is, too often it appears, at least, that we put out the welcome mat, dust it off, and shine it up for the entire reprehensible lot of them. We do it by providing a setting for committing crime that they love.

How do we do that? By making it easy for them to rent from us, by not working to make our properties more secure, and by providing places for these miscreants to skulk while they lie in wait to commit crimes.

To avoid that, let's look at what bad guys hate, and then do a lot of it and do it well. If they hate the things we do that make it difficult to commit crimes, they will not come around. Rather they will inflict themselves on a property and its tenants who look like they have thrown out the welcome mat.

One thing they hate is having to work hard at committing crime. If they wanted to work, they would have gotten a job. The majority of crimes are committed simply because someone left a door unlocked, an item outside, or evidence of valuable items inside. In fact, when criminals commit such crimes of "opportunity" they blame the victim, saying the victim was "asking for it." Because the crime was so easy, the criminal believes it is your fault, that he is not responsible at all. Go figure.

Avoid this problem by doing a crime and safety survey of your rental properties. Your police department probably has a crime prevention office that is eager to share checklists and other ideas for making your properties places that bad guys hate. Apartment and landlord associations also often have similar information. Then, as the security professionals say, harden your target.

Another thing bad guys hate is strict rental standards. They seek out landlords to rent from who do not care much who they rent to as long as they get the rent. Problem is, not only do bad guys commit crimes on and around the property where they rent, they also may get caught and have to go to jail (moving without notice, so to speak), so no rent. They also may figure that if you were sucker enough to rent to them, they do not need to pay any rent. After all, it is your fault for letting them move in, in the first place.

Avoid that by inserting in your rental policies and standards—the sheet of paper that you hand all applicants—a clause that reads much like this:

Your application will be rejected if we receive a reference from a present or previous landlord which reports that you

- were gambling, engaging in prostitution, drug dealing, or manufacturing drugs;

- were violent or made threats to the landlord or to neighbors;
- any member of your household was convicted of a felony in the past 10 years; or
- any member of your household is a current illegal substance abuser or has ever been convicted of the illegal manufacture or distribution of a controlled substance.

Many times the mere mention of you not accepting crooks as tenants will send them on their way. Even so, some will try anyway, so it is vital that you actually go through the process of checking landlord references and public records to make sure that your applicant is not a bad guy.

Do all that, and the bad guys will hate it. They will find a landlord who is an easy target. After all, you would sure hate it if they rented from you or used your property to commit crimes.

Robert Cain is a nationally recognized speaker and writer on property management and real estate issues. For a free sample copy of the Rental Property Reporter call 800/654-5456 or visit their Web site at www.rentalprop.com.



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Call Don Hay: 916-624-4000; Toll free 1-866-246-7325

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Peachtree Business Products
Professional Office Services of ID, Inc.
Starker Services, Inc.

Claim Services:

Claim Source One

Internet Tools:

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Homepaiges
HomeRentalAds.com
HomeRentals.net
Lease Place, Inc.
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Legal Services:

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Law Offices of Heist & Weisse, P.A.

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Omega Termite & Pest Control
Onsite Pro, Inc.
Pro Source Wholesale Floorcoverings
Tankless Hot Water
Universal Cleaning Specialist

Marketing:

Home Management Network

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London Computer Systems, Inc.
PROMAS Landlord Software Center
Property Automation Software Corp.
Small Computer Services, Inc.
Winning Edge Software Solutions
Yardi Systems, Inc.

Tenant Screening:

First American Registry, Inc.

For more affiliate information, please
visit the NARPM Web site
www.narpm.org.

Resident Appreciation— It Means Everything!

by Ernest E. Oriente, The Coach

Want to know the secret for keeping your residents forever? And what if you could keep your properties full (with a waiting list) because your residents loved the way you appreciated them? In this article you will learn how easy it is to develop a powerful resident appreciation program. Once in place, an appreciation program will forever change the way you operate and manage your apartment communities.

DEVELOPING A MONTHLY APPRECIATION PLAN

At the beginning of each month, develop some fun ideas to “thrill” the residents at the properties you own or manage. Start by planning a short brainstorming session with your key property supervisors, resident managers, and their leasing staffs, so you can hear their unique insights about ways to make the program a giant success. Their input is critical as each property has its own special resident profile, so customize your appreciation plan accordingly. Once your appreciation plan is finalized, provide a written recap for your leasing team so everyone will know exactly what their role will be. Clear communication makes for perfect implementation.

TIP FROM THE COACH

Consider building your resident appreciation plan for six to 12 months in advance. This makes for better financial budgeting, a more thoroughly developed appreciation plan, and your leasing team will have the time to evaluate several competitive proposals for each month's theme.

BUILDING APPRECIATION THEMES

As you consider the theme for each month's appreciation program, start by looking for specific holidays or seasonal times of the year. For example, summer time is perfect for fun pool-side events and outside activities. Have your leasing team take plenty of photos and fill your next newsletter with pictures of your residents having a great time. Everyone loves to see pictures of themselves and for those who could not attend, they will certainly be encouraged to participate at the next event. Another appreciation theme, depending on the profile of your residents, might be more educational. For example, have a local computer store give a live demonstration for your residents of the Internet. Your residents will be thrilled to hear more about this cutting edge technology and the computer store gets to meet lots of potential new customers—a win-win for all. Finally, speak with your vendors and neighborhood businesses as many would

like to cosponsor your appreciation program. Your residents might just be perfect new customers for them.

TIP FROM THE COACH

Certainly your residents will love the appreciation you show them each month and so will your prospects. If appropriate, invite every prospect who comes to the properties you manage to participate in your resident appreciation program. Take this small step and watch your closing ratio double, with the prospects who attend!

EVALUATING THE SUCCESS OF RESIDENT APPRECIATION

Start by asking your leasing team to make written notes of any nice comments shared by your residents or prospective new residents. These nice quotes are perfect to include in your next property newsletter and make for great reading, especially for those who could not attend or participate. Next, evaluate the number of residents who attend or participate each month, as this helps for planning future programs. Of course, monitor your resident retention percentages, as this is the critical measurement of how well your appreciation program is working.

TIP FROM THE COACH

Remember, your residents will feel important when they know they are a top priority. Implementing a resident retention program will not cost much. But the return on your investment will be significant based on less turnover, happier residents that send more referrals, and more fun for your leasing staff. Why? Because The Coach says so! Plus, good news travels fast and so will the sterling reputation you earn with your residents.

Want to hear more about this important topic or ask some additional questions? Fax a note on your letterhead to 435/615-8670, or send an e-mail to ernest@powerhour.com, and The Coach will fax/e-mail back to you a free invitation to be a participant on a TeleForum conference call. On this call we will discuss 25 appreciation themes your residents will love.

Author's note: Ernest E. Oriente, The Coach, is the founder of PowerHour®, a professional business coaching/recruiting service, and the author of SmartMatch Alliances®. PowerHour® is based in Olympic-town—Park City, UT. To receive a FREE property management success newsletter send an E-mail to: ernest@powerhour.com. Recent PowerHour® articles have appeared in 3500+ business/trade publications and Web sites.

An Invitation to Join Us in Star-Spangled Baltimore

by Rose G. Thomas, MPM®, 2004 Convention Committee Chair

If you have not already decided to join us for NARPM's 16th annual convention in Baltimore, MD, September 22–25, 2004, perhaps a taste of Baltimore's rich history will entice you.

Baltimore's harbor has long been a busy and important seaport. In 1793, when France declared war on England and the Napoleonic Wars began, Congress authorized the building of Fort McHenry in Baltimore, MD, along with other coastal forts, to "protect our maritime frontier." Fort McHenry's masonry walls, the ones we see today, were completed in 1803. They were erected on the site of Fort Whetstone, an earthen, star-shaped fort built in 1776 to protect Baltimore Town; this fort had never been attacked. Fort McHenry—named for our second Secretary of War James McHenry—passed eleven similarly quiet years.

But that would soon change. When the United States declared war on England in June of 1812, it seemed inevitable that coastal forts like Fort McHenry would play an important role. After all, this war was declared in part to "preserve Free Trade & Sailor's Rights." In August of 1814, British troops marched on Washington, DC, and burned the Capitol; and they were soon to attack Baltimore.

So how is Fort McHenry connected with "The Star Spangled Banner"? Well, in that same month, Dr. William Beanes, an elderly and much loved town physician of Upper Marlborough, MD, took part in placing three British refugees in jail. In retaliation, Beanes was arrested by the British and taken captive aboard their flagship, HMS Tonnant, that was in the Chesapeake Bay.

In response, Secretary of State James Monroe granted permission to intercede on Dr. Beanes' behalf to Col. John S. Skinner, an American agent for prisoner exchange, and to Francis Scott Key, a young attorney from Georgetown in Washington, DC. Key (who was born and buried here in Frederick, MD) and Col. Skinner boarded the HMS Tonnant just as it was preparing to attack Fort McHenry. The two persuaded the British to release Dr. Beanes. Yet all three were held under guard until after the impending battle—first on the HMS Surprise, then on the American sloop that Skinner and Key had come in—lest they should reveal British plans.

On September 13, 1814, British warships converged and the Battle of Fort McHenry (the sea component of the Battle of Baltimore) began. Imagine the heavy hearts of Key, Col. Skinner, and Dr. Beanes as they helplessly paced the deck of the sloop during the relentless bombardment of Fort McHenry, whose "guns were small and defenders few."

The battle lasted all day and most of the night. In the first light of dawn on September 14, their eyes searched the sky above the fort—what banner flew there would tell the outcome of the battle. But through the haze of gunpowder they could not see whether Baltimore Town was saved. Finally, at seven o'clock, the light began to grow and the smokey fog briefly parted; Key, Col. Skinner, and Dr. Beanes saw to their amazement and joy "the flag was still there."

Young Key, an amateur poet, was inspired to record his experience. He wrote most of the poem, "The Star Spangled Banner", there on the sloop in a few minutes on the back of an unfinished letter pulled from his pocket. Later that night in a Baltimore hotel, the Indian Queen, he completed it.

It was printed onto handbills the next morning under the title: "Defence of Fort M'Henry". And that same day Key's brother-in-law, Judge J.H. Nicholson, suggested it be set to the old English drinking tune, "Anacreon in Heaven", familiar to Americans as the tune for the political song Adams and Liberty. In October, Baltimorean actor Ferdinand Durang first sang it in public. And although it became popular immediately, "The Star Spangled Banner" was not our official national anthem until approved by Congress in 1931.

Francis Scott Key and the soldiers and sailors who defended Baltimore are commemorated at Fort McHenry by a statue of the Greek mythological hero of music and poetry, Orpheus. Called simply, Orpheus, the striking, 22-foot-tall bronze figure by Charles H. Niehaus, was commissioned in 1914 and dedicated on Flag Day, June 14, 1922.

Visiting Fort McHenry and Orpheus will "transport" you to a defining moment in our nation's history—this is just one of the wonderful opportunities waiting for you in Baltimore. If history alone does not entice you, consider that Laura Lippman, best selling author of the Tess Monaghan series of crime fiction, was raised in Baltimore and loves her hometown. A recent Washington Post article on Lippman mentions that Orpheus ("a naked guy with a harp") appears in her fiction. Oh, and Lippman thinks the grounds of Fort McHenry offer the "best view in the city." More on this in a future *Resource*.

If you would like to add modern day intrigue to your convention trip, read more about author Laura Lippman and the Tess Monaghan novels at Lippman's Web site: <http://www.lauralippman.com/bio.html>. If you are a history buff—or you would just like to take a peek at Orpheus—the sources from which this article was drawn are listed below. Hope to see you in the Charm City!

SOURCES:

<http://www.nps.gov/fomc/>

<http://www.nps.gov/fomc/pdffiles/histfomc.pdf>

<http://www.nps.gov/fomc/pdffiles/orpheus.pdf>

<http://www.usflag.org/francis.scott.key.html>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A23346-2004Jan16.html>

The World Book Encyclopedia 1937 & 1964 Editions

Rose G. Thomas, MPM®, is founder and president of Property Management People Inc. in Frederick, MD. She has served as vice president and president of the local NARPM chapter. In addition, she has served as editor of the Residential Resource, National secretary, National treasurer, and is currently Vice President.

Change Ideas to Reality

by Jennifer Ottolino

This article is designed to provide you with a process for focusing on an idea and turning it into a reality.

How many times have you sat and thought of a great idea that you became really excited about, only to let it drift away because you did not know how to turn it into a reality? Why does this happen?

Your self-talk may be getting in the way. You know, that little voice that runs through your head all day long, telling you that you can not do it, that it is impossible, that you are crazy. Language is very powerful and all of those negative thoughts you repeat to yourself all day long take their toll and may lead you down the path of stagnation.

Here is the great new. As powerful as those negative thoughts are, the positive thoughts are just as powerful. The truth is that you can create what you want. To demonstrate the process, try this exercise and see just how powerful you really are.

1. THINK ABOUT YOUR IDEA

This sounds really obvious, but how many times do you get a glimmer of something really great and then just push your thoughts away? Instead, try sticking with it. When you start to see a clear picture in your head, your idea has become real to both your heart and your mind—the most powerful of all combinations.

2. FOCUS ON WHAT YOU WANT BY USING POWERFUL, POSITIVE, SPECIFIC LANGUAGE

We are taught to express things in terms of what we do not want, not what we do want. For example, we are taught to say, “I do not want to be trapped,” versus “I want freedom.” The statement “I want freedom” is so much more powerful. This simple shift of focus is all it takes to put you on the path to abundance. Here is a good way to start making this shift:

- Sit down with yourself and think about what you want. Just free flow whatever comes into your mind; just make sure you write it down as a positive statement.



- When you have created your list, start to define it. The more specific you make it, the better. Remember you can not turn an idea into a reality when you can not define it. At this point, do not worry about how you are going to get it. Just start to really conceptualize your idea.

- Once you have created your list create one powerful message that sums up all of your requirements and post it somewhere where you can read it every single day. Seeing this statement every day will be inspiring and a very powerful tool to help you focus on what you want. You can read your extensive list every week or so to keep you motivated and focused.

3. USE YOUR FEELINGS AS A GUIDE

Now it is time to see what opportunities are out there waiting for you. The amazing thing about this process is that you will start to receive all sorts of messages, but you have to pay attention. Out of the blue, you will see an article about your idea. Read the article, discover more, and do research.

Does it fit your criteria? How do you feel about it? Do you feel excited or bored? Now

here is the important part. Go with how you feel. Your feelings will never steer you wrong. If you feel excited, learn more, and follow the path. If you feel bored, let it go, and forget about it. You will get messages through the process to let you know you are attracting what you want. Follow through, and begin to take action on what you find exciting.

4. TRUST

Believe that this will work and that every opportunity that presents itself is leading you to where you need to be. You are learning the lessons you need to learn right now, and you will attract that on which you focus.

5. ACKNOWLEDGE

When you receive the positive messages, acknowledge them, write them down, and be grateful. All of this positive energy will grow and create more abundance, which you will see throughout your entire life. You will start to see all of the wonderful things in your life, and you will start to feel a sense of strength and well-being. This is your body telling you that you are on the right path. Acknowledge it, and give thanks.

You already possess all the strength and knowledge that you need to turn your ideas into a reality. You have just never been taught to apply it. If you let go of the struggle, get focused, and listen to the messages, you can create the life you want.

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Breaking Records in 2004—Making NARPM History

by Erika K. Green, MPM®

President Caldwell's theme of "Opening New Doors in 2004" is being well executed, as the Membership Committee, chaired by Betty Fletcher, MPM®, a national director, breaks three records in January. The Membership Committee charged into the new year with an action plan in place. The first record-breaker was for attaining the most new members in one month, with 103 new memberships in January 2004. The former record of new memberships in one month was 66, set back in 1997 when Melissa Prandi, MPM®, was the Membership Committee chair.

The second and third record-breakers were for the most attendees to a chapter start-up meeting and the most to join at that first meeting. Membership Development chair Melissa Prandi, MPM®, took the reins and led the membership team's focus to Oahu, HI, where a new chapter was established. On January 21, 2004, 128 property managers attended the first meeting and 69 joined as new members on the spot, setting records for both. Naturally, this has created an incredible energy circulating in the membership team, as they have now challenged themselves to break the record for the most new members in a calendar year, currently 489.

Welcome to the new members who joined in January 2004, and thanks to you and the membership team for making NARPM history!

Erika K. Green, MPM®, is the broker and co-owner of Quest Property Services Inc. in Fort Worth, TX. She has been a member of NARPM since 1994 and has served in numerous capacities on NARPM's national level including New Membership chair, Member Support chair, and a member of the Membership, Convention, Long Range Planning, and Editorial Committees and is currently serving as a National director and the Editorial chair.

CERTIFICATION CORNER

by Suzanne Reeder, MPM®, NARPM Certification Chair 2004
The Certification Committee is pleased to announce the following new candidates. Good luck!

RMP® CANDIDATES

Mavis Ivane, Mary M. Love, REALTOR, Kailua-Kona, HI

Kent Miller, The Miller Group, Jonesboro, GA

Richard Wolf, Benchmark Realty, El Paso, TX

MPM® CANDIDATES

Marlyn Dochenetz, Homemart Realty Group Inc., Lawrenceville, GA

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Affiliate of the Year 2004

Someone is Watching You! by Mike Anderson, HomeRentals.net

The latest Internet epidemic is not spam or viruses, but spies! Almost everyone has spies in their computer tracking their activities and reporting them to advertisers, retailers, and others. These spying programs, called “spyware,” do more than invade your privacy, they can also cause serious problems with your computer, especially when you are visiting advanced Web sites or using Internet applications.

WHY AM I BEING SPIED ON?

Primarily because people want to sell you stuff. If they know what you like, and what you respond to, they can accurately target you with their messages and track their success. If you visit car sites, for example, an insurance company might want to send you auto insurance advertising. This is very annoying, but mostly harmless.

It gets a little more sinister when that same insurance company decides not to advertise to you, or refuses to provide you coverage, because they knew you frequented the Web sites of lawyers for example. This is the current epidemic with the “frequent buyer cards” that are popular in grocery stores and other establishments. Usually it is not a retailer who is tracking your computer activities, it is a data collection company. These guys are not known for their discrimination. They will sell to anybody. The information on Web sites that you visit, and things you do online, could end up in the hands of anybody. All that said, annoying ads, increased marketing, and even an inability to buy from a certain company are not the most significant dangers of spyware.

A SPY LIVING IN MY COMPUTER?

That’s right, they live in your computer. They eat your computer’s memory and drink its processor power. They open doors when they want to, and close and lock doors when they do not want you in. Many of them interfere with your right to search the Internet with your preferred search engine, instead connecting you to their own search engine. If they do not want you to visit a Web site or get your e-mail, they have the power to stop you. They can open up your computer to hackers on the Internet. They can use your computer’s disk or processor to perform their own functions, then report back to the “mothership.” They can even set up your computer as a Web server, with millions of people having access to login to your computer and download your files.

There are a number of ways a spyware program installs itself in your computer. Sometimes they are attached to free downloads off the Internet, other times they are attached to Internet advertising. Once you install the cute, seemingly harmless program, the spyware is living and active inside your computer. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of these programs that may perform some neat function, but are really there to spy and wreak havoc. Examples include Atom Wire, Audiogalaxy Satellite, BearShare, Bonzi Buddy, Brilliant Digital, Comet Cursor, ComTry, Gator, Global Divx Player, Go MP3, Go!Zilla, Grokster, ieplugin, iMesh, KaZaa, LimeWire, Morpheus, QC Toolbar,

QTrax, Swaptor, and XoloX. The basic rule of thumb is this: if somebody is spending their money to advertise and promote a “free” download, there’s probably more than meets the eye. Be cautious of any free program that adds a “skin” to your browser, adds cursors or menus, blocks Web advertising, adds time or temperature to a toolbar, synchronizes your clock, or adds a search bar to your browser.

HOW DO I EVICT THE SPIES?

Thankfully, spyware is one of the things that really aggravates honest, hard-working computer geeks. Because of this aggravation, there are scads of people out there researching spyware and providing tools to eradicate it. There are two types of spyware tools—those that constantly run on your computer actively sniffing for spyware as it tries to load itself, and those that scan your computer checking for anything that looks like spyware. The latter tool comes in two forms—one that scans and reports, and another that eliminates the spyware. There are numerous publishers and flavors of these antispyware

tools, you need to pick the tool that best suits you.

HOW DO I SCREEN THE SPIES TO STOP THEM BEFORE THEY MOVE IN?

There are some common sense things that can be done, including installing a “gatekeeper” to protect your computer. Many spyware elimination tools allow you to install this gatekeeper. The downside is that the gatekeeper may slow down or harass the legitimate functions your computer performs. That is a small downside to avoid spyware, though!

You can also adjust your browser settings to prompt you before downloading ActiveX controls. In many cases, this will warn you before spyware is installed. This setting can usually be found in your browser’s security settings. Do not assume that all ActiveX controls are spyware though—many perfectly legitimate programs use this. This setting simply warns you, so you are aware when a control is going to download. It is a good rule never to download anything that pops up out of the blue. If you are trying to download or install a program, pop up confirmation boxes may appear as a normal routine. It is when you are innocently surfing the Web and a popup confirmation box appears that you need to watch out.

HOW DO I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Because spyware is such a big issue, there are hundreds of Web sites dedicated to providing information and removal tools. Using your favorite search engine, do a search for “spyware” and see what comes up. For a list of specific sites and tools, feel free to e-mail me at MikeA@HomeRentals.net. Do what you need to do to get rid of the spyware—but do not do nothing. Ignoring the spyware on your computer could have serious consequences!

Mike Anderson of HomeRentals.net prepares this column. If you have a question you would like answered, e-mail him at mikea@homerentals.net.



Q: Why Advertise on the Internet?

A: Results! Results! Results! by K. Castillo, www.123rentahome.com

In the past, rental property advertising was somewhat limited to looking like this: "3br, 2ba, 2000sf. w/d, lndscp incl. \$1200 mo." Why? Cost! The price of plain print advertising in the local newspaper makes it somewhat prohibitive to totally convey to a potential renter just what the property you are advertising is all about. As a result, a tremendous amount of time spent answering questions from callers ranging from *what is the color of the carpet to does it have carpet at all?* Then, after answering endless questions, the potential client cools on the idea of renting the home he or she inquired about. Maybe it was the lime green carpet. Whatever the reason, the home remains vacant.

Sometimes everything sounds great, and the home seeker's interest is still peaked after the time-consuming question-and-answer session. You set up a time for them to view the home, and reality sets in! The home that you described so beautifully on the phone turns out to be not so beautiful in their eyes. Whatever the reason, the home remains vacant! Let us see, the 20-minute ride to the property, 30-minute show-and-tell, and the 20-minute ride back to where you started means 70 minutes lost! Since time is money, both were lost! Would it not be great if your potential home-seeker were totally informed, both informationally and visually?

Remember the old saying: "A picture is worth a thousand words?" What if you were allowed unlimited photos of every property you listed, displayed where the world could view them? What if you were able to explain in detail the specifics of each and every property? What if the cost to do this was a lot less in comparison to print advertising? Sounds almost too good to be true, but it is right at your finger tips—your keyboard! The Internet is by far the most cost-effective way to advertise real property, whether for sale or for rent!

Let us examine what your advertising dollars buy on the Internet versus traditional plain print advertising. Because newspaper ads are priced by the line and number of characters, going into detail about the property would probably cost a small fortune. How about just a front view of the home? Forget it. Most papers do not even offer photo ads for rental properties, and the ones who do charge an arm and a leg. Recently in our home town Sunday newspaper there were 34 columns of homes for rent. The majority listed were 3br, 2ba, etc. How lost does one feel with that much competition? I spoke to a gentleman on the phone about his advertisement in the paper that day. He said it cost him over \$70 for the small ad that ran just that one Sunday. As of Monday, he received not one call on the property. Ouch!

Because of the lack of competition, print advertising costs have skyrocketed in recent years. With more and more people having and using their computers, print advertising will become less and less appealing to both the property manager and renter as time goes on, not solely based on cost but also on actual results! Let us see what Internet advertising has to offer!

Internet advertising can reach people all over the world, 24 hours a day. *Wow!* If you really think about it, that sounds kind of far fetched! Mind-boggling as it seems, the Internet has this capability. Not only can you list properties with unlimited pictures and unlimited text, you can manage any part of your listings 24 hours a day! You could actually have homework! Imagine sitting in front of your computer on Sunday morning, drinking coffee, having a donut, and reading all your e-mails from very interested potential renters. Not just curious, but very interested after having seen the property inside and out and read all the details pertaining to it. Now, would you say these leads are hot or what?

Keep in mind all the benefits of the Internet. Links to your company Web site (if applicable), e-mail, phone numbers, logos, photos, and business descriptions are all very easily distributed on the Internet. The cost for all of this is so affordable that you really might want to know what the catch is. The future of renting and selling real properties is here right now! Go to your nearest computer now and find a Web source that is right for you. Do not miss out, do not be late, and by the way, does anybody have a 3br, 2ba, w/d, pl/spa for about...?

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Contribute to the Residential Resource

<u>Issue Date</u>	<u>Submission Due Date</u>
May 2004	March 15, 2004
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If you are interested in writing an article, please e-mail an attachment of your article in Word or text format to Jessica Jacobs jjacobs@assn mgmt.com or send her a Word or text file on 3-1/2" diskette to P.O. Box 140647, Austin, TX 78714-0647. All articles are subject to editing and approval of subject matter.

Protect Yourself from Our Litigious Society

by Jim Williams, American Business Development

We have all seen the ads: "Have you been injured? You may be entitled to a cash award!" or "If you lost money in the stock market because of your broker's casino mentality, call us to recoup your losses!"

It is sad but true: if you accumulate wealth, you become a target for lawyers, the IRS, or someone with less than you. The good news is that you can protect yourself from a devastating lawsuit.

Did you know that you have a one-in-four chance of having a potentially devastating lawsuit filed against you sometime in the future? There are currently between 80 and 90 million lawsuits filed in this country each year. That is over 150 suits per minute! Over 70% of the world's lawyers are right here in the United States, and we are adding new ones at a rate of 50,000 per year! What do you think those new lawyers are going to do to the number of lawsuits filed annually?

Unfortunately there is no way to completely avoid the possibility of being sued. There is, however, a way to reduce the risk of a devastating lawsuit and to protect you personally should a lawsuit be filed. What you need to do is to arrange your affairs so that any activity that could create the potential for a lawsuit is transacted in a manner that will not affect your personal assets. Whether the activity is an operating business, rental property, or any other "risk" operation, you need to separate yourself from those operations through corporate entities.

John D. Rockefeller once said: "Own Nothing, Control Everything."

If you do not own anything, or it "appears" that you do not own anything, no lawyer will sue you unless someone is willing to pay his exorbitant hourly fees. If, on the other hand, the lawyer sees substantial assets, he may very well take the case against you on a contingency basis. Attorney's contingency fees in the United States currently run in excess of 10 billion dollars per year!

The best way to protect your personal assets from this "lawsuit-crazy world" is by forming a legal entity separate from yourself. This can be a Corporation, Limited Liability Company, Limited Partnership or some combination thereof. However, you must keep in mind that in order for an entity to give you the protection you need, it must be set up and operated properly, and the type of entity or entities must fit your particular situation. If set up properly, your entity will not only give you the protection you need, but will, in most instances, pay for itself many times over in fringe benefits and tax savings. To find out more about the differences in each of these and other business structures just pull up our Web site www.abd2win.com and go to our "Business Structures" page.

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estate holdings, from your personal assets can be clearly seen with the following example:

John is a computer consultant that works out of a small office in downtown San Jose, CA. His wife works with him part-time doing the books and records and other office duties, and she is his only employee. John's net income is currently \$80,000 per year before taxes. He generates 75% of his business income from services and another 25% from the sale of related software products. John and his wife had been operating as sole proprietors—under their own names without a corporate structure—for over 10 years until early in 2003. They had been able to acquire several rental properties over the years and were becoming concerned about protecting their assets.

At first, John thought he should form a C Corporation so that he could protect his and his wife's assets while also reducing their taxes. After learning that he could be construed to be a Personal Service Corporation by the IRS because his product sales were less than 50% of his overall sales, John decided on an S Corporation for the business and a Limited Liability Company for his real estate. By separating his business into one entity and his rental properties into another, John and his wife accomplished a number of positive things:

1. They moved the rental properties out of their name reducing the possibility that some overzealous lawyer might come after them personally because on the county records they were showing a great deal of wealth.
2. They protected themselves personally from a potential lawsuit generated against one of the rental properties. Any lawsuit filed against the properties would stop at the LLC and would not put their other personal assets at risk.

3. If they did have a personal judgment declared against them, the properties would be protected through a charging order.
4. They have protected their real estate and other personal assets from any lawsuits against the business. Since the business was set up as an S corp., all of the income flows through to John and his wife personally. Therefore, the only assets in the company would be those needed to maintain the day-to-day business. In other words, John can move the profits out of the company and protect them from litigation at the same time.
5. They saved money on taxes by taking all of their fringe benefits right off the top by having things like automobile expenses, health insurance, travel, business entertainment, and so on, paid for as legitimate business expenses by the new legal "entities." They also increased their options on certain retirement plans.
6. They saved an additional \$6,120 on self-employment taxes by splitting the \$80,000 in half and taking \$40,000 as salary and \$40,000 in distributions. The 15.3% self-employment tax for Social Security and Medicare (FICA) is "not" applicable on distributions.

In addition to all of the protection they received, the total tax savings for John and his wife should be well over \$8,000 per year. The total one-time cost to set up both entities was approximately \$1,500!

If you would like to find out more about how to protect your personal assets, and have the government pay you to do it, call American Business Development toll free at 866/249-2472 for a free consultation. We would also love to have you visit our Web site at www.abd2win.com where you can learn a little more about us, or send your questions by e-mail.

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Protect Your Properties from Airport Noises

by Stuart Lieberman

I currently represent several municipalities in a lawsuit concerning expansions at a regional airport. When I first met some of the mayors to discuss this matter, I was shocked at the noise levels with which they, and everyone who lives in that area, must contend.

Property managers need to be aware of external noise issues for at least two reasons. First, tenants may claim that owners and operators have a duty to abate external noise to maintain the habitability of a residence. Second, external noise such as that from airports, will make property values drop.

Consider this: many airports are becoming busier and need to expand. This means more takeoffs, more landings, and in general, more noise. And when the planes become bigger, the noise problem intensifies.

People are filing lawsuits all over this country fighting over noise and air pollution. These airports are literally ruining peoples lives. Constant loud noise exposure can be a horrible nuisance and people should not have to live with this.

Worse yet, the airports often provide coldhearted responses. Remember, for them increased air traffic means increased revenue. And if some must be hurt so that they can prosper, so be it. Often,

the operators claim that the neighbors are doing nothing more than shaking them down for money. But it is not about money, it is about quality of life.

Maybe for the big government airport operators its about money. But for the real folks who must deal with the impacts, it's about trying to survive.

If you do not live near one, you can not appreciate the problem. Many airports are expanding and changing flight patterns. This often translates into more planes, that are often larger, flying over peoples' homes.

Noise makes people crazy. People actually become accustomed to timing their speaking so that they do not have to compete with low flying aircraft. And forget about watching television absent interruption.

If you do not live near an airport, you figure these people are just complaining for no reason. But often the problems were minimal or nonexistent when the homeowners first moved into their communities. Then, as the airports expanded and planes got bigger, their

Continued on page 15

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April 22	Fort Worth, TX	RMP® Tenancy	Jean Storms, MPM®
April 23	Fredericksburg, VA	RMP® Applying Technology to Property Management	Wallace Gibson, MPM®
May 11	Honolulu, HI	RMP® Applying Technology to Property Management	Jean Storms, MPM®
May 12	Honolulu, HI	RMP® Marketing	Ray Scarabosio, MPM®
May 15	Honolulu, HI	RMP® Operations	Suzanne Reeder, MPM®
May 21	Spokane WA	RMP® Operations	Suzanne Reeder, MPM®
May 23	Spokane WA	RMP® Marketing	Ray Scarabosio, MPM®
May 25	Naples FL	RMP® Operations	Peter Meer, MPM®
May 26	Naples FL	RMP® Marketing	Dave Holt, MPM®
May 25-26	Naples FL	MPM® Personnel Procedures and Employee Relations	Sally Backus, MPM®

Interested in Sponsoring Certification Classes?

Opportunities are available to chapters that would like to further member education, promote certification, and increase their chapter funds by sponsoring a certification class. However, it takes time to plan a class — so give your chapter five to six month's lead-time if you wish to sponsor one of these events.

Find out more by calling Bill Jackson, RMP®, at 425/467-7785 or e-mailing bill@protocolpropertymgmt.com. Bill can provide you with the details you need to make a Certification class a successful venture.

To register for classes, complete the registration form and mail or fax with payment to NARPM Headquarters. For more information call Headquarters at 800/782-3452.

RMP®/MPM® Class Registration

FEES	Early	Registration*
Ethics Classes	Registration*	Registration*
Member	\$45	\$55
Nonmember	\$60	\$70
RMP® Classes	Registration*	Registration*
Member	\$195	\$225
Nonmember	\$250	\$280
Retake	\$100	\$130
MPM® Classes		
Member	\$395	\$450
Nonmember	\$450	\$505
Retake	\$300	\$355

* To receive the early registration price payment must be post-marked, faxed, or e-mailed 30 days prior to the class.

CLASS INFORMATION

- On-site registration begins at 8:00 a.m. Class hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- RMP® classes qualify for 6 hours of NARPM certification.
- MPM® classes qualify for 12 hours of NARPM certification.
- All materials will be given to students on the day of the class.
- All attendees are required to make their individual hotel reservations.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Cancellations must be received in writing. If cancellation notice is received at least 30 days prior to the class, a full refund will be issued less a \$25 processing fee. If cancellation notice is received less than 30 days before the class, a 50% refund will be issued. No refunds will be made on the day of class; however, the registration fee can be applied to a later class with a \$25 transfer fee.

Due to low registration, a class may be cancelled with 15 days prior notice. Registration fee would be credited to a future class.

(Please print or type)

Name _____

Company _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____

List Classes

Name of class	Class Date	Cost
_____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	\$ _____
Total		\$ _____

Method of Payment

I have enclosed a check for \$_____ Ck/M.O. # _____ Date _____

Please charge my credit card in the amount of \$_____ as follows:

Visa MasterCard Discover American Express

Card Number _____ Exp. Date _____

Name of Cardholder _____

Billing Address _____

Signature _____

I authorize NARPM to charge my credit card.

Two Easy Ways to Register

1. MAIL your form with payment to NARPM, P.O. Box 140647, Austin, TX 78714-0647.

2. FAX your form with credit card payment to 512/454-3036. Please do not mail the original.



P.O. Box 140647
Austin, TX 78714-0647

FIRST-CLASS MAIL
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AUSTIN TX
PERMIT NO. 2714

Protect Your Properties

lives become miserable. It is no big deal, unless it happens to you. Once it happens, it tends to consume your entire life.

Right now a lawsuit is pending in federal court in Arizona over noise pollution. Brought by the towns of Carefree (I guess no longer) and Cave Creek, these people have had enough.

Another suit was filed last year in the Dayton, OH, area. Residents claim that the government is violating an agreement in which they promised that planes would fly away from residential areas.

So much for promises. Many airport operators are specially created governments formed with laws that insulate them from a lot of liability. So attempts to fight the operators are easily frustrated. And for this reason, promises then go out the window.

In 1999, about 105 Toledo residents accepted a \$4.6 million settlement with the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority. The settlement ended a legal battle that began in 1993 and threatened to bankrupt the port authority.

A court found that the airport operator created a nuisance in enticing a large air carrier to locate an air-cargo hub at the airport. Good news for the community. The good guys won.

Is your property impacted by an out-of-control airport? Organize and fight back. You can fight City Hall. It is seldom easy, but it can and should be done for the sake of the owners, operators, and residents.

Stuart Lieberman and Shari Blecher are partners in Princeton's Lieberman & Blecher. Their law firm specializes in environmental law and also focuses on land uses, real estate, and toxic tort litigation. The firm's Web site is www.liebermanblecher.com.