

# Residential Resource

January 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.*

## How to Turn An Unhappy Resident into a Raving Fan!

by Ernest F. Oriente, The Coach

This can happen when you least expect it, an unhappy resident has just arrived in your leasing office while your telephone is ringing, budgets are due in 25 minutes, and six future residents are waiting to tour your wonderful apartment community. Time to panic, right? Not a chance! Read this article, and use these three easy steps to handle an unhappy resident while turning them into a raving fan.

### LISTENING CAREFULLY

The moment you realize you have an unhappy resident, take a deep breath and ask this person in a soft voice if they would be kind enough to join you in your office. This gives you a few seconds to gather your thoughts and will give the two of you the privacy to have a reasonable conversation. Plus, you really do not want your current residents or any future residents to hear this unhappy conversation. Next, ask your team to hold all your telephone calls, clear your entire desk, and take out a blank sheet of paper to take notes. At this point, ask your unhappy resident to begin telling you exactly what the problem is. Take detailed notes while listening patiently, making certain not to interrupt him/her while he/she is speaking. Remember, your resident is not attacking you personally, so keep your cool during this entire conversation. Once your resident is finished explaining why he/she is unhappy, ask him/her this key question, "Is there anything else you would like to tell me?" This is a key question because it signals to your resident that

their turn is now done and you are ready to address and answer their concerns.

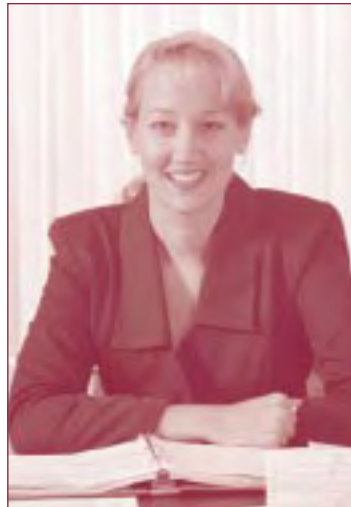
### TIP FROM THE COACH

Before addressing the concerns from your resident, let us be certain we understand what is at stake when handling resident problems and why it is important to handle each resident as if they were liquid gold. A typical resident pays \$700 per month or \$8,400 per year. In addition, anticipate that each of your current residents will refer two prospects a year to your apartment community, which represents another \$16,800 in new revenue and if each of these referrals send you two more referrals this year, that is another four new residents at \$33,600 annually. So,  $\$8,400 + \$16,800 + \$33,600 = \$58,800$  in

potential new revenue, per resident, per year. Can you clearly see why we must convert unhappy residents into raving fans?

### DIFFUSING THE SITUATION

Once your resident has shared with you exactly why he/she is unhappy, start your half of the conversation by thanking him/her for his/her comments. Next, say to your resident, "Let me see if I understand you completely." Restate this person's concerns as you slowly read from your notes. Reading your notes slowly does two things: 1) it gives your resident a chance to calm down; and 2) it shows that you were truly listening to what he/she had to say and are ready to take action. Now, apologize if you or



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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Fellow NARPM Member,

"Opening New Doors" in a new year and new era for NARPM is this year's theme!

It is with great excitement and enthusiasm that I embark on this journey with you through 2004. As we conclude our 15th anniversary year and look back from whence we came, we find our association in great standing and ready to move confidently into an envisioned future. Wonderful past presidents have directed us along this path, and we are grateful for their energy and leadership. They have contributed to the NARPM of today and will have a place of honor in what we become in years hereafter. I was honored to share the stage with many of the past presidents at the national convention in Hawaii. It was inspiring to feel the power of their combined presences during that magical September evening on the beach of Waikoloa.

Your leadership team of 2004, including your national board of directors (pictured on page 14) and the committee chairs, are arduously working on your behalf. It is our intent to transform our association into a refined meeting place for professional residential property managers seeking to further their expertise, income, and influence through networking, certification, and education only available within NARPM. We have a plan, and we are implementing our plan to benefit you, the member.

After conducting a marketing survey of members and nonmembers, which was part of our Strategic Plan for last year, we discovered that members of NARPM make more money than nonmember property managers. We also learned that our members want additional educational opportunities and availability online, as well as more opportunities to meet with each other. We have heard you, and we are responding! We are also working to develop alliances with other real estate associations, which will give NARPM an opportunity to continue to add benefits to your membership. Our goal is for every residential manager everywhere to know that NARPM is critical to his or her success in this industry because his or her clients demand that level of expertise of their property managers.

If you are interested in seeing how the leadership of NARPM (both local and national) functions, please join us in Austin, TX, on January 26-28, 2004, at the Leadership Symposium. You are invited to be an active participant in the evolving face of your association by joining us there. All local chapters' board of directors will be installed in unison with the National Board. The committees will be interacting in a new format, and a variety of workshops will be held on leadership development. It promises to be an excellent event, and all members are welcome!

I am happy to have this opportunity to greet you monthly and share all the news and excitement of NARPM's evolution into the future. I would be remiss if I did not give you a small exercise (exteacher that I am) ensuring that this feature is being read, so the January question is "What is the single best idea that you ever learned from another member, and how did it impact your business?" You can e-mail your response to [agetto@aol.com](mailto:agetto@aol.com), and I look forward to sharing some of your responses here. Thanks for taking the time to read this and sharing the year with me as we begin "Opening New Doors."

Andrea Caldwell, MPM®  
NARPM President



NARPM President  
Andrea Caldwell

## OFFICERS

**Andrea Caldwell, MPM®**  
President  
[agetto@aol.com](mailto:agetto@aol.com)  
408/978-8100

**Marc Banner, MPM®**  
President-Elect  
Finance Chair  
Bylaws Chair  
[mbanner@cablone.net](mailto:mbanner@cablone.net)  
208/377-8889

**Rose Thomas, MPM®**  
Vice President  
Convention Chair  
[rose.thomas@pmpbiz.com](mailto:rose.thomas@pmpbiz.com)  
301/694-6900

**Karen Hull, MPM®**  
Secretary  
[khull@prop-mgmt-experts.com](mailto:khull@prop-mgmt-experts.com)  
209/465-5000

**Wendell Davis, MPM®**  
Treasurer  
Legislative Chair  
[wendell04@aol.com](mailto:wendell04@aol.com)  
904/737-2455

**Christopher Hermanski, MPM®**  
Past President  
Nominations Chair  
Web Team Chair  
[chermanski@mainlander.com](mailto:chermanski@mainlander.com)  
503/343-0141

## DIRECTORS

**Dave Holt, MPM®**  
[dave@rpmgmt.com](mailto:dave@rpmgmt.com)  
612/379-7890

**Betty Fletcher, MPM®**  
Membership Chair  
[betty@fletcherpm.com](mailto:betty@fletcherpm.com)  
501/907-7091 x 101

**Erika Green, MPM®**  
Editorial Chair  
[erika@questps.com](mailto:erika@questps.com)  
817/76309696 x 101

**Bill Jackson, RMP®**  
Education Chair  
[bill@protocolpropertymgmt.com](mailto:bill@protocolpropertymgmt.com)  
425/467-1436

**Luke Kaufmann, MPM®**  
[luke@partnersmgmt.com](mailto:luke@partnersmgmt.com)  
404/876-8700

**Robert Winger, MPM®**  
Marketing Chair  
[robert@sacramento rentals.com](mailto:robert@sacramento rentals.com)  
916/446-6663

## COMMITTEE CHAIRS

**Melissa Prandi, MPM®**  
Advance Site Selection Chair  
415/482-9988 X 203

**Jim Reimer, MPM®**  
Affiliate Chair  
[jim@mgmtoneinc.com](mailto:jim@mgmtoneinc.com)  
208/375-3400

**Suzanne Reeder, MPM®**  
Certification Chair  
[suzanneatc@aol.com](mailto:suzanneatc@aol.com)  
253/852-3000

**Jean Storms, MPM®**  
History Committee  
[jstorms@landlordsource.com](mailto:jstorms@landlordsource.com)  
916/408-4400

**Raymond Scarabosio, MPM®**  
Long-range Planning Chair  
[landlordSF@aol.com](mailto:landlordSF@aol.com)  
415/379-9035

**Robert Machado, MPM®**  
Professional Standards Committee  
[rmachado@homepointe.com](mailto:rmachado@homepointe.com)  
916/429-1205

NARPM HEADQUARTERS  
P.O. Box 140647  
Austin, TX 78714-0647  
Exec. Director: Roy Bohrer  
Exec. Assistant: Sherri Beck CPS

Tel: 800/782-3452  
512/381-6091  
Fax: 512/454-3036  
E-mail: [info@narpm.org](mailto:info@narpm.org)  
Internet: [www.narpm.org](http://www.narpm.org)

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## Turn a Resident into a Raving Fan

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your team made any mistakes and look for at least one or two points with which you can agree. By conceding a point or two right away, you show that you are not defensive about his/her concerns and that you really want to solve his/her problems, not duck blame or make excuses.

### TIP FROM THE COACH

Whenever you are interacting with a current resident or a future resident, customer service experts call this a "moment of truth." When you are dealing with an unhappy resident, this is called the "pinnacle of performance." Super Stars in the property management profession do not mind handling an unhappy resident because they see this as an opportunity to shine and to win this resident's long-term loyalty.

### CONVERTING AN UNHAPPY RESIDENT INTO A RAVING FAN

OK, now comes the easy part. Ask your unhappy resident exactly what action steps he/she would like to see you take. Promise your resident that you will do everything necessary to fix or handle the concerns he/she has shared with you and tell him/her exactly when and by what time he/she can expect the problems to be handled. Now, look to resolve these problems as quickly as possible — well in advance of the day and time you promised your resident. Motorola calls this, "under-promise, over-perform" and they have used these magic words to create a multibillion-dollar company. Next, take the time to either call this resident or visit him/her in person, to tell him/her the concerns he/she had shared with you are now fixed and resolved. In addition, take a few minutes to write a small note to apologize again for his/her unhappiness and to thank him/her for

expressing his/her concerns. At last, your resident should be completely satisfied that you have addressed his/her important concerns and you have earned his/her respect and goodwill.

### TIP FROM THE COACH

Ready to convert your former-unhappy resident into a raving fan? Consider purchasing the book *Positively Outrageous Service*, written by T. Scott Gross, 800/635-7524. His book gives you a step-by-step plan for creating raving fans and will give you lots of fun and great ideas for converting very unhappy residents into your best referral sources. I have read his book several times and highly recommend you read his pearls of wisdom. In fact, once you are done reading his book, you will realize that handling unhappy residents is really the best way to win new friends!

Want to hear more about this important topic or ask some additional questions about raving fans? Fax a note on your letterhead to 435/615-8670, or send an e-mail to [ernest@powerhour.com](mailto:ernest@powerhour.com), and The Coach will fax/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 14,400 hours [since 1988] delivering customized training by telephone in leadership, traditional/Internet marketing, and sales for property management companies, apartment locator/corporate housing services, and multi-housing 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 executives/professionals/individuals who are geographically dispersed, in a time efficient and profitable format. PowerHour® is based in Olympic-town — Park City, UT, at 435/615-8486, by e-mail at [ernest@powerhour.com](mailto:ernest@powerhour.com), or at their TeleForum Web site: [www.powerhour.com](http://www.powerhour.com). To receive a FREE property management success newsletter, with subscribers throughout North America, send an e-mail to: [ernest@powerhour.com](mailto:ernest@powerhour.com). Recent PowerHour® articles have appeared in 3,500+ business/trade publications and Web sites.*

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## NEW MEMBERS

Welcome new NARPM members! The following is a list of new members who joined NARPM from November 1 to November 30, 2003.

Dianah Black-Parker  
1206 Laskin Rd, Ste 100  
Virginia Beach, VA 23451  
757/718-1675

Yvonne Dalke  
Maguire Hill Real Estate  
PO Box 2266  
North Bend, WA 98045  
425/888-1300

Cathy Felshaw  
Property Counselors  
Management Group  
PO Box 60195  
Ft. Myers, FL 33906  
239/275-8320

Sharon Gilbert  
Century 21 First Realty  
Property Management  
1980 Capital Circle NE  
Tallahassee, FL 32308  
850/523-6100

Valerie Mahan  
Featurepark  
2181 Jamieson Ave, Unit 1608  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
727/421-2572

Keeffe McSweeney  
Partners Management  
1035 Juniper Street  
Atlanta, GA 30309  
404/876-8700

Kent Miller  
The Miller Group of Re/max  
Advantage  
PO Box 1693  
Jonesboro, GA 30237  
770/471-6000

Beverly Nicholson  
ERA Old South Properties, Inc.  
6218 N Ninth Avenue  
Pensacola, FL 32504  
850/478-8845

Brian Scott  
F P Management, Inc.  
PO Box 741  
Beech Grove, IN 46107  
317/709-2309

Lori Van Mater  
At Home In Key West, Inc.  
905 Truman Avenue  
Key West, FL 33040  
305/296-7975

Jerry Williams  
Wright-Patt Gem City  
Realty, Inc.  
21 S Broad Street  
Fairborn, OH 45324  
937/878-2221

Christine Wong  
Re/Max In Motion/  
Anna Maria Wong Team  
14824 Wicks Blvd.  
San Leandro, CA 94577  
510/875-7999

Robert Fowler  
HomeRentalAds.com  
5805 State Bridge Road,  
Ste G312  
Duluth, GA 30097  
770/663-8695

Bryan Keith  
Logicbuilt, Inc.  
544 S Pacific St, #101  
San Marcos, CA 92069  
800/465-6442



## 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:

- ★ 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.
- ★ The 12-month membership period for the five new members starts the day your first new membership application is approved by headquarters.
- ★ 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*.
- ★ The Award Certificate can be used to pay NARPM annual dues, or like amount can be applied toward National Convention.
- ★ 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.
- ★ A member can earn more than one Award Certificate per 12-month period.

## Ambassador Program

November 2003 New Members

New Member

Ambassador Member

Jerry Williams

Beverly Browning, MPM®, CPM®

Yvonne Dalke

Mary Tungsvik, MPM®

Sharon Gilbert

Joe Manausa

Beverly Nicholson

Michael S. Porter, MPM®

# Do You Have a Good Corporate Logo?

by Alif Wahab, Uniqon Design Services

What makes a good logo design? A good logo design in theory should be able to create a positive, powerful first impression. It should also create a long lasting one as well.

Examples? Just think of IBM's and McDonalds' logos. Even if you can only see part of their logo you will instantly recognize it. This proves that their logo works in leaving a strong impression on viewers. Is that not what we all want?

It should also convey to viewers your company's ethos, mission, and products/services. A good logo also builds your brand and gives a polished, more professional look to your business.

It should reflect the nature of your business and what kind of services you offer. If it is a bank, then a classic and bold typeface works well to suggest a solid and protected look. If your unique business is based on speedy service, you might consider italics or dashes to suggest movement.

Practically, a good logo design should also be simple and work well in black and white. Why? Let us imagine again examples of excellent logos — Nike's swoosh, Sony, Dell, and BMW. Can you recognize them in black and white? From a distance? Or even just a part of them?

That is why your logo needs to be simple to work well in all mediums. Clients often make the mistake of thinking that more is more, when in actuality less is more. The simpler your logo, the easier it is on the eyes, and the faster it will register in your future customers' minds.

Government organizations, five-star hotels, and exclusive clubs should use logos that are classical in nature to give an image of stability and exclusivity.

Colors are not as important in a good logo design as you might think. If your logo does not look good in black and white, it will not look good in any color.

Choose only colors that represent your company well. Yellow or sky blue gives a youthful and energetic look. Navy or lavender gives a calm, professional feel. Red or orange means strong and intense, while green and magenta command respect.

In the end, think ahead and avoid being too 'modern.' A trendy look might work now, but five years later it might look dated. A good logo design should last a minimum of 15 years, as it might be costly to update your logo a few years later.

Choose your logo design wisely, and remember a cheap logo design service is not necessarily better. As the saying goes, "You get what you pay for."

*Alif Wahab is the director of a multidisciplinary design firm, Uniqon Design Services. The firm specializes in Income-Generating Design Solutions for Businesses. Visit <http://www.uniqonlogodesign.com> for more info.*

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# Marketing Smarter to Earn More by Charlie Cook

An accountant once told me that he never met anyone who did not want to make 30% more money. Whether you want a better lifestyle, take more vacations, buy a fancy car, spend more time with your family, send your children to college, or give everything away, you could always use more money.

If you sell services, your primary limitations on earnings are your costs and the number of hours in a week. Most independent professionals are already working well over 40 hours a week and cannot work longer hours to increase earnings. Your goal should be to find ways to work less and increase your earnings. How can you market smarter and make more money?

## DO NOT DISCOUNT YOUR SERVICES

Have you ever heard of a lawyer or carpenter offering a 20% discount on their hourly or daily rate? Every time you offer a discount or reduce your regular rates, you are sending a message to prospects that your services really are not worth what you are asking.

Once your clients know that your prices are discounted or negotiable, you will always be fighting a battle to be the paid full price for your work. Never offer discounts; your clients will assume that they are expected to pay the asking price for your services.

## OVERCOME OBJECTIONS TO PRICE

Prospects invariably want to know your pricing before they understand the benefits your products and services provide. Quoting prices is meaningless until prospects can put the cost into the context of the results they can expect.

When prospects show concern about your pricing, it is a good sign. It indicates their interest in buying your services and a need to understand the value you provide. You could list all the benefits of your services, but if you really want to make the sale, it is far more effective to let prospects sell themselves.

A client's perception of value is not based on how much they pay, but on whether their expectations will be met and what benefit they will receive. Do not get stuck on the dollars you charge per hour. Instead help prospects define the dollar benefit of your services.

When prospects query you on price, respond by asking questions to help them identify for themselves the problem they want solved, the cost of the problem, the solution they need, and how you can help them. Prospects buy when they think their expectations will be met. Let them define their expectations and they will be far more likely to

sell themselves when you finally explain your pricing at the end of the conversation.

## POSITION YOURSELF AS AN EXPERT

Differentiate yourself from your competition by using articles to regularly provide insight and ideas to your prospects and clients so they come to view you as an expert in your field. Use expert positioning and consider raising your prices.

When Arnold Schwarzenegger first arrived in the United States he had trouble getting work as a stonemason with his funny accent, despite charging less than his competitors. A friend suggested he set his prices above the competition and bill himself and his partner as exclusive European masons. His business took off, and look where he is now!

## AVOID HOURLY FEES

Unless you sell hour-long massages, charging by the hour is the best way to limit your earning potential. When you charge by the hour you lose money if you work efficiently or if you get a great idea right away. Prospects can always negotiate with you on the number of hours they want, undermining your ability to put in the time needed to meet their expectations.

Prospects want results. Help them clarify the results they want and then set a project fee for accomplishing those results. Make sure your contract or letter of agreement allows you to adjust your price if the project changes midstream.

## USE VALUE-BASED PRICING

You can pay \$30 or over \$5,000 a night for a motel or hotel room. Both provide a roof over your head, a bed, and your own bathroom, so why do some people pay over 150 times more for one than the other?

People buy based on their perception of the value provided. If they understand the value that your service or product provides, they may be willing to pay much, much more than you are currently charging. Look at the results you provide for clients, and reassess your pricing.

## LEVERAGE YOUR TIME AND MONEY

Like most service professionals you have limited time and money to spend on marketing. Much of your time is spent delivering services. Is your marketing helping you earn more? Do prospects understand the unique value you provide? If not, take a look at the way you are positioning your firm and adjust it to clarify your value to clients.

Are you making what you could be? If you apply even one or two of the above strategies, you will be making more money than you are now without working any harder. You will probably still wish you had 30% more.

*The author, Marketing Coach Charlie Cook, helps independent professionals and small business owners attract more clients and increase their earnings with the Five Principles of Highly Effective Marketing. Sign up for the Free Marketing Guide and the More Business newsletter, full of practical marketing tips at [www.charliecook.net](http://www.charliecook.net) or e-mail to [ccook@charliecook.net](mailto:ccook@charliecook.net). 2003 © In Mind Communications, LLC. All rights reserved.*

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# Ten Reasons Why New Year's Resolutions Do Not Last, and How to Make Them Work

by Carol Halsey

Let us face it. You set new resolutions every year, with all good intentions, but they rarely last out the month. So why do they not last?

Recognize that a resolution is only another word for a goal. What you are actually doing is committing to a new goal you wish to accomplish sometime within this new year.

Let us take a look at ten reasons why they do not last, and how you can have more success this year. These apply equally for a personal goal or a business goal.

**1. You have not made room in your life for a new priority.**

Your life is probably already very full. Now you want to add a new goal. If you are really serious about reaching it, something else will have to be eliminated for the time being. Decide what that is, and replace it with this new resolution.

**2. You want to change something.**

You may decide that you need to eliminate a bad habit like smoking, or you want to lose weight by rearranging your eating habits. Changing habits is difficult, and takes a great deal of discipline and persistence. Get support from friends and family to help you through the tough times.

**3. You are changing something because you think you should change it, and not necessarily because you want to change it.**

You may be putting pressure on yourself to "do the right thing." If you are not totally committed to the change, it will not happen.

**4. Your resolution appears too big, and you are overwhelmed.**

You started out very excited about the thought of accomplishing this goal, but now it seems insurmountable. To overcome this and stay on track, set a deadline for when you want to reach this goal. Then break it down into small steps, with a deadline for completing each step. Remember, inch by inch, life is a cinch.

**5. You are not saying "no" to tasks and people who will distract you.**

Keep in mind that this new goal is a priority in your life. Do not give your precious time and energy to other people's priorities that take time away from yours. Stay focused on what is important to you and learn to say "no" to others.

**6. You do not have a plan for reaching this new goal.**

If you do not know how you are getting there, you will surely end up someplace else. You need a plan for reaching your new goal. Schedule the time and tasks into your daily life for this.

**7. You do not seek out support from others.**

Find someone who will support you and to whom you will be accountable. Let them know what your new goal is, your target for accomplishing it, and how they can help and support you. They will be there to keep you focused.

**8. You allow this new resolution to rule your life.**

If you become obsessed with pursuing this new goal, it will control everything you do. This will create too much pressure on you

and you will find it difficult to maintain. Planning and scheduling the time to work on your new resolution will allow you to incorporate it into your life and give your life balance.

**9. You do not work on it consistently.**

If you just work on your resolution only at irregular intervals, you are setting yourself up for failure. That is why planning and scheduling time is so important. Commit to doing something every day, no matter how small, that puts you closer to your goal.

**10. You do not celebrate the small victories.**

If you are only focused on the end goal, you miss the small accomplishments along the way. Each time you reach a small goal, celebrate. You have the satisfaction that you are getting closer to the big goal, and it gives you the incentive to continue.

*Carol Halsey is founder of Business Organizing Solutions. She is a professional organizer, consultant, speaker, and author. You can get articles, ideas, and a free Idea Kit, filled with simple tips for saving time, simply by visiting her Web site: <http://www.PilesToFiles.com>. Subscribe to her free organizing newsletter, "Organizing Ideas," sent to you twice a month. © 2003 Carol Halsey*



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the NARPM Web site [www.narpm.org](http://www.narpm.org).

# PBDE: Something Property Managers May Want to Avoid (at Least for Now)

by **Stuart Lieberman**

Polybrominated Diphenyl Ether, or PBDE, is one of those chemicals that you may never have heard of until you read this column. But be forewarned, you will be hearing more about it in the near future. This chemical retards fires and is found in many homes throughout the United States. You will not find it in much of Europe, where it is now banned. Maybe it will eventually be banned here as well.

Here is the problem with this chemical: It appears, according to some scientists, that we are absorbing this fire retardant into our bodies. According to published reports, PBDE is already accumulating in the breast milk of nursing mothers! And scientists suggest that the chemical may make us ill. It seems to be another one of those cases where the stuff is on the market, we are being exposed to it, and scientists are now being forced to question whether this chemical will hurt us. Is not it just a little late?

PBDE is used in furniture padding. It is designed to slow in-home fires. The question that needs to be asked is whether this chemical is causing more harm than good. And as a property manager who may have legal responsibility for ensuring that living conditions are completely safe and habitable, you need to be aware that this is a developing issue.

Supporters claim that the product has value and that the value outweighs any health risk. But not everyone is buying this argument. Chemical manufacturers say the risk of fire-related death drops by 45% when this substance is used in furniture. However, environmentalists want this material banned because they allege that it is toxic and that it accumulates in the body.

Swedish scientists first documented the increase of PBDE in humans years ago. In 1998, scientists reported that levels of PBDE in breast milk had increased 40 times since 1972. And some studies suggest that

this chemical may cause brain damage in mice.

California, to its credit, is not waiting for people to become ill. That state became the first in the nation to ban the chemical. While the EPA is monitoring the situation, California has decided to protect its citizens and will not take any chances.

Here is my question: If the material may be harmful, if it may cause illness, if we do not fully understand the impact of this product — why are we using it? As I understand it, in Europe products of this nature cannot be used unless they are proven to be safe. Here it appears that products cannot be banned unless they are proven to be harmful. It is a different approach with a real difference in how we are protected.

As many readers may know, a few years ago industry sold us on a new fire-retardant wood for use in multifamily dwellings all over the United States. That material lost its structural integrity and rotted, causing lawsuits all over the United States. Everyone who was anyone ended up being sued, with large scale re-roofing projects as a result.

I wonder whether PBDE will suffer the same fate. Some animal tests already indicate trouble. Why use this chemical without fully understanding it? As a property manager, are you willing to wait? I think real estate professionals need to ask these kinds of questions and have good answers that they can later rely on, if, heaven forbid, they need to do so.

*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](http://www.liebermanblecher.com).*



## Let Us Get Cracking!

By Cindy Van Mater, MPM®, 2004 Convention Arrangements Chair

Maryland crab feasts are part of a long tradition around the Chesapeake Bay. And not because crabs are a part of the Maryland economy — but because blue swimming crabs are so melt-in-your-mouth delicious. My daughters who have a real estate business and live in Key West, FL, come back to Maryland regularly — just for the crabs! So, there could be no more appropriate, no more fun, no more delicious off-site event for the 2004 National Convention in Baltimore than the Crustacean Celebration at Phillips Seafood planned for Thursday, September 23, 2004.

A short stroll along an elevated walkway will take you from the Hyatt Hotel to Phillips. Once there you will be welcomed by a friendly staff ready to teach you the fine art of cracking and eating crabs. Before long you will be handling crabs like a seasoned Marylander — and no doubt become as hooked on them as we are. To add to the fun, Phillips' staff will demonstrate how to prepare many of the delightful foods they serve. By the way, Phillips began operating as a crab processing plant on Maryland's Eastern Shore in 1916. They opened their first Crab House in 1956 and now have several restaurants in Maryland, one in Washington, DC, and another in Myrtle Beach, SC. They are famous for their dedication to quality and for their Maryland-style crab cakes.

So, what is on the menu besides all-you-can-eat, sweet meat, fresh steamed, blue swimming crabs? Well, save room for at least a taste of jumbo steamed shrimp, Maryland fried chicken, corn on the cob, coleslaw, potato salad, watermelon — and premium broiled crab cakes. (I will tell you a Maryland secret: some people like eating crab cakes even more than cracking and eating crabs! Shhhhh. Promise you will keep this quiet.) A superb cheesecake is the finish to the feast — so do try to save a little room. All the coffee, tea, and soft drinks you can hold are provided with the meal and adult beverages of your choice are available for purchase. Is your mouth watering yet? Mine is. I can hardly wait to get cracking!

Let us hope for nice weather because crab feasts are even more fun outdoors. Imagine with me for a moment: You are sitting with a congenial crowd at a brown-paper-covered table piled high with spicy, steaming, succulent crabs. The aroma is almost as pleasant as every juicy bite. As you eat, your face is tickled by a gentle salt breeze and you are enjoying the intriguing and lovely scene of Baltimore's Inner Harbor. Add to this pleasant image the evening's entertainment, an icy drink, and a few of those tasty side dishes. Have you made your reservations yet?

While we are feasting, The Gangplank Ragtime Band will entertain us with rousing old-time music and traditional patriotic tunes. They are a popular and upbeat band who invariably have the audience singing along. Yes, you can sing between bites.

And when we are thoroughly through stuffing ourselves, the evening will be far from over. From Phillips, it is just a short walk to the ESPN Zone where you can watch your favorite sports teams on a 16-foot high screen. Or pay a visit to Power Plant Live! Built around a common plaza with plenty of outdoor seating, it is where you will find the Improv Comedy Club, the Babalu Grill, Cafe Asia, and Howl at the Moon — featuring the world's best dueling-piano rock-n-roll show.

For those who thrive on outdoor nightlife, the Inner Harbor is the perfect place. There is always a festive atmosphere. Street entertainers, open-air concerts, fireworks, paddle-boats, and cruise-boats are all part of the fun. Adventurous souls can take a water taxi to historic Fell's Point and enjoy live music on the cobblestoned streets.

Those who prefer a quiet ending to the evening might enjoy just strolling along the harbor's edge and soaking up the atmosphere — it is inspiring to see Old Glory flying above Fort McHenry at night.

Start making plans now to join us September 23, 2004, for this authentic Maryland Crab Feast — and other fun — on Baltimore's Inner Harbor. Please take my word for it, and my daughters', there is absolutely no finer way to spend the last day of summer than at a Crustacean Celebration!

*Cindy Van Mater, MPM®, is the president of Professional Property Services, Ltd., in Myersville, MD, and the founding president of the Maryland Suburban Chapter of NARPM, serving on its Board for the past nine years. She has been a NARPM member since 1992 and has served on the Membership Committee, the Marketing Committee, the Nominating Committee, and is currently the Arrangements Chair for the Convention Committee. She has been in the property management business in the Frederick, MD, area for over 20 years and a real estate professional for 25 years. She is co-owner of her own small business for the past 12 years with her partner/husband, Harry Van Mater, RMP®.*



Baltimore Inner Harbor photo courtesy of Baltimore CVB



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# 50 Surefire Web Design Tips

by Mario Sanchez

## TIPS TO BRAND YOUR WEB SITE

- Include your logo on all pages. Position it at the top left on each page.
- Complement your logo with a tagline or catchy sentence that summarizes your business purpose. For example “Always low prices” is the tagline for Wal-Mart.
- Create a favicon. A favicon is that small graphic that appears next to the URL in the address bar.
- Have a consistent look and feel in all your pages. Use a color scheme and layout that are clearly recognized across your site.
- Have an About Us section, that includes all relevant information about you and your business.
- Include a copyright statement at the bottom of each page.

## TIPS ON WEB SITE NAVIGATION

- Design your pages to load in less than 10 seconds (50Kb maximum size, including pictures).
- Group your navigational options in relevant categories.
- Use common names for your menu options: Home, About Us, Contact Us, Help, Products. Avoid “clever” or “trendy” alternatives.
- If your site uses Flash, also provide an HTML version for users who prefer a less fancy, faster site.
- Provide simple text navigation links at the bottom of long pages, so users do not need to scroll back up.
- Link your logo to your homepage, except in the homepage itself. Put a link to your homepage on all your internal pages.
- Display a “breadcrumb trail”; it is basically the path from the homepage to the page where you are. A breadcrumb trail looks like this: Home > Section > Subsection > Page, and it greatly facilitates navigation.
- If your site is too big, provide search capabilities. Include a search box in the upper right corner of your homepage, and a link to a Search page from your interior pages. Freefind offers you a free and powerful search engine for your site.
- Set your search box to search your site, not to search the Web.
- Create a custom error page that displays a simple site map with links to the main sections of your site. That way, you will not lose visitors that have followed a bad link to your site or who have misspelled your URL.

## TIPS ON LAYOUT AND CONTENT PRESENTATION

- Save the top of your page for your most important content. Remember: good content must flow to the top.
- Layout your page with tables, and set the width in percentage terms instead of a fixed number of pixels. That way, your page will always fit the screen, without the need to scroll horizontally.

- Optimize your page to be viewed best at 800x600 (the most popular resolution at the time of this writing).
- Use high contrast for the body of your page: black text on white background, or white text on black background works best.
- Do not use too many different fonts in one page. Also, avoid using small serif fonts (like Times Roman): they are difficult to read from a computer screen. Verdana is the most Web-friendly font, since it is wide, clean, and easy to read.
- Avoid long blocks of text. Use tools that facilitate scanability, like bullets, subtitles, highlighted keywords, hyperlinks, etc.
- Avoid amateurish features like: numeric page counters, wholesale use of exclamation points, all caps, center justified blocks of text, excessive animated gifs, busy backgrounds, etc.
- Do not use pop-up windows. They distract your visitors and are immediately dismissed as ads.
- Test your site so that it looks good in different browsers and resolutions.

## TIPS ON WRITING FOR THE WEB

- Write in layman’s terms so that everybody can understand your content, unless you are running a technical site for technical people.
- Reading from a screen is painful: use 50% less words than you would use on print.
- If a page is too long, break it into several pages and link to them.
- Do not use font sizes smaller than 10 point for the body of your page. Specify your fonts in percentage terms instead of pixels, to let users set their own size preferences using their browser’s text view options.
- Use a spell-checker. Spelling mistakes are embarrassing and hurt credibility.

## TIPS TO KNOW YOUR CUSTOMERS

- Ask for feedback: include a feedback form in your Contact Us page.
- Publish an ezine and include a subscription form in your homepage. Give your customers valuable information and encourage them to contact you.
- Include polls and other tools to gather market intelligence.

## TIPS ON LINKING

- Make your links descriptive. They should indicate what the user will be linking to, as opposed to just saying “click here.”
- Do not underline anything that is not a link.
- Underline your links and use a consistent color for them across your site (preferably blue).
- Use a different color for visited links, so that your visitors know where they have been (preferably purple or a more subdued tone of the unvisited links color).

- When linking to a non-HTML file, such as Excel, Word or Acrobat, make it evident, by including a small icon next to the link.
- Do not link to “under construction” pages.
- Make sure that your links work and that you do not have broken links. There are free online tools that can help you with this.
- If you use graphic links, do not forget to use the ALT attribute. The ALT attribute should describe what are you linking to.

### TIPS ON HOW TO USE GRAPHICS

- Optimize your graphics. Use only .gif and .jpg formats. Make your image files as small as possible while maintaining acceptable quality. Use a free online graphics optimization tool.
- Use thumbnails (miniature versions of a picture) and make them clickable to the actual size picture.
- Avoid graphics that look like ads. People ignore them.
- Use the ALT attribute on pictures, even when the image is not a link. It helps users with disabilities and people who have turned off graphics.

### TIPS TO OPTIMIZE YOUR SITE FOR THE SEARCH ENGINES

- Create short, descriptive page titles to entice search engine users to click on your links.
- Create a site map containing all your pages, and link to it directly from your homepage. Search engine robots will follow the link to your site map and will most likely add all your pages to the index.
- Decide what the two or three main keywords are for each page (the words you believe search engine users will type to find your page) and repeat them often in your page title, description meta tag, and page body.
- Create a Links page and call it Resources. In it, place links to those sites that have agreed to place a reciprocal link to your page. The more inbound links you have from quality sites with a topic related to your site, the better your site will rank with the search engines.
- Use more text than graphics, and minimize the use of Flash and JavaScript. Search engines heavily favor text and will crawl and index your site faster.

For more details, visit [www.theinternetdigest.net](http://www.theinternetdigest.net).

Mario Sanchez publishes The Internet Digest, <http://www.theinternetdigest.net>, a collection of Web design and Internet marketing tips and resources to help you design a better Web site and market it more effectively.

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# Join the Club by Cheryl Flake, Vice President of Cashflow Solutions, Inc.

Sometimes you see a new product that becomes wildly successful.

Then you begin to get used to seeing it more and more, then all the time, then everyday. Then it becomes so widely-used and familiar that you do not really take notice anymore. After it gains that level of acceptance, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that this product — like any businesses' product offering — faces the same challenges that all businesses face.

In order to become so popular, it had to cause a change in the way its prospective customers thought. It had to cause a change in their old buying habits. The benefits it offered to these customers had to motivate them to start using it and buying it — instead of the solutions those consumers had relied on before. It had to thrive in a marketplace crowded with competitors, and prosper in an uncertain economy — just like your business has to — to become a commercial success.

As a business owner, ask yourself (while taking a fresh look at the "Successful Product" example that follows) whether the benefits outlined below could apply to your business, too.

What if you discovered:

1. A new nationwide consumer "Buyers' Club" had been formed — and that most adults in the United States had already joined this Club as "Consumer Members."

2. Then, you found out that millions of businesses in the United States had learned about this club and joined up, too — as "Merchant Members" — because "Consumer Members" prefer to spend their money with "Merchant Members."

3. And, it only costs a few dollars a month to be a "Merchant Member." You are eligible to join even if your business is a new start-up, a sole proprietorship, even a part-time venture you are working at while still at your "Day Job."

Then, you found out more details regarding the reasons why so many business owners had already joined this Club.

When customers buy any service or product (on average) from Club Members:

1. the "Consumer Members" spend more, buy more impulsively, and buy more expensive services or merchandise than they originally planned to buy;
2. they are less conscious of slight price differences and will seek out "Merchant Member" businesses rather than comparison shop; and
3. they tend to read the ads of those "Merchant Member" businesses first, and look for the membership logo those businesses always display in their advertising.

Does this sound pretty good to you so far? Good enough that you would want to join? Wait, there is more.

Plus, as a "Merchant Member Business,"

1. you never have to worry about a bounced check or an overdue account from a "Consumer Member" in the Club. Their funds are guaranteed electronically at the point-of-sale — and then automatically wire-transferred to your checking account.
2. displaying the Club logo in your ads gave you instant credibility. (The Club spends \$4,000,000 daily on advertising to increase their name recognition with consumers.)

As a business owner who is always looking for every competitive advantage for yourself, would you join?

This "Club" really exists and all these benefits for "Merchant Member Businesses" really exist too. Can you believe there are still some businesses that have not joined? Yes, there are still businesses who do not accept credit cards!

Consumer credit card use — and Visa/MasterCard merchant acceptance — is a perfect example of a wildly successful product that has mushroomed in use over the last few decades. It provides superior benefits versus other forms of payment — and solutions to problems for both "Consumer Members" and "Merchant Members."

Customers prefer to use their credit cards for everything — there are more credit cards in the United States today than Social Security cards. Over 40% of the buying public prefer to use credit cards exclusively rather than checks or cash.

Visa/MasterCard Merchant Account approvals can now be guaranteed for 99% of all legitimate businesses — including new start-ups, home-based, all service businesses, etc. Small businesses no longer



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- Multiple Check & Invoice Limits
- Over 200 Reports With Drill Down
- And the list goes on and on




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have to miss selling opportunities because of a "payment barrier" between them and their customer. Remember, you cannot make it too easy for prospective clients to buy from you!

What if a customer wants to buy and does not have the cash? Do you mail an invoice and open yourself up for a potential collection problem? Many companies accept credit cards specifically to reduce receivables and the time and energy that collections — including NSF check collections — require.

Credit card funds are now being electronically deposited into any checking account — even a personal account — within 48 – 72 hours. If your concern is the cost of the 1.5% – 2.5% merchant account discount rate, ask yourself how much the sales you did not make cost you!

From a practical standpoint, accepting credit cards in the field — for service calls, deliveries, contractors, or trade shows — has presented problems in the past. But new radio-based technology is now available for businesspeople who do not always do business at a fixed location.

Wireless Point-of-Sale Transmitters — a solution developed to solve problems inherent in conducting business away from electricity and phone lines — are mobile credit card terminals featuring a rechargeable battery and receipt printer. They allow mobile businesses the luxury of "swiping" the card's magnetic stripe and receiving authorization in seconds without imprinting paper slips, calling and waiting on hold for a voice approval, or just "hoping for the best" that the card is OK.

Getting paid by credit cards is a basic tool that every business can utilize. If you are not accepting them now, you can set up a Visa/MasterCard Merchant Account in a matter of days. Accepting credit cards can increase your sales, expand your client base, and improve your cash flow. It can help you prosper in an uncertain economy — and thrive in a marketplace crowded with competitors — just like any business has to today in order to become a commercial success.

## **C**ERTIFICATION CORNER

by Suzanne Reeder, MPM®, NARPM Certification Chair 2004

The Certification Committee is pleased to announce the following new candidates. Good luck!

### **RMP® CANDIDATES**

Pamela Taueffer, Healdsburg Property Management, Healdsburg, CA

Scott McPherson, All County Property Management & Realty, Inc., St. Petersburg, FL

### *Contribute to the Residential Resource*

<u>Issue Date</u>	<u>Submission Due Date</u>
April 2004	February 15, 2004
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@assnmgmt.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.

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# Top 10 Ways to Clear Clutter by BZ Riger-Hull

1. Hold the intention that the only three things allowed on your writing desk are a lamp, a small vase for flowers, and a photograph or two. That is it! When you get up from your desk put everything else away except those three things.
2. Sort your mail as soon as it comes in, then recycle, throw out, file, or respond. No piles and no promise to go through it later.
3. Spend 10 minutes a day walking through your house with a large shopping bag. Grab at least three things from each room in the house that you can throw away.
4. Have a special reading box or basket. Sort through magazines or articles you want to read and tear out the articles you are interested in and recycle the rest of the magazine.
5. Make sure you sort your e-mail so you never have more than three to five things in your in box at any one time.
6. Set up project files in Word to keep track of important things you are working on. Designate a separate file for each project or focus. You will not have to hunt for your information when you need it.
7. Shred unwanted office paper and use it for garden mulch, cat litter, or starting a nice crackling fire in the fireplace.
8. Learn to say NO. Or at least get in the habit of asking for a day to think the request over. This will clear out clutter from your schedule.
9. Make a rule that everything has a drawer, cabinet, basket, bin, or shelf it belongs on. Put nothing on the flat surfaces in your house.
10. Write down all of those things that are running around your brain nagging you. Sort them into three categories.
  - a. Things that will help me accomplish my goals that are really important to me.
  - b. Things I think are urgent or burning.
  - c. Things I should do. Be honest and ruthless when you sort this list.

Stop doing everything that falls under #c. Delegate everything that falls under #b to someone else, or eliminate it all together. The #a items are the only things you want to spend your time working on.

*BZ Riger-Hull is the Success Coach. She helps business professionals and entrepreneurs create success, balance, and wealth on their own terms. Read excerpts from her book The Soul of Success, and get tips and practical strategies for success from the Inspirit Newsletter. To subscribe, go to <http://www.in-spiros.com>.*

## NARPM BOARD 2004



Seated (l-r) Rose Thomas, MPM (Vice President), Marc Banner, MPM (President-elect), Andrea Caldwell, MPM (president), Karen Hull, MPM, (Secretary), Chris Hermanski, MPM, (Past President), Standing: Luke Kaufmann, MPM, Robert Winger, MPM, Erika K. Green, MPM, Betty Fletcher, MPM, Bill Jackson, RMP, Not Pictured: Wendell Davis, MPM, (Treasurer), and Dave Holt, MPM

## 2004 RMP®/MPM® Certification Classes

Date	Location	Class	Instructor
January 26	Austin, TX	RMP® Marketing	Raymond Scarabosio, MPM®
January 25-26	Austin, TX	MPM® Operating a Maintenance Company	Kit Garren, MPM®
February 19	Denver, CO	RMP® Operations	Peter Meer, MPM®
February 18-19	Denver, CO	MPM® Owner/Client Relations	Wallace Gibson, MPM®
April 15	San Jose	Ethics	TBA
April 22	Ft. Worth, TX	RMP® Tenancy	Jean Storms, MPM®
April 23	Fredericksburg, VA	RMP® Applying Technology to Property Management	Wallace Gibson, 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](mailto: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	
<b>Ethics Classes</b>	Registration*	Registration*
Member	\$45	\$55
Nonmember	\$60	\$70
<b>RMP® Classes</b>	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  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
AUSTIN TX  
PERMIT NO. 2714

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## Ready, Aim, Ask

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

What do you want to learn from prospective tenants? Obviously you want to determine, somehow or other, if they will be good tenants. You find out by carefully checking all information on their rental applications. Then you ask questions and sift through their answers to find out if they are (1) telling the truth, and (2) people who will pay the rent on time, take care of your property, and get along with their neighbors.

You ask questions both on the rental application and face-to-face. It is important that, just as with your rental application, you ask the same questions face-to-face to each applicant or prospective tenant.

You have two reasons vital to your business for asking the same questions to each prospective tenant: (1) you are comparing apples to apples (different questions mean a different set of answers and the inability to compare the answers adequately), and (2) asking different questions to different applicants risks a Fair Housing complaint.

Always ask questions that require the person you are asking to respond with a complete sentence. "Why are you moving?" "What did you like most about the last place you lived?" "What kind of neighbors did you have at your last apartment?" You can think of lots more. None of those questions can be intelligently answered yes or no.

What sort of thing are you looking for in your applicants' answers? First, you are looking for signs of lying. Those could be a number of things, including, but not limited to, throat clearing, shifting back and forth on their feet, staring at the floor, or getting a glazed look in their eyes. Paul Eckman, professor of psychology at the University of California in San Francisco, says that everyone shows telltale signs

when he or she lies. "Liars do not monitor, control, and disguise all their behavior."

Second, look out for answers that would indicate a propensity for causing trouble. A question about their neighbors at their current residence could go a long way towards indicating how well they get along with other people. Weigh the answer carefully.

Third, be careful when they tell you too much. Over embellishment can be a sign of a carefully-crafted lie they have practiced over and over to pull out for each landlord. Of course, it could also mean they just talk too much, telling you far more than you would ever want to know.

Put careful questioning together with a thorough verification of all information on the rental application, and you can cut down the incidence of bad tenants by 90%. Bad tenants do not like their past rental history to be scrutinized. They have a lot to hide.

When you interview applicants, always come prepared with a set of questions to which you want answers. Your questions should aim to find out what quality of tenant you are talking to. Then ask, ask, ask, to get good tenants.

Get ready by preparing your questions in advance, taking aim at the information you need to make an informed decision. Then ask them of your applicants.

*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](http://www.rentalprop.com).*