RESIDENTIALResource NARPM™
THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY MANAGERS

Partnership over pitch:
Lessons from both sides of the table

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JULY 2026 ISSUE | 1403 GREENBRIER PARKWAY, SUITE 150, CHESAPEAKE, VA 23320 USA | WWW.NARPM.ORG

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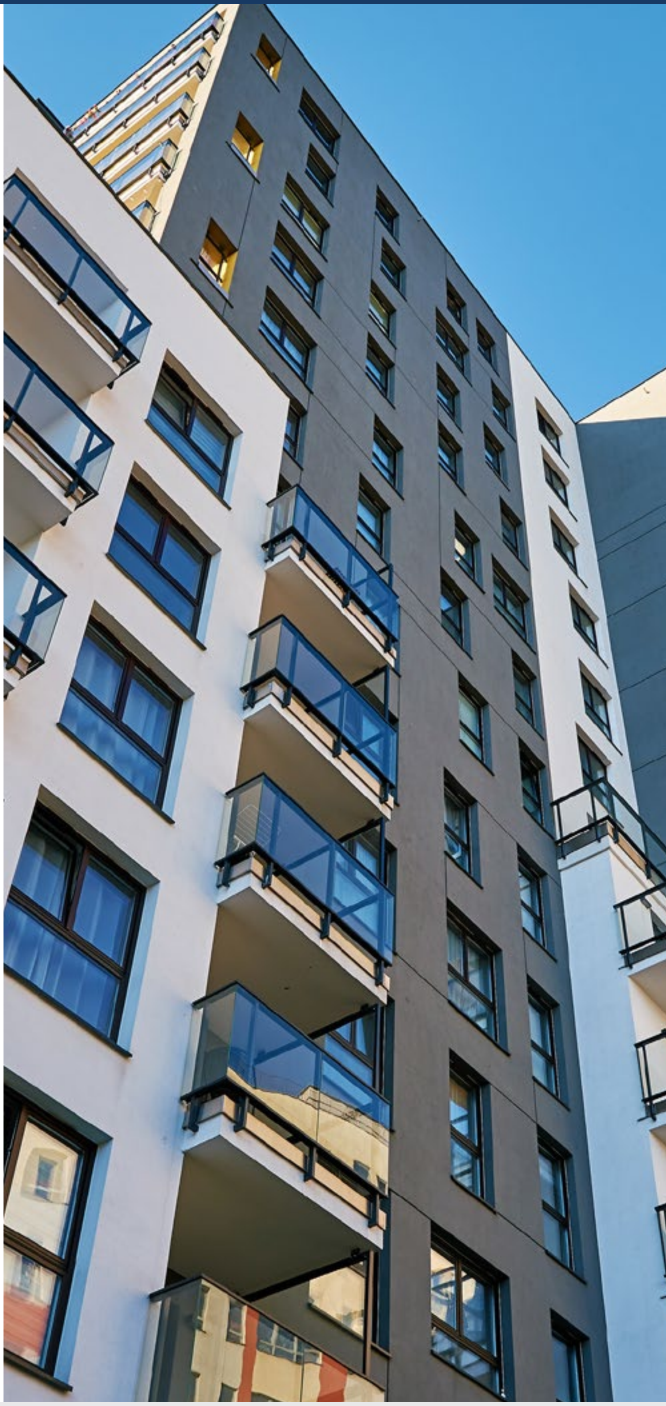

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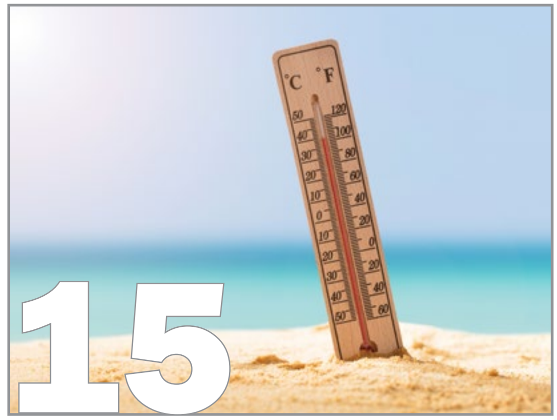
IN THIS ISSUE July 2026

NARPM® provides resources for residential property management professionals who desire to learn, grow, and build relationships.

FEATURE ARTICLES



MONTHLY COLUMNS

NEW MEMBER REFERRALS • MAY 2026

REFERRING MEMBER	NEW MEMBER
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Damon Wofford	Theo J. Davis

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Since 1989, the NARPM® news magazine has been a key focal point for the organization. The *Residential Resource* keeps members up to date on association events and provides valuable industry advice and insight. NARPM® members receive the *Residential Resource* as part of their membership, included in their annual dues.

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An award-winning publication, the *Residential Resource* has won APEX Awards of Excellence, a Gold MarCom Creative Award, and a Communicator Award of Distinction for Print Media.

The *Residential Resource* is produced for members of the National Association of Residential Property Managers by Organization Management Group, Inc. in Chesapeake, Virginia, (www.managegroup.com) with layout by BIZPORT (www.bizportdoes.com).

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It is the policy of NARPM® to comply fully with all antitrust laws. The antitrust laws prohibit, among other things, any joint conduct among competitors that could lessen competition in the marketplace. NARPM®'s membership is composed of competitors; they must refrain from discussing competitively sensitive topics, including those related to pricing (such as rates, fees, or costs), individual competitors or specific business transactions, or controlling or allocating markets. NARPM® shall not restrict members' ability to solicit competitors' clients. NARPM® shall not restrict members' ability to advertise for business, provided the advertising is not false, deceptive, or otherwise illegal.

DD Garzón, Master Property Manager RMP®

PRESIDENT'S Message

From coast to coast and in D.C., advocacy efforts are elevating NARPM®'s voice

> Perhaps the most encouraging sign of all is the growing engagement of our Members. Through our advocacy platform, NARPM® Members have generated more than 40,000 contacts with policymakers over the past three and a half years.

One of NARPM®'s strategic initiatives for 2026-2027 is to elevate NARPM®'s visibility and voice with the general public and in key policy and media conversations through strategic public positioning.

While much of this work happens behind the scenes, the results are becoming increasingly visible. As housing affordability, rental housing supply, and property rights continue to dominate discussions at every level of government, NARPM® is earning a seat at the table as a trusted voice for professional residential property managers.

This year, NARPM® has significantly expanded its advocacy efforts. For the first time in our history, we now have two full-time government affairs professionals dedicated to advancing our industry and representing member interests.

Together with our Government Affairs Committee, PAC Trustees, Chapter leaders, and engaged members, they have helped generate thousands of advocacy touches and direct interactions with policymakers throughout 2026.

At the federal level, NARPM® has been actively engaged in both legislative and regulatory discussions. We joined a coalition of national housing organizations advocating for the repeal of the outdated CARES Act 30-day notice requirement and successfully secured two important changes to the House version of the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act.

Those changes helped ensure that professional property management companies are not mistakenly classified as institutional investors and protected policies that support the continued development of much-needed rental housing. We also submitted comments to the FTC, HUD, and EPA on issues affecting our Members, ensuring that the professional property management perspective is represented whenever housing policy is being discussed.

Advocacy is only one way NARPM® is strengthening its value to Members. This year, we launched a Member Legal Hotline, giving Members direct access to qualified legal insight on issues such as fair housing, lease disputes, eviction procedures, and regulatory compliance.

We also developed our NARPM® PAC management app entirely in-house, saving the association approximately $15,000 annually in recurring technology costs while improving operational efficiency. These initiatives reflect our commitment to providing practical tools, resources, and support that help members navigate an increasingly complex business environment.

Our advocacy efforts extend far beyond Washington, D.C. Across the country, NARPM® Chapters are building relationships with policymakers and ensuring that the voice of professional property managers is represented in important housing discussions.

The Florida State Chapter organized its annual Day on the Hill in February, while Members of the Atlanta Chapter participated in Georgia's Day Under the Gold Dome in March. The Washington State Chapter hosted weekly legislative roundtables and monitored more than 140 housing-related bills while helping Members navigate a rapidly changing regulatory environment. The Texas State Chapter continues to work on meaningful landlord-tenant law reforms that support both housing providers and residents. In Hawaii, the Oahu Chapter partnered with legislators and industry stakeholders to help establish a Landlord-Tenant Working Group, giving property managers a direct voice in shaping future housing policy and landlord-tenant law reforms.

Together, these efforts demonstrate the strength of NARPM®'s advocacy network and reinforce our commitment to ensuring that professional property managers have a seat at the table wherever housing policy is being discussed.

Perhaps the most encouraging sign of all is the growing engagement of our Members. Through our advocacy platform, NARPM® Members have generated more than 40,000 contacts with policymakers over the past three and a half years. Support for both the NARPM® PAC and Advocacy

Continued on page 11 "President"

2026 NARPM® President **DD Garzón, Master Property Manager RMP®,** *is an Industry Liaison at PURE Property Management. DD founded Skyline Properties Group Inc. in 2004 and grew the greater Atlanta-based company to manage single-family, multifamily and built-to-rent properties as well as HOAs and short-term rentals. Skyline Properties Group was acquired by PURE in November 2021.*

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pmw · PropertyMeld · Propertyware (A RealPage Company) · Rent Manager (Property Management Software) · Rently

rentvine · second nature · ShowMojo · Tenant Turner · zInspector

MEMBERSHIP Growth

NARPM® membership as of May 31, 2026:

5,335

A WARM WELCOME TO ALL THE NEW MEMBERS WHO JOINED FROM MAY 1 – 31, 2026.

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Client concentration: How to mitigate your risk

Patrick Hurley *is the founder of PM Broker Group (https://pmbrokergroup.com/), a brokerage focused exclusively on the valuation and sale of property management companies. With more than a decade of experience advising owners on exits, succession planning, and value optimization, Patrick has worked closely with buyers and sellers nationwide. His work centers on helping founders understand how operational structure, leadership depth, and owner involvement directly influence market value.*

It might be natural to think that signing a large account is good for your property management business. It certainly can be. However, there is a point when any one customer can represent too much of your overall client mix.

Why is this a problem?

It's not an issue — until it is. You may have staffed up to support the workload and lined up vendors accordingly, but that also means your business could face significant disruption if that account is lost. Even with a strong relationship with the property owner, factors beyond your control — such as a sale of the properties, changes in health, or family circumstances — can quickly make that business disappear.

If you're considering selling, this concentration becomes even more critical. A potential buyer will scrutinize your customer mix and may walk away altogether or present a significantly discounted offer.

If you're considering selling, this concentration becomes even more critical. A potential buyer will scrutinize your customer mix and may walk away altogether or present a significantly discounted offer.

I learned this lesson the hard way. Years ago, I acquired a company that had almost 20 percent of its portfolio tied to one owner. Within days of closing, the owner used the sale as an opportunity to pull his business. There was no time to make changes, and we certainly didn't have time to make mistakes. He simply took advantage of a change in ownership to take his properties to another company.

That deal, which significantly reduced the value of the company I'd bought practically overnight, taught me a lot. The first lesson was that every contract I signed with an owner had to include terms that protected my interests against bad luck and capricious changes of mind.

I'm not suggesting not taking on that whale of a client, but I am suggesting taking steps to mitigate the risk.

To avoid a similar predicament, here are some of the ways a property manager can protect themselves:

Include an assignability clause. An assignability clause in a contract dictates whether a party can transfer its rights and obligations to another party. These clauses allow for the transfer of contractual duties in situations like mergers and acquisitions. It makes changing company ownership immaterial to the customer's commitment.

Include non-compete and non-solicitation clauses. If you sell your company, you can make the business you've been developing part of the deal. For instance, if an owner you've been working on for a year decides to sign with your former company, you are entitled to a referral fee. If you still have properties under management in the market, you can require the new property manager to refrain from soliciting their business for a specific period.

Include a claw-back clause. If I had had a claw-back provision in my sale agreement, I'd be entitled to recover some of the money I paid for the company when the owner canceled his contract. Claw-back clauses also protect you from misrepresentation, unethical conduct you uncover later, and other issues the seller might have withheld from you.

The rule of thumb for the property management industry is to ensure that no small number of owners control more than 15% to 20% of your income stream. Growing and diversifying your portfolio organically takes time and resources, so it's important to make changes to the way you're writing your

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agreements to mitigate risk. Start now, because it can be a slow and gradual process to change your contract language with each owner.

In some cases, having a niche can be an asset for a portfolio. You might be dominating a desirable neighborhood or specific price point in the market, and buyers will recognize the value that adds to your company. But be aware that if you're focused in a small area, a change in local laws or policies can eliminate your revenue stream with the stroke of a pen.

A great example is cities that decide that short-term rentals are no longer allowed. You can't predict the future, so for the most part, diversifying your geographic reach, your customer base, and your asset classes is a smart strategy.

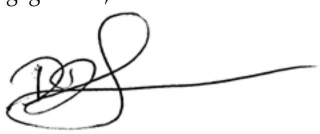
Continued from page 5 "President"

Fund continues to grow as more members recognize the importance of investing in the future of our profession.

As we continue working to elevate NARPM®'s visibility and voice, I challenge more of our state and local Chapters to become actively engaged in advocacy efforts. Whether it's participating in a Day on the Hill, building relationships with elected officials, joining industry working groups, or educating members on legislative issues, every Chapter has an opportunity to make an impact. I also encourage every member to support these efforts through contributions to the NARPM® PAC and the NARPM® Advocacy Fund.

Advocacy requires resources, relationships, and engagement.

Together, we can strengthen NARPM®'s influence, ensure our profession is represented in important policy discussions, and help shape the future of residential property management. Advocacy is more than words — it is action, engagement, and a commitment to shaping the future of our profession.



DD Garzón, Master Propery Manager RMP®
NARPM® President

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Real Property Management Pioneer
Highland Village, TX

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Mars Hill Realty Group, Inc.
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Top strategies for managing lease renewals

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Lease renewal season can be both a challenge and an opportunity for property managers. Ensuring smooth, efficient lease accounting, while maintaining strong relationships with residents, requires a well-organized approach. By adopting proven strategies and leveraging innovative tools, property managers can streamline processes and maximize success with renewals.

WHY LEASE RENEWALS MATTER

Lease renewals are a cornerstone of effective property management, providing stability by ensuring continued occupancy and predictable revenue streams. A streamlined renewal process also enhances resident satisfaction, which can lead to higher retention rates and fewer vacancies.

However, managing lease renewals effectively requires juggling multiple tasks, including tracking upcoming expirations, calculating rent adjustments, and negotiating terms. For property managers handling large portfolios, this process can quickly become overwhelming without the right strategies and tools in place.

START PLANNING EARLY

The foundation of successful lease renewals lies in preparation. Starting the process early gives you ample time to address any challenges that arise and reduces the likelihood of last-minute complications.

Here are some tips for getting ahead of the game:

- Analyze Lease Expiration Dates: Use your property management software to create a clear schedule of lease expiration dates. This ensures you can prioritize upcoming renewals without missing key deadlines.
- Evaluate Market Trends: Conduct market research to assess rental pricing trends in your area. This will help you determine whether to increase rents or offer incentives to retain tenants.
- Communicate with Renters: Send renewal reminders at least 90 days before lease expiration. Early communication enables residents to plan their next steps and gives you time to address any concerns they might have.

STREAMLINE PRICING ADJUSTMENTS

Setting the right lease pricing is critical during renewals. Rent increases should balance profitability with resident retention. Consider the following strategies:

- Use Data-Driven Insights: Analyze historical rental data, market trends, and property-specific factors to calculate fair lease pricing.
- Offer Flexible Options: Provide renters with choices, such as longer lease terms at a slightly lower rate, to incentivize renewals.
- Communicate Changes Clearly: Be transparent about rent adjustments and provide detailed explanations about changes to tenants.

OPTIMIZE COMMUNICATION WITH RENTERS

Clear, proactive communication is essential for successful lease renewals. Residents who feel informed and valued are more likely to re-up their leases.

Send Personalized Renewal Offers: Tailor your renewal communications to each tenant's situation. Highlight the benefits of renewing, such as stable rent pricing or property improvements.

Use Multiple Channels: Combine emails, text messages, and phone calls to ensure renters receive your renewal notifications.

Address Resident Concerns: Be prepared to negotiate terms or address issues, like maintenance requests, that might influence a tenant's decision to renew.

MONITOR KEY PERFORMANCE METRICS

To continuously improve your lease renewal process, track key performance indicators (KPIs) such as:

- Renewal Rates: Measure the percentage of expiring leases that are successfully renewed.
- Tenant Retention Costs: Calculate the expenses associated with retaining residents, including incentives or upgrades.

Continued on page 19 "Strategies"

FEATURE Article

DEEP DIVE INTO INDUSTRY NEWS AND TOPICS RELEVANT TO NARPM® MEMBERS

Kristen Ewen *is the VP of SEO and PMW Marketing at Property Manager Websites (PMW by Rentvine, https://www.propertymanagerwebsites.com/), where she helps property management companies strengthen their digital presence and support long-term growth through strategic marketing initiatives. With a focus on visibility, communication, and operational alignment, Kristen works closely with firms across the industry to improve how they attract and engage owners and residents. Reach her at Kristen@rentvine.com.*

The summer stress test: How peak season exposes operational gaps

Every property manager knows the feeling. Phones ring nonstop, leasing pipelines fill faster than teams can respond, maintenance requests stack up, and turn schedules tighten. What felt manageable in March can feel chaotic by June.

It is easy to chalk this up to "busy season," something to survive rather than analyze. That framing, however, misses a larger opportunity. Peak season does not create problems. It reveals them.

A BUSINESS UNDER PRESSURE

Summer acts as a stress test for your business. As volume increases, the systems and processes that seemed sufficient under normal conditions are pushed to their limits. What breaks under pressure is rarely random. It is diagnostic. The challenge is that most firms are too busy reacting to notice what is being exposed.

Consider leasing. During slower months, a delayed response to an inquiry might not feel critical. In peak season, that same delay often results in a lost prospect. When this happens across dozens of leads, what once appeared to be a minor inefficiency becomes a measurable performance issue.

Communication follows a similar pattern. When activity is steady, gaps between team members can go unnoticed. As volume accelerates with more showings, applications, and service requests, those gaps widen. Missed updates, inconsistent messaging, and unclear responsibilities begin to surface in ways that directly impact both prospects and residents.

WHERE THE CRACKS SHOW

Maintenance is another common pressure point. Vendors are stretched, timelines slip, and small issues take longer to resolve. Delays begin to compound, turning routine requests into sources of frustration for residents and stress for staff. Even turns, which form the backbone of summer operations, become revealing. A single delay in scheduling, inspection, or vendor coordination can ripple across multiple properties, exposing how interconnected these processes really are.

None of these challenges are new. In most cases, they have been present all along. Peak season simply amplifies them, making them harder to ignore.

THE SURVIVAL TRAP

The most common response is understandable. Teams shift into survival mode, focusing on getting through each day, putting out fires, and keeping operations moving. Process improvements are postponed, and conversations about efficiency are pushed to a later time when things are expected to slow down.

There is a cost to this approach. When peak season is treated purely as something to endure, the business misses the most valuable feedback it will receive all year. The same issues that create stress in June will still be present the following summer, often more entrenched and more difficult to address.

A BETTER WAY TO READ THE SIGNALS

High-performing property management firms take a different approach. They do not expect peak season to feel easy, but they do pay close attention to what feels difficult. They notice where delays occur repeatedly, listen to what their teams struggle with under pressure, and identify where communication breaks down in real time.

Rather than dismissing these moments as part of the chaos, they treat them as signals. This does not require a major operational overhaul in the middle of the busiest months. The value lies in awareness and observation.

Where are leads slowing down in the pipeline? Where are decisions getting stuck? Where are small issues consistently turning into larger ones? These are not just seasonal frustrations. They are indicators of where systems and processes need to improve.

CLARITY UNDER PRESSURE

For all its intensity, peak season offers something rare: clarity. It strips away the assumption that everything is working fine and reveals how the business performs under real pressure.

The goal is not to eliminate the stress of summer. In a high-demand, service-driven business, some level of pressure is inevitable. The goal is to build a business that performs well under that pressure, where processes hold up, communication remains clear, and teams are not forced into constant reaction.

What breaks during the summer is not simply a problem to fix later. It is a signal that deserves attention now.

Partnership over pitch: Lessons from both sides of the table

Alex Zweydoff, Master Property Manager RMP®, *is the Director of Business Development at Home Rentals Depot in Orlando, Florida, and the CEO and Co-Founder of ClearLead Digital. With more than 15 years of experience in real estate and property management, Alex brings an operator's perspective to leadership, advocacy, business development, and industry growth. Alex holds the MPM® and RMP® designations and serves as a Director on the NARPM® National Board of Directors. He is also an active leader within Florida Realtors®, where he continues working to bring greater visibility to the property management profession. Alex is passionate about advancing the industry and elevating the profession through education, advocacy, innovation, and leadership. His work focuses on helping property management professionals strengthen their businesses, increase their influence, and position property management as an essential part of the real estate industry.*

Property management is a relationship business. It is also one of the most operationally complex businesses in residential real estate. Every day, property managers are balancing owner expectations, resident needs, maintenance coordination, leasing timelines, compliance requirements, accounting, and risk management, often simultaneously. Because of that complexity, the vendors and partners who serve this industry carry more responsibility than they may realize.

Having worked on both sides of the table, as a property manager and now as an industry partner, I have learned that the best vendor relationships are not built on a great pitch. They are built on understanding.

Not everyone sees it that way, and that is fine. Some in the industry view that dual role with skepticism, and I understand why. There is a perception that you cannot serve both worlds without compromising one. But my experience has been the opposite. Stepping into the partner side did not change who I am or what I care about. It gave me a new layer of clarity about an industry I genuinely love and want to see elevated.

> "The vendor relationships you build are a reflection of your standards. The right partners make your company more professional, more efficient, and more credible to owners."

I will always be a property manager first. I will still be making decisions with the best interests of our members and this industry in mind. I am the same Alex my colleagues have always known, just able to help my friends and peers differently. My reputation means everything to me, and I will not ever sacrifice it.

Property managers do not need more noise. They are approached constantly with new platforms, tools, contractors, software solutions, and promises of efficiency. Some of it is genuinely valuable. Some of it misses the mark because the vendor has not taken the time to understand what property management actually involves. The vendors who earn lasting trust are rarely the loudest. They are the ones who listen first, ask better questions, and treat property management as the professional industry it is.

A maintenance vendor is not just repairing a garbage disposal. That vendor is affecting resident satisfaction, owner confidence, and potentially lease compliance. An attorney is not just preparing documents. They are helping reduce risk and create clarity. A software provider is not just offering features. They are shaping how teams communicate, report, and operate. A marketing partner is not just generating leads. They are helping owners understand the value of professional property management.

That context matters, and the best industry partners understand it. Property managers operate at the center of multiple competing expectations at once. Owners want performance, protection, and communication.

Residents want responsiveness, fairness, and clarity. Team members need systems that make their work easier, not harder. Vendors who genuinely understand this dynamic bring more value, because they think beyond their own service and consider how it affects the entire property management experience.

"I will always be a property manager first. My reputation means everything to me, and I will not ever sacrifice it."

Property managers have long memories when it comes to vendor reliability. They remember who answers the phone on a Friday afternoon. They remember who communicated a delay before it became a problem. They remember who owned

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a mistake instead of deflecting it. They also remember who disappeared after the sale.

In an industry where timing and documentation can make a significant difference, reliability is not a bonus feature. It is the baseline. A missed repair can become a habitability concern. Poor communication can cost an owner a relationship. Inconsistent documentation can create legal exposure. Vendors do not need to know every detail of property management law or operations, but they do need to respect the responsibility that property managers carry every single day.

The most effective vendor relationships share a few things in common. They are clear about what they do and do not do. They set realistic expectations and meet them. They understand urgency without requiring the property manager to explain why something matters. They provide documentation when needed. And they respect the property manager's time, knowing that every hour spent managing a vendor relationship is an hour not spent serving owners and residents.

This is not about being the cheapest option or offering the longest service list. It is about being aligned with how property management companies actually operate.

Working on both sides of this industry has also reinforced something important: The vendor relationships you build are a reflection of your standards. The right partners make your company more professional, more efficient, and more credible to owners. The wrong ones create noise, liability, and distraction.

When evaluating vendors, it is worth asking a few direct questions. Do they communicate the way we communicate? Do

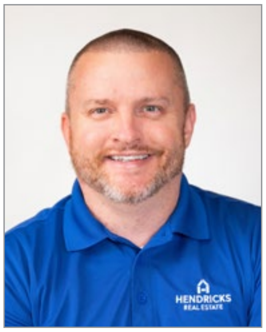
they understand this industry, or are they learning on our time? Do they protect the client relationship? Do they solve problems without creating new ones? The answers matter more than the proposal.

As our industry continues to evolve, with rising owner expectations, faster communication standards, and an increasingly complex regulatory environment, the quality of our partnerships will matter more, not less. The future belongs to relationships built on mutual respect, transparency, and a shared commitment to professionalism.

At the end of the day, we are all just people. We want to work with people we trust, people who do what they say, and people who care about something bigger than the transaction. That is what I have always believed about this industry, and it is what keeps me in it.

FEATURE Article

DEEP DIVE INTO INDUSTRY NEWS AND TOPICS RELEVANT TO NARPM® MEMBERS



Master Property Manager (MPM®) Candidate **Tim Hendricks, RMP®,** *is the Broker and Owner of Hendricks Real Estate, a full-service real estate investment firm headquartered in Austin, Texas. He bought his first piece of investment real estate at 19 and has yet to stop.*

Bend, then break: Concessions and the PM/client relationship

Almost every property manager I know is proud to say this to their peers at a conference: "We don't make exceptions." Most of them believe it, too.

Rarely would we acquiesce to a major policy shift for a client — it's easy to stand firm when a prospect asks you to let them handle all maintenance, hold the security deposit in their account, or have the tenant send them a Venmo for rent because they don't want a 1099.

Most relationships start drifting because of a hundred tiny concessions that seemed harmless at the time. The dangerous part is that we often do not recognize those concessions as "breaking policy." We call them being flexible, accommodating, or relationship-focused. In our minds, we are not breaking the rules — we are just bending them a little.

That bend is where the slippery slope begins. I'm not talking about ethical violations or massive operational failures. I'm talking about the small 5% deviations from your standard operating procedures that feel reasonable in the moment:

- Waiving your normal maintenance approval threshold
- Sending extra reporting outside your normal cadence
- Allowing one owner to bypass your communication system
- Making an exception to your leasing criteria
- Adjusting your fee structure "just this once"

Individually, none of these seem catastrophic. In fact, many property managers justify them as good customer service. I'll raise my hand, sheepishly, and plead "guilty" to all of these at some point in my company history.

But here's what actually happens. The first concession changes the relationship dynamic. The owner now knows your policies are negotiable. And once that expectation is established, the requests rarely stop. What starts as one exception slowly evolves into a pattern where the owner continuously pushes on process boundaries.

Each new request feels only slightly larger than the last one, so you continue accommodating. Six months later, you realize you are operating a completely customized management model for a single client.

Unfortunately, many property managers unintentionally create the very client relationships they later resent. What makes this especially dangerous is that bending policies usually does not produce the outcome we hope for. Most of the time, the property manager is making concessions to preserve the relationship and avoid churn.

I learned this lesson myself, and it cost me a client, a friend, and seven doors under management. This client used to work in the property management space, and pushed himself into the co-pilot seat before I realized what had happened. My team knew he was a friend and tried to be accommodating. When I heard we were sending daily leasing updates vs. weekly, I cringed a bit but shrugged it off as a few extra minutes per week — where's the harm in that?

Then came the Facebook posts to an investor group we were both in, with the client looking for "investor-friendly" pricing for a repair we had already bid out. I ignored it with the rationale that we would not onboard whatever Chuck in a Truck vendor he found, so it would be a non-issue. But it was another signal of a deteriorating relationship that I chose to ignore rather than address head-on.

Despite all the bending, he churned. That is the painful part. I compromised my operational discipline, stressed my team, created inconsistency, and disrupted our processes — only to lose the client.

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I'd love to tell you what the straw that broke the camel's back was, but sitting here at my desk a year later, I don't know what exactly it was. We received an email stating that he was changing property managers with little explanation or rationale. I got in my feelings right away, upset that I didn't at least get a personal phone call or some kind of recognition that we had adapted in so many ways to try to keep him happy.

Despite all the bending, he churned. That is the painful part. I compromised my operational discipline, stressed my team, created inconsistency, and disrupted our processes — only to lose the client.

Strong property management companies are built on predictable systems. The value we provide is not just effort or responsiveness; it is consistency. Owners hire us because they want professional execution that scales across hundreds of decisions. The moment every owner gets a customized version of your company, scalability disappears.

Your SOPs exist for a reason. They are usually the result of years of operational refinement, hard lessons, legal considerations, staffing realities, and efficiency improvements. When you repeatedly deviate from them, you are not simply serving an owner — you are weakening the structure that allows your business to function well.

That does not mean you should be rigid or robotic. Exceptional property managers still show empathy, communicate thoughtfully, and solve problems creatively.

The best operators I know are incredibly clear about where flexibility ends. They communicate policies confidently, explain the reasoning behind them, and maintain consistency even when it feels uncomfortable in the short term. Because they understand something important — every exception teaches the client how to work with you.

If you teach them that your systems are optional, eventually your systems will disappear. And once that happens, the relationship becomes exhausting for everyone involved — including the owner. So the next time you are tempted to bend a policy "just a little," ask yourself one question:

Is this a thoughtful exception… or the first step down a slippery slope?

Continued from page 13 "Strategies"

- Time to Renew: Assess how long it takes to complete the renewal process from initial communication to signed lease.
- Analyzing these metrics helps you identify areas for improvement and refine your strategies over time.

THE ROLE OF LEASE RENEWALS IN LONG-TERM SUCCESS

Effective lease renewal management goes beyond reducing vacancies; it strengthens tenant relationships and enhances operational efficiency. By adopting best practices, staying proactive, and leveraging renewal tools, property managers can navigate lease renewal season with confidence.

As you plan for your next renewal cycle, consider how these strategies and technologies can streamline your workflow and improve resident satisfaction. With a focused approach, lease renewals can become a seamless process that benefits both you and your renters.

DISCUSSION BOARD Hot Topics

WHAT HOT TOPICS ARE PROPERTY MANAGERS CURRENTLY TALKING ABOUT?

NARPM® maintains Discussion Boards in the NARPM® Community for several specialties within the organization. These Discussion Boards enable members to stay in contact and to share questions and concerns as they arise. If you would like to participate in one of these groups, visit **community.narpm.org** and look for **Communities**. Member login is required. Discussion Boards are only available to NARPM® Members.

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Q ***I wanted to open up a discussion around HUD's recent memo regarding emotional support animals and whether any of you are actively making changes to your emotional support animal (ESA) policies as a result. A little context on our end. We're a residential property management company based in Temple, Texas. Like many of you, we've been closely following HUD's updated guidance, which now limits reasonable accommodation exemptions to trained service animals only, effectively removing the blanket pet fee waiver requirement for untrained ESAs.***

Here's where we are: we're seriously considering implementing pet fees and deposits for ESAs on lease renewals and for incoming residents going forward. However, we're proceeding cautiously because the Texas Workforce Commission has not issued any public statement regarding whether they will align their investigation practices with HUD's new position. That gap in state-level guidance has us a bit hesitant to move too quickly.

A few questions I'd love feedback on from the group:

- ***For those in Texas, have you received any direction from the TWC or your legal counsel on how to proceed?***
- ***Are any of you applying the changes only to new leases and renewals, rather than existing active approvals?***
- ***What documentation practices are you putting in place to protect your company?***

We want to be proactive but also stay on the right side of both federal and state Fair Housing law.

A *There was an internal memo from the HUD Secretary to his staff that was leaked. The memo said he did not want to see enforcement around ESAs. This is not an official policy change or Fair Housing directive. The interpretation is that HUD will only investigate housing discrimination complaints around service animals (those trained to perform work or tasks directly related to a disability).*

The memo only changes how HUD investigates complaints. Tenants can still sue in federal court, and there are local/state laws that still offer ESA protections. Our office is not making any practice changes at this time. In my opinion, things are moving in the right direction, but this was an enforcement directive, not a policy change. So it is business as usual.

Q ***I'm trying to gauge what others are seeing these days in terms of units per portfolio supervisor. Our company currently manages about 1,300 doors, primarily a mix of SFRs and small multifamily properties. We've organized into five teams, each with a portfolio supervisor supported by a maintenance coordinator.***

On average, that puts each supervisor at roughly 250 units, and I'm starting to feel like they're having difficulty keeping up — even with a lot of tasks outsourced.

We also utilize remote staff who handle: advertising and listing management; application processing; routine maintenance coordination; insurance compliance.

Even with that support structure, 250 units per supervisor seems to feel like they can't handle the load. I don't want to set unrealistic expectations for the team. Any feedback would be appreciated.

A *I can't imagine one person being responsible for 250 houses. I always thought that the traditional industry average is about 100-150 units per property manager.*

A *Our portfolio consists of both SFR and some smaller multi-family properties. However, we have had supervisors cover well over 200 doors for years. At one point, we had one covering 400 doors.*

Our goal is to continue to add more support staff who specialize in tasks for all the teams so that our supervisors can focus on keeping relationships with their owners and the tenants for non-routine maintenance/operations.

I think our supervisors would be bored only handling 150 doors unless they were doing all the other work associated with their properties.

Remember – everything you read on the Internet is not true. If necessary, seek legal counsel.

See the entire discussion here:
https://community.narpm.org/home

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The AI divide: Why some property managers scale and others struggle

Artificial intelligence is quickly becoming the defining operational conversation in property management. But as more companies rush to adopt AI-powered tools, a clear divide is beginning to emerge across the industry. Some firms are using automation to improve efficiency, reduce burnout, and scale operations more effectively. Others are discovering that new technology can magnify operational weaknesses that already existed beneath the surface.

The difference is not the software. It is the process behind it.

From automated leasing responses and maintenance coordination to owner communication and reporting, AI-powered tools are appearing everywhere. For many property management companies, the pressure to adopt these technologies feels urgent and, in some cases, unavoidable.

But firms approaching AI strategically are seeing very different results than those implementing tools reactively. As operational demands continue to grow, the gap between organized companies and overwhelmed ones may widen even further.

As property management companies navigate the next wave of operational change, one truth is becoming increasingly clear: firms with strong systems and clearly defined workflows will benefit most from AI adoption, while companies with operational inconsistency may simply automate their existing chaos.

TECHNOLOGY CANNOT FIX OPERATIONAL DISORDER

For years, many property management companies relied on institutional knowledge and reactive workflows to get through daily operations. Team members learned processes informally, communication standards varied by employee, and operational consistency often depended on the experience of a few key people. That model becomes increasingly difficult to sustain as portfolios grow. Now add AI into the equation.

An automated communication system can only perform well if communication expectations are already defined. A maintenance workflow powered by automation still depends on approval structures, escalation policies, and vendor coordination procedures being clear. AI-driven reporting tools still require accurate data and consistent operational input. Without strong operational foundations, automation can actually amplify inefficiencies instead of solving them. In many cases, firms are discovering that AI exposes process weaknesses that already existed beneath the surface.

THE REAL OPPORTUNITY IS OPERATIONAL CLARITY

The property management companies seeing the greatest benefits from AI are not necessarily the ones using the most advanced technology. They are often the firms that invested first in operational clarity.

That includes:

- Standardized workflows
- Documented procedures
- Communication expectations
- Centralized data management
- Accountability structures
- Repeatable team processes

When those systems are already in place, AI becomes a multiplier rather than a disruption.

For example, automated leasing communication can dramatically improve response times when lead-handling procedures are already clearly defined. Maintenance coordination tools work far better when teams already understand approval thresholds, emergency protocols, and vendor assignment rules.

In other words, successful AI adoption often looks less like replacing people and more like reducing friction inside already-functional systems.

WHERE AI IS ACTUALLY HELPING PROPERTY MANAGERS TODAY

Despite the hype surrounding artificial intelligence, the most valuable use cases in property management are currently practical rather than revolutionary. The firms seeing meaningful results are typically applying AI in targeted operational areas, including:

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LEAD RESPONSE AND LEASING COMMUNICATION

One of the clearest advantages of AI is speed. Prospective residents increasingly expect near-instant responses, especially outside traditional business hours. AI-assisted communication tools can help answer common questions, schedule showings, and maintain engagement with leads before a leasing agent becomes directly involved. For many firms, this improves responsiveness without requiring additional staffing.

MAINTENANCE COORDINATION

Maintenance remains one of the most time-consuming aspects of residential property management. AI tools are beginning to help categorize requests, prioritize urgency, identify duplicate issues, and streamline communication between residents, vendors, and staff.

While human oversight remains critical, automation can reduce administrative strain and improve response consistency.

INTERNAL WORKFLOW PRIORITIZATION

Some companies are using AI to assist with task organization, operational reminders, and identifying workflow bottlenecks. These tools can help teams manage growing operational complexity more efficiently. This becomes increasingly valuable as portfolios scale and communication volume rises.

REPORTING AND SUMMARIZATION

AI-generated summaries for owner updates, maintenance histories, and operational reporting are also becoming more common. Instead of manually compiling large amounts of information, teams can focus more attention on interpretation and client relationships.

Again, the value comes from supporting human decision-making, not replacing it.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF PROPERTY MANAGEMENT STILL MATTERS

For all the attention surrounding automation, property management remains a relationship-driven business. Owners still want trust and accountability. Residents still need empathy during difficult situations. Team members still need leadership, judgment, and operational experience. Technology can improve efficiency, but it cannot fully replace the human elements that define successful property management companies.

In fact, as automation becomes more common, interpersonal communication and operational leadership may become even more valuable differentiators. The companies that succeed over the next several years will likely be those that combine operational efficiency with strong human-centered service.

AVOIDING THE “TOOL STACK TRAP”

One of the biggest risks facing property management companies right now is the temptation to adopt too many disconnected technologies too quickly.

New AI tools are entering the market at a rapid pace, each promising faster workflows, lower costs, and greater efficiency. But constant implementation without operational strategy can create confusion instead of improvement. Teams become overwhelmed. Processes become fragmented. Communication becomes inconsistent.

And in many cases, the companies struggling most with AI are not dealing with technology failures at all. They are dealing with process failures that automation simply made more visible.

Instead of chasing every new platform, firms may benefit more from asking a simpler question: “What operational problem are we actually trying to solve?” That shift in thinking changes the conversation from technology-first to process-first. It also helps companies avoid adopting tools that create more complexity than value.

THE NEXT COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

The next generation of successful property management companies will not necessarily be defined by who adopts the most AI.

They will be defined by who builds the most operationally resilient business.

That means:

- Creating scalable systems
- Reducing dependency on individual employees

Continued on page 27 "AI"

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FEATURE Article

DEEP DIVE INTO INDUSTRY NEWS AND TOPICS RELEVANT TO NARPM® MEMBERS

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The other face of your company: Why building vendor loyalty is a good brand strategy

When something breaks, your tenant doesn't care whether it's your employee or your vendor who arrives. She knows she rents from you, something needs fixing, and someone is about to walk into her home. Whatever happens next involves your company's reputation, regardless of whose name is on the invoice.

And since the stakes are that high, it's dangerous to treat maintenance as a simple logistics problem: who is available, who can be there by Thursday, who answered the phone? That standard practice misses the bigger question hiding underneath: Is your tenant's experience of your company being written by someone you barely know or by someone who understands the high standards you require and acts accordingly?

The better answer is obvious, and it happens when you treat the vendor relationship as something worthy of thought and planning.

...The best vendors are evaluating property managers just as carefully. The labor shortage in the trades has made this worse. There are not enough vendors, so decisions become availability-based instead of standards-based.

YOU ARE COMPETING FOR THE BEST VENDORS, TOO

Of course, the top tradespeople in any city are not hurting for work. A good plumber can stay busy on residential calls indefinitely. What they are genuinely short on is a client who does not make their lives harder than the job already is. Vague work orders, wrong access codes, tenants who were never told anyone was coming, and invoices that sit for 90 days are not small inconveniences to a contractor running a small operation. They are the reason your call gets deprioritized when things get busy, which is exactly when you need him most.

Property managers spend a lot of time evaluating vendors, but the best vendors are evaluating property managers just as carefully. The labor shortage in the trades has made this worse. There are not enough vendors, so decisions become availability-based instead of standards-based. Hiring whoever answers the phone and hoping for the best is not a vendor strategy.

Instead, when you deliberately plan how to eliminate headaches for vendors, you become the client contractors want to keep. That is a competitive advantage worth building. It shows up directly in what your tenants experience, too. And the upfront costs pay off in the end because you take carelessness out of the equation.

WHAT THE RELATIONSHIP ACTUALLY TEACHES

For instance, a vendor shows up to replace a failed dishwasher pump. While the appliance is pulled away from the wall, he notices signs of a slow leak behind the unit. The drywall is soft near the floor, and there is visible staining inside the cabinet. He finishes the repair, takes the required photos, and leaves without mentioning what he saw.

Three months later, the tenant reports a musty smell in the kitchen. By then, the leak has caused mold growth and damaged the surrounding cabinetry. What could have been addressed with a small plumbing repair and some preventative drying becomes a much larger project involving remediation, repairs, and disruption for the tenant.

This shows you're not just dispatching people to fix things. You are teaching vendors what your standards are, what you notice, what you care about, and what kind of professional behavior gets rewarded in your operation. Over time, vendors learn how you think. They learn what deserves a phone call, what should be documented, and what details matter enough to

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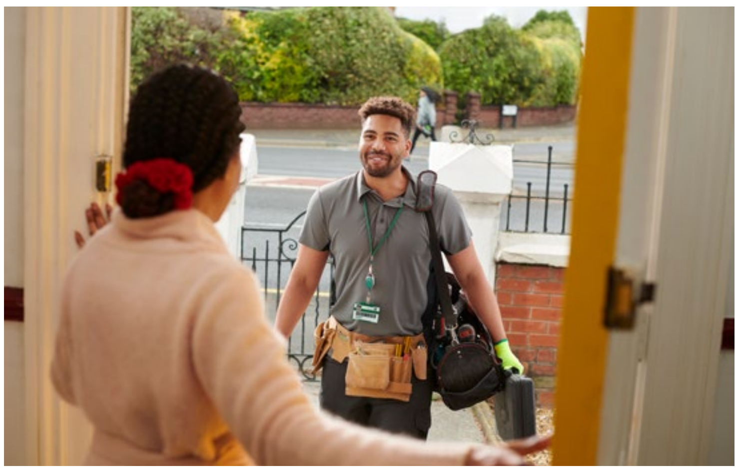
stop and ask a question. That learning shapes decisions made when nobody from your office is standing in the room.

WHAT A REAL VENDOR RELATIONSHIP REQUIRES

Becoming the client contractors want to work with is not about being generous or easy, but about being clear, consistent, and fair in ways that many clients are not. The vendors worth keeping are watching how you treat them. They are choosing their best clients the same way their best clients are choosing them.

Start with written expectations before the first job. A professionalism standards agreement is not a defensive document. It's the first real conversation about what working together actually means, and it treats the vendor as a professional who deserves to know exactly what is expected, not someone who should figure it out as he goes. The agreement should cover materials, specifying the exact color and type of paint for a wall repair with no substitutions permitted.



It should cover communication: attempt contact with the tenant midday, then evening, then first thing in the morning. If three attempts produce no response, the vendor calls the property manager and hands it back. The property manager then decides what happens next, not the vendor. Documentation requirements should cover anything unexpected discovered during the visit, not just the completed work.

When it comes to vendors, go deep, not wide. A short vendor list feels like a constraint until you need someone at seven on a Friday night. The manager who has given a plumber consistent work, paid him promptly, and treated him like a professional worth keeping is not making a cold call in that moment. He is calling someone who already knows the answer is yes. Two vendors who know exactly what we expect will outperform ten who are still guessing, because the relationship carries information that a work order never can.

Consider compensating vendors for quotes they don't win. Vendors have to work to produce quotes, even though the industry tends to expect that work for free. The vendors who learn you truly respect their time treat your jobs differently than everyone else's. This is not common practice, but the managers who do it are remembered for it.

It's also good practice to pay promptly for completed work. A vendor waiting 60 or 90 days has been hurt whether you intended it or not. If you need something handled today and your vendor needs to pay his crew tomorrow, he already knows whose call to return first. Having a check ready on the back door the day the job is done is not a small thing to a contractor running a small operation. Pay fast, give consistent work, and you become the client he prioritizes when everything is stretched thin.

When a vendor handles something well, say so specifically. Say so with something real: "The tenant called me after you left and said you walked her through everything you found, and that is exactly what I need from the people I work with." That feedback shapes the next judgment call he makes in a unit you are not in. How you respond to a mistake matters just as much. A manager who threatens to find someone else gets vendors who say nothing when something goes wrong. A manager who says here is what I need differently gets vendors who call when something unexpected turns up.

WHAT YOUR TENANT CARRIES AWAY

When a maintenance request closes, the tenant receives a portal notification that the work is complete. Send a short message the same day asking whether everything went smoothly and whether there are any remaining concerns. If the vendor was late, dismissive, or left the space worse than he found it, you will hear about it when you ask. If you never ask, that experience sits with the tenant and quietly shapes a decision you never see coming.

Adequate maintenance is the baseline. The tenant who feels genuinely looked after, whose home was treated with care and whose concerns were followed up on, has experienced something worth talking about. Owners notice the same thing. A maintenance issue handled professionally tends to build confidence. One handled poorly tends to raise questions about everything else.

The tenant may never remember the contractor's name, but she will remember how the experience made her feel about your company. Whether she renews, refers a friend, or tells an owner your firm can be trusted, those impressions have a way of lasting.

The person you sent instead of you may have been a vendor, but the reputation they represented was yours.

It's your brand. Take the steps I discussed to make it a good one.

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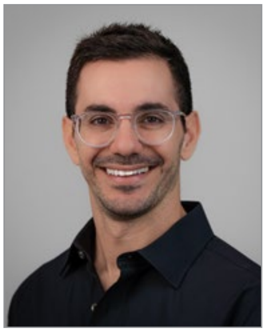
- Standardizing communication
- Improving workflow visibility
- Simplifying operational decision-making
- Building processes that technology can enhance effectively

The divide emerging in property management is not really about artificial intelligence itself. It is about operational readiness.

AI is not replacing operational discipline. It is making it more important.

As the industry continues evolving, the firms that approach automation strategically rather than reactively will likely be the ones best positioned for long-term growth. Because in property management, technology may create efficiency, but process still creates stability.



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Resident engagement: Definition, strategies, ideas, and software

Resident engagement is the active and meaningful involvement of tenants in their living environment. High levels of resident engagement improve lease renewal rates and property reputation. Successful resident engagement requires consistent communication and accessible community events.

Portal logins and event participation help measure the impact of these initiatives over time. Property managers avoid common mistakes by maintaining a regular schedule and closing feedback loops with tenants. Technology, such as property management software, enables managers to scale the engagement efforts.

WHAT IS RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT?

Resident engagement is the ongoing interaction between a tenant and their housing provider. The level of engagement can be used to measure the strength of the relationship and the sense of community within a property. Property managers and owners take the lead in creating opportunities for residents to interact regularly.

Satisfaction scores reflect happiness with services, while engagement reflects active participation in community life. Community engagement emphasizes social bonds between neighbors in the residential area.

Operators use these measures to predict long-term retention for the property portfolio. The connection encourages tenants to treat the property with more care and respect. Engaged communities experience less social isolation and higher levels of mutual support among neighbors. Management teams find that highly involved residents provide valuable feedback for future capital improvements. Relationships turn a simple rental unit into a long-term home for the tenant.

WHY DOES RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT MATTER?

Resident engagement matters because high engagement levels directly increase the likelihood of lease renewals at the end of a term. Residents with strong ties to their neighbors and to management are less likely to move out and more likely to leave positive online reviews.

Active communities also experience fewer tenant complaints to management as residents feel comfortable resolving issues directly with staff. Resident engagement can also result in an increase in net operating income through lower marketing expenses and fewer turnovers.

WHAT ARE THE LEVELS OF RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT?

Engagement exists on a spectrum that moves from passive information sharing to active resident leadership. Managers identify where their community sits to plan the next steps for growth.

- **Inform:** The inform level involves one-way communication where management shares newsletters or emergency alerts. Tools like email and lobby posters support the baseline by keeping residents aware of property updates.
- **Consult:** Management collects feedback from residents through surveys and suggestion forms at the consult level. Property owners use these polls to understand tenant preferences before making minor changes to common areas.
- **Involve:** Residents help shape decisions by providing input on event planning or amenity upgrades. The stage ensures that community offerings align with the actual desires of the people living there.
- **Empower:** Residents lead their own initiatives (book clubs or fitness groups) with minimal management oversight. The role of the manager shifts to supporting the organic peer-led movements with space and resources.

Most communities operate within the inform or consult stages while aiming for higher involvement.

HOW DO YOU INCREASE RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT?

Increasing involvement requires a layered approach that combines communication, technology, and consistent execution over time. Small efforts performed consistently create a stronger impact than large one-off events.

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- **Establish a consistent communication rhythm:** Managers provide weekly updates or monthly newsletters at predictable intervals. Predictability ensures that residents know when and where to find important property information.
- **Make digital interaction frictionless:** Residents use mobile portals to book amenities and pay rent without manual paperwork. Mobile accessibility allows people to interact with management while on the move or at work.
- **Host low-friction community events:** Simple gatherings (food truck nights, coffee mornings, fitness classes, and pet meetups) encourage easy participation. Consistency in scheduling the events outperforms expensive one-time productions.
- **Spotlight individual residents:** Recognition tactics like resident of the month posts celebrate the people in the community. Highlighting personal milestones helps residents feel seen and valued by the management team.
- **Make maintenance part of engagement:** Every work order serves as a moment to build trust through quick completion and clear updates. Follow-up messages after a repair show that the management cares about the resident experience.
- **Collect feedback and act on it visibly:** Short surveys allow residents to share their thoughts on property improvements. Visible changes based on the feedback demonstrate that management listens to the community.
- **Use data to identify disengaged residents early:** Declining login rates or missed events serve as signals for potential churn. Proactive outreach to these residents helps re-establish a connection before they decide to move.

The strategies require consistent execution across hundreds of units to reach the desired participation levels.

HOW DO YOU MEASURE RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT?

Measurement provides the data needed to improve community involvement over time. Metrics help managers identify which initiatives work and which require adjustment.

- **Portal/app login frequency:** Regular logins indicate that residents are active and staying informed about property news. High frequency suggests that the digital tools provide value to the daily lives of the tenants.
- **Event participation rate:** Managers calculate participation rates by dividing the number of RSVPs by the total number of units. Tracking the rate per event reveals which types of gatherings appeal most to the current resident base.
- **Survey response rate:** High response numbers signal that residents believe their opinions matter to the management. Declining rates indicate a growing disconnect between the tenants and the property goals.
- **Maintenance feedback and CSAT scores:** Post-completion ratings show the level of satisfaction with the most frequent point of contact. Target scores guide the maintenance team in improving service delivery.
- **Renewal rate correlation:** Engaged residents renew their leases at higher rates than those who remain isolated. The lagging indicator confirms the long-term success of the engagement program.

COMMON RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT MISTAKES TO AVOID

Predictable errors lead to the failure of community programs regardless of the initial budget. Avoiding the pitfalls keeps the engagement program focused and effective for the residents.

- **Treating engagement as occasional, not ongoing:** One-off events fail to build lasting relationships without a consistent communication rhythm. Long-term success depends on regular touchpoints throughout the entire year.
- **Overcomplicating events:** Simple recurring meetups perform better than elaborate productions that require heavy planning. Residents prefer easy gatherings that fit into their existing daily schedules.
- **Ignoring digital convenience:** Friction in the RSVP or payment process kills participation almost immediately. Requiring phone calls or emails for simple tasks discourages residents from getting involved.
- **Not measuring participation:** Improvement remains impossible if managers do not track which activities generate interest. Minimal tracking includes event attendance and digital portal usage.
- **Collecting feedback but not closing the loop:** Residents stop providing input if they see no visible changes after a survey. Proving that feedback leads to action is essential for maintaining trust.

HOW PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE HELPS WITH RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

Property management software ensures that engagement strategies remain consistent across large portfolios. The tool removes the friction from daily interactions that leads to renewal decisions. Automation handles the repetitive tasks of information sharing so staff focus on person-to-person relationships. Tracking features allow owners to see exactly how often residents interact with the digital portal.

Professional teams use property management software to streamline communication, improve resident satisfaction, and strengthen community engagement.

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