

RESIDENTIALResource

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY MANAGERS



**Build value,
not just size**

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p10 The biggest challenge
facing property
management companies

p15 Busy isn't a business
strategy: A reflection
on leadership

p28 The company only you
can run



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IN THIS ISSUE September 2026

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

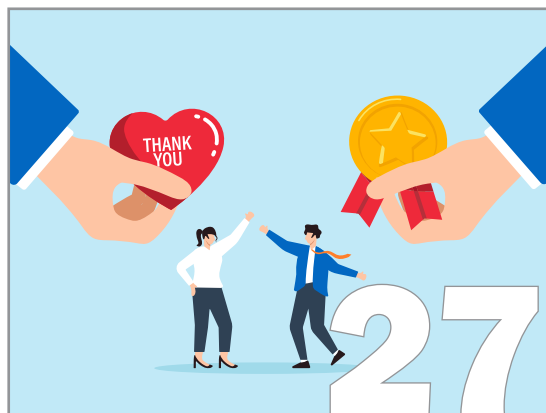
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NEW MEMBER REFERRALS • JULY 2026

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Yakita Hunter

EDITORIAL MISSION

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.

The *Residential Resource* is published monthly, with occasional combined issues. Submit articles by email as a Word doc to: publications@narpm.org. You will be advised if accepted and be required to sign NARPM®'s Author, Presenter and/or Creator Warranty and Agreement before your article's publication. Items mailed in for publication cannot be returned. Address changes may be forwarded to NARPM® National. NARPM® reserves the right to edit or refuse all publications for content and selection. Members are encouraged to submit articles for publication. Printed articles help earn members credit toward their designations.

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If you are not a member of NARPM® and wish to receive a yearly subscription to *Residential Resource* for \$49.95 per year (11 issues), please contact info@narpm.org to sign up.

NARPM® ANTITRUST STATEMENT

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.

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PRESIDENT'S Message



Whether you've been a Member for 30 days or 30 years, I encourage you to take one more step along your NARPM® Roadmap this month. Attend a Chapter meeting, enroll in a class, earn a designation, ask a question in My Community, or register for Convention.

The NARPM® Roadmap: Getting the Most Out of Your Membership

I recently had the honor of speaking at the Houston Chapter, and during the Q&A, one of our newer Members asked a great question:

"What are some of the top benefits of a NARPM® membership, and what should I take advantage of first to get the best bang for my buck?"

I loved that question because it's one every new Member — and even many longtime Members — should ask. NARPM® offers an incredible number of resources, but like any investment, the value comes from using them.

This year's theme, More Than Words, reminds us that impact comes from action. The value of your membership isn't found in a list of benefits — it's found in the relationships you build, the education you pursue, and the resources you put into practice.

Here's what I call the NARPM® Roadmap to getting the greatest return on your membership.

START WITH YOUR LOCAL CHAPTER

If you're wondering where to begin, start with your local Chapter.

The relationships you build there will become one of the most valuable parts of your membership. You'll meet professionals facing the same challenges, mentors willing to share their experiences, and trusted local vendors who can help improve your business.

Many of us can trace some of our greatest business breakthroughs — or lifelong friendships — back to a conversation at a Chapter meeting. If you don't have a local Chapter nearby, the At-Large Chapter offers virtual opportunities to connect with Members across the country.

INVEST IN YOUR GROWTH

Once you've built your network, invest in yourself.

NARPM® offers webinars, virtual classes, designation courses, and educational content covering leadership, operations, technology, accounting, maintenance, marketing, and more. Every class strengthens your knowledge and, ultimately, your business.

More than Words

Another excellent investment is attending NARPM® conferences. They're not just about networking; they're an opportunity to discover new technology, vendors, maintenance solutions, and business partners that can save time, increase efficiency, and improve profitability. Often, one great idea or vendor relationship pays for the entire trip.

I hope you'll join us this October at the 2026 NARPM® Annual Convention & Trade Show in Las Vegas. Learn more and register at <https://www.narpmconvention.com/>.

STAY CONNECTED BETWEEN EVENTS

Learning doesn't stop when a conference ends.

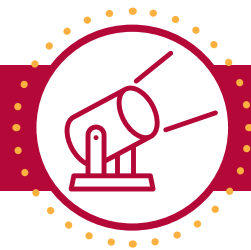
The NARPM® Radio Podcast (<https://narpm.podbean.com/>) is an easy way to stay current on operational best practices, leadership, technology, and industry trends wherever you are. With over 237 episodes and counting, it's a great way to continue learning from some of the best minds in our profession.

Another favorite resource is My Community (<https://community.narpm.org/>), NARPM®'s online discussion forum. Whether you need advice on a challenging owner situation, a software recommendation, or operational best practices, thousands of fellow Members are only a few clicks away.

That willingness to share knowledge is one of the things that truly makes NARPM® special.

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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.



2026 NARPM® Convention & Trade Show Chair Spotlight: Megan Zellers, MPM®, RMP®



Name: Megan Zellers, MPM®, RMP®, Your Intown Home Property Management, Atlanta, Georgia

I've been in a NARPM® Member since: 2009

I became involved with NARPM® because: Michael McCreary introduced me to NARPM® when I began working with him. Having been

so deeply involved in the organization himself, he understood firsthand the incredible value NARPM® brings to our industry. I'm forever grateful that he introduced me to an organization that has had such a meaningful impact on both my professional journey and the relationships I've built along the way.

The most fulfilling thing about the behind-the-scenes planning of the NARPM® Convention & Trade Show is: Seeing all of the pieces come together and knowing that the work we're doing behind the scenes will create an incredible experience for our Members. There are so many details, conversations, ideas, and decisions that happen long before anyone walks through the doors. Watching those pieces turn into something tangible is incredibly rewarding. Even more fulfilling is doing it alongside such an amazing group of volunteers who are willing to jump in, share their talents, and truly embrace the "All Hands on Deck" mentality. At the end of the day, it's knowing that all of our hard work will allow our Members to learn, connect, be inspired, and have a little fun along the way.

The thing I'm most excited about with the Convention this year is: Bringing our Members an elevated, engaging experience from start to finish! I'm especially excited about creating a more interactive Trade Show and an incredible speaker lineup that speaks to every level and aspect of our industry — from maintenance coordinators and administrative professionals to property managers and brokers/owners. We've truly embraced the "All Hands on Deck" theme championed by our NARPM® President, DD Garzón, and I love that this Convention is designed to recognize that every role is an important part of the crew. I'm excited to bring everyone together, give them opportunities to learn, connect, and have fun, and ultimately make this a Convention they won't want to miss!

My favorite thing about our Vegas destination is: Mandalay Bay is such a fun backdrop for this year's Convention. Las Vegas allows us to create an experience that is bigger, more interactive, and a little more adventurous than a traditional Convention. There are so many possibilities for networking, education, and fun—and it fits perfectly with our "All Hands on Deck" theme!

One great takeaway I've learned so far as Convention Chair is: You absolutely cannot do this alone! There are so many moving pieces that go into creating a Convention of this size, and I've been reminded over and over again how talented and passionate our NARPM® Members are. When you get the right people in the right seats and give them the opportunity to contribute, amazing things happen.

My favorite memory from a past Convention is: Honestly, some of my favorite memories are the moments when you see Members who may not know each other come together, build relationships, laugh, and genuinely enjoy being part of this organization. The education is important, but the friendships and connections we make through NARPM® are what make Convention so special.

My favorite thing about being Convention Chair is: Getting to see an idea go from a conversation to something real and knowing that it will create an experience for thousands of our Members. I also love working with such an incredible group of volunteers and seeing everyone's different talents come together. There is something really special about building something as a team (or "crew" as I like to call us).

In my opinion, the greatest challenge facing the property management industry today is: Keeping up with the pace of change while still maintaining the personal side of our business. Technology, regulations, artificial intelligence, staffing challenges, rising costs, and changing expectations are all impacting property managers. We have to continue evolving without losing sight of the relationships...with our owners, residents, vendors, and teams that make this industry work.

NARPM® membership is important to me because: Property management can sometimes feel like an island, and NARPM® reminds us that we don't have to navigate this industry alone (see what I did there?!? LOL). The willingness of Members to share experiences, challenges, successes, and ideas with one another is

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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 *My tenants have requested a deep cleaning of their washer to remove mold accumulated over time. I purchased various products and had a contractor clean under the front-loading rubber flap. I have also looked at numerous online advertisements, but I am skeptical. The problem seems to persist unless I contact a technician to take apart the washer for a deep and costly cleaning. Can anyone recommend an effective product and the best way to do a deep clean of a washer's drum?*

A *Washers/dryers are hard. I don't like supplying them, and this is one reason why. Who broke it? Too heavy loads? Things like this. At move-in, we document the gasket condition and pull out the soap drawer, talk to tenants about wiping it after each load, leaving the door ajar, cleaning the soap pull-out weekly, etc., but it helps 50% of the time.*

A *(OP) I wish to clarify that I am merely looking for an effective cleaning product and/or method. It is not a matter of including or not including these appliances in the rent or tenants' accountability. This is merely normal use over time and wear and tear. So if anyone has indeed deep-cleaned a washer or hired a technician to do so, I would love to hear what worked best. So far, the most useful recommendation was to use Affresh® tablets.*

A *We have that issue in Florida. Tenants often leave the washer door closed when not in use. This is how we take care of it:*

- Run empty loads with baking soda and white vinegar.
- Use a steam cleaner.
- Leave the washer door open to let it dry completely before cleaning again. This tool (a front-load magnetic washer door prop and stopper) helps. It keeps the door open and is \$8 on Amazon.

Q *Do you allow owners to have any say-so in tenants' security deposits? We often get an owner who wants to be at the walk-through when the tenants have moved out and give their input on how we should handle the security deposit. Is there any law that allows this, or is it just up to what is written in our management agreements? Just curious how you all handle this.*

A *We have a clause on our move-out checklist that addresses this. It would apply to the owner also being present.*

"You may request a move-out inspection with one of our representatives. Our representative will walk the property with you. Our representatives have no authority to bind or limit the company regarding deduction for repairs, damages, or charges. The representative will simply note any issues they discover at the time of inspection. Charges will be assessed by the property manager after such time that estimated costs of repairs can be obtained. If you would like a move-out inspection, please contact our office no later than one week prior to your requested inspection date. We will do our absolute best to accommodate your request; however, our staff's calendars fill up quickly, especially towards the end of the month. Inspection requests are on a first-come, first-served basis. We encourage tenants to take photos and videos when they move out. Per the lease, we will process the security deposit within 30 days of move-out. We are not required to process a security deposit if the tenant does not provide a forwarding address."

A *We do not encourage owner clients to be at our move-out walk-throughs because you never really know what you are walking into. We prefer to assess on our own and prep the client on what to expect. We then provide a list of repairs along with an estimate. Of those repairs, we assign damages and what we will withhold from the security deposit.*

That said, some owners insist on joining us, and we cannot stop that, only discourage. Additionally, an owner can insist that we charge for specific things, but it's rare, especially after I explain the legalities. If they insist anyway, I ask them to send me that request in writing, which also

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ELEVATE YOUR PROFESSIONALISM

One of the best ways to distinguish yourself is by earning a NARPM® designation. Whether it's RMP®, MPM®, CRMC®, or CSS®, your designation demonstrates professionalism, continuing education, and a commitment to excellence.

Be sure to update your Member profile on the Find a Property Manager search tool (<https://www.narpm.org/find/property-managers/>). Property owners use this directory to find qualified managers, and Members with CRMC®, MPM®, and RMP® designations receive priority placement in search results.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR MEMBER RESOURCES

Your membership includes much more than networking and education.

Take advantage of the Legal Hotline for guidance on property management laws and best practices. Stay informed through this *Residential Resource*® magazine and Friday Highlights, and explore the forms, videos, branding materials, and other tools available on NARPM.org.

Don't overlook the NARPM® Accounting Standards and the Trust Accounting Standards. These resources provide consistency, improve reporting, and help elevate professionalism across our industry.

KNOW THAT SOMEONE IS FIGHTING FOR YOU

Many of the greatest benefits of membership happen behind the scenes.

NARPM® advocates for residential property managers at the local, state, and federal levels, ensuring our industry's voice is heard on issues such as landlord-tenant legislation, fair housing, and other regulations that directly impact our businesses and our clients.

THE BEST IS YET TO COME

As we continue implementing our 2026–2027 Strategic Initiatives, Members can expect even more value.

We're developing meaningful industry data and benchmarking reports to help Members make smarter business decisions.

We're investing in national marketing efforts to increase public awareness of professional property management, driving more consumers to the Find a Property Manager directory while strengthening our local Chapters.

We're also expanding Member education by delivering a broader variety of learning opportunities and getting timely, relevant content into your hands faster, so you have practical solutions for today's challenges.

And we're introducing additional Members-only discounts through our trusted NARPM® vendor partners, helping you save money while growing your business.

At the end of my presentation in Houston, I answered that Member's question with one simple thought: Your membership is not something you have. It's something you use.

Whether you've been a Member for 30 days or 30 years, I

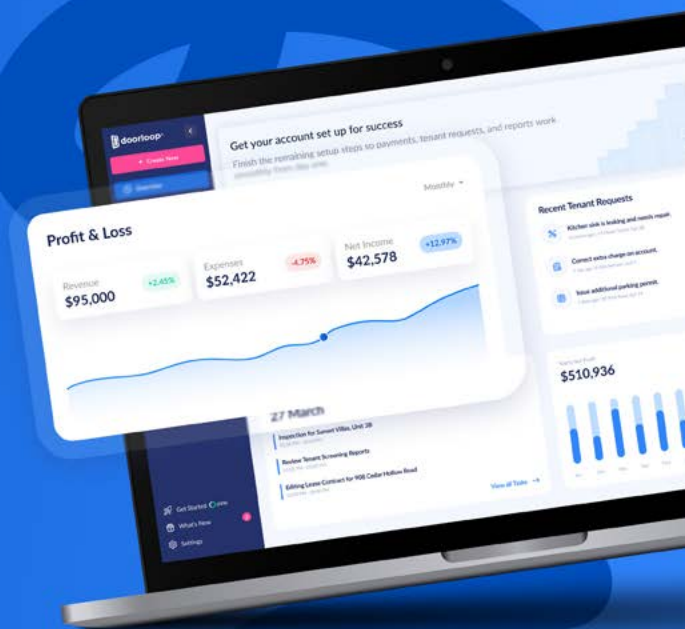
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The AI-Native Operating Platform for Innovative Property Management Teams



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encourage you to take one more step along your NARPM® Roadmap this month. Attend a Chapter meeting, enroll in a class, earn a designation, ask a question in My Community, or register for Convention.

Because that's what More Than Words is all about. When we fully engage in everything NARPM® has to offer, we don't just become better property managers. We strengthen our businesses, support one another, and elevate our entire profession. 🏡

DD Garzón, Master Property Manager RMP®
NARPM® President

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usually stops them, but once in a while they still insist we do as requested. This is the advice from our commission. Typically, in those situations I let the client go not long after because they obviously do not value my expertise or the law.

A We don't do final walk-throughs with the tenant present. If an owner requests to do a final walk with me, I will oblige, because sometimes I miss things. I do find these requests are rare as trust is built. If an owner requested this at every move-out, I would give some thought as to whether I wanted to keep them as a client.

A No. We specify in our property management agreement that owners are to have no contact with residents. There are a couple of reasons for that. One is that residents will try to play the property manager against the owner, just like children will try to play mom and dad against each other. The second is that you are the professional and going to be objective about what constitutes normal wear and tear. Residents will always want every cent of the deposit back; owners will want the entire property repainted over any little smudge on the wall. I don't know that there is any law on this (as always, check your local laws and ordinances), but allowing owners to get involved is a bad idea. You can certainly provide the owner with a copy of the move-in and move-out reports, but you should be the decision-maker.

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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*Cliff Hockley Consulting, LLC's **Clifford A. Hockley, MBA**, is a Certified Property Manager® (CPM) and a Certified Commercial Investment Member (CCIM). He joined Bluestone and Hockley Real Estate Services in 1986 and successfully grew and then merged with Criteria Properties in 2021 to establish Bluestone Real Estate Services. Cliff is the managing member of a real estate consulting practice. He has successfully coached real estate investors and CEOs throughout the United States since 2015. He holds an MBA from Willamette University and a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from Claremont McKenna College. He is a frequent contributor to industry newsletters and served as an adjunct professor at Portland State University, where he taught real estate-related topics. Cliff is the author of two books, "21 Fables" and "Successful Real Estate Investing: Invest Wisely Avoid Costly Mistakes and Make Money." Reach him at Cliffhockley@outlook.com or via <https://www.chockleyconsulting.com/contact-us>.*

The biggest challenge facing property management companies: How to plan and fund growth

In today's business environment, it's difficult to prioritize how much money you should spend on advertising and marketing.

As property management companies are newly formed, you find that it's usually personal contacts who help get a business going. Often the new owner inherits the business from an existing owner, or they have a client that hires them to manage a portfolio, and that ends up spinning off into a business.

Many property management companies tend to manage single-family houses and small complexes. Most of the property management marketplace is driven by management of houses in small complexes. That's why there are so many small residential management companies versus companies that manage larger projects and larger properties. In addition to that, there are significant capital requirements that must be considered when planning your company's growth.

THE INTERNET

It's always been hard to be visible given the amount of competition and the significant expense of marketing in each marketplace. In the current environment, there is a push on digital presence. At a minimum, every company must have a professional website with clear service offerings. This means investing in site optimization as well and spending money on advertising with Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, or some other source for visibility on their website on a local basis.

To facilitate that process, companies have evolved to fill that need, especially given that most property managers are not internet- or marketing-savvy. Some examples are:

- www.goodjuju.com
- www.Upkeepmedia.com
- www.PMW.com
- www.Fourandhalf.com

As your business continues to grow, focusing on one industry to build a critical mass of business makes sense, unless you are in a very small marketplace that does not have enough of any one kind of real estate to allow you to grow.

BEFORE THE INTERNET

Before there was the internet, owners of property management companies targeted owners of existing properties through mail and telephone calls and personal visits. That's still an acceptable way to grow business, especially if you can land clients that have multiple properties.

It's an old story about repeat business and the Pareto Principle. It's not unusual to have 20% of your clients responsible for 80% of your business. Part of that's about the ownership focus of the clients. There are many more clients that have one house, one duplex or one commercial property versus multiple investments.

REFERRAL NETWORKS

In addition, many business owners build relationships with other real estate agents, attorneys, CPAs, and mortgage brokers who have clients with real estate. Clearly, the focus is on real estate and estate attorneys. And, in fact, many CPAs don't have experience with real estate, and finding those that do makes it easier to get the right referrals as well.

Networking is still an in thing. Being visible at events that target particular real estate groups establishes some level of expertise. For example, if you're focused on managing condominium associations, being involved in the Community Associations Institute (CAI) can help establish

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legitimacy and expertise. For each style of property management, there is an association.

For example (this is a nonexclusive association list):

- National Association of Residential Property Managers (NARPM®)
- The Institute of Real Estate Management (IREM®)
- National Apartment Association (NAA)
- Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) International
- International Facility Management Association (IFMA)
- Manufactured Housing Institute (MHI)
- The Self Storage Association (SSA)
- National Association of Industrial and Office Parks (NAIOP)
- Local owners' associations

CHALLENGE

The challenge is finding the time to take care of your existing clients while growing your business. As your business continues to grow, focusing on one industry to build a critical mass of business makes sense, unless you are in a very small marketplace that does not have enough of any one kind of real estate to allow you to grow.

One more challenge is answering the phone quickly. You can close more new clients by being available for phone calls, texts, and emails. Slow responses equal lost opportunity.

HOW MUCH TO INVEST IN MARKETING

At a recent conference I attended, most of the owners invested about 1% of their income on advertising and marketing. This may be enough money to keep you at your current level of management accounts, but it will not drive explosive growth in the number of new clients. Faster-growing management companies invest from 5% to 10% of their income to fund growth, which may include in-house staff (like a director or vice president of business development) to manage the growth. Being able to free up 5% to 10% of income is a major challenge for most property management companies, and, of course, growing a company takes time.

You have options to drive significant growth:

- Spend more money: To create visibility, you should spend 5% to 10% of your annual revenue to fund your growth.
 - a. These funds can be invested in hiring an advertising agency
 - b. Advertising online
 - c. Hiring a marketing agency that specializes in marketing property management companies.

Hire a business development person whose only job is to drive business growth. Typically, the developer cost is your base expense; you still need dollars for marketing, too.

- Buy a competitor: You can also take those same funds and buy a competitor or two.

We purchased a well-recognized local company and hired the owner and two maintenance people while using an employment agreement rather than a purchase-and-sale agreement and merged the group

into our company.

In another case, we purchased another company and moved their semi-retired principals into our office. Finally, we purchased another small company with about 60 tenants, 30 clients, and a property manager. We hired the property manager and, starting on day one, cleared \$6,000 a month as additional net income to our bottom line.

Typically, we grew by buying smaller companies because we had limited funds.

In all cases, we used an attorney to draft agreements once we had an agreed-upon Letter of Intent. We closed all these purchases with an average 25% down payment. We closed one deal approximately every five years. Typically, the owners were ready to retire. Critical in every deal was corporate culture fit.

In every deal, we also assumed we might lose 20% to 30% of their clients who might not be happy with our management style, so we were careful not to overpay on these purchases

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and calculated the potential losses into our valuation of the company we wanted to buy. In almost every case, the seller was ready to retire, and that created the impetus for us to make a deal. In most cases, the seller came to us because we were visible in the marketplace.

GROWTH COSTS MONEY

Growth means more staff is needed, more office space is needed, and logistics like computers and leadership also need to be addressed. As you buy a company and grow, you will want to link your staffing and capital plan to your growth. Our weekly management team agenda had a topic focused on growth and new accounts, so that the accounting, property managers, and maintenance leaders could plan. You don't want to keep growth a secret.

IMAGE

As you grow, you must keep your existing clients. If you don't take care of your clients, tenants, and properties, you will have a difficult time recruiting new business. You must have a stellar reputation in the marketplace to generate new accounts. That means you must pay attention to your online five-star ratings, which means tenant satisfaction is a priority.

Property management decision-makers look at online ratings when making the decision to have you manage their property or, as a business owner, sell their company to you.

TRACKING

Tracking your marketing success or failures helps you understand

whether you're making the right marketing decisions. Have your assistant track your calls, proposals, responses, and failures monthly and review with your management team. Review your management proposals annually to see whether they require updating. Establish what your potential clients want to see in a proposal.

There are many ways to spend money to attract business. First, it is most important to focus your business on being a "Best in Class" company. To do this, you need to hire extraordinary employees, train them, and pay them well. Once you have accomplished this, you can focus on being visible and investing in marketing your company.

Organic growth is typically a very slow process. Each new account you bring online has to be successful. If you bring in a property, say a 120-unit condominium or apartment property or a 100,000-square-foot commercial property, and fail in the management of that property, your reputation will be tarnished, and it will be more difficult to attract new business. You must be successful with every management assignment.

In today's environment, a property management company owner will be forced to spend more money on marketing if they want to grow significantly. All options should be on the table. Your assistant's priority should be to get you information on key performance indicators and lead your marketing effort until you can afford to hire a director of marketing. In the meantime, you need to lead the charge for business recruiting. It's just one more hat you wear as a business owner. 🧢

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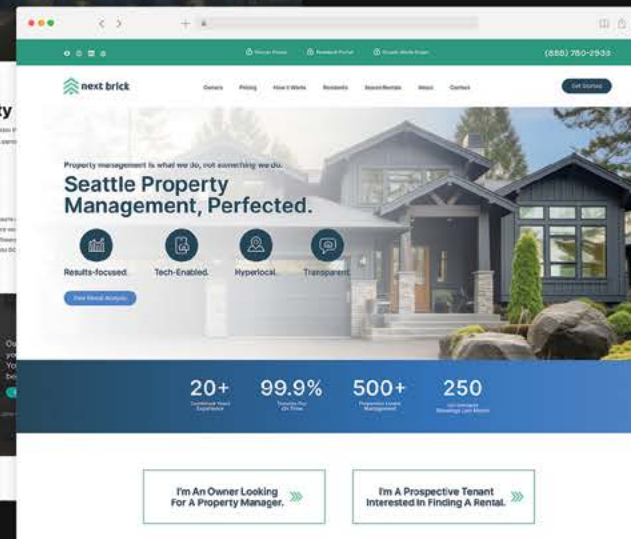
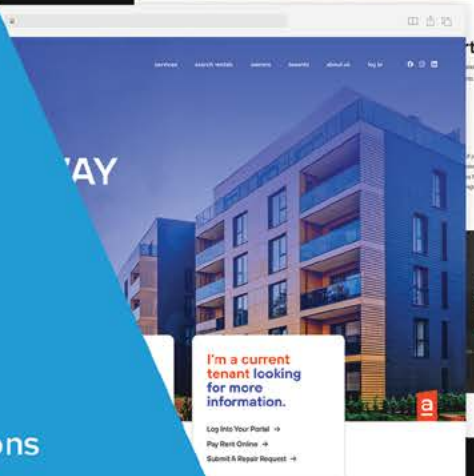
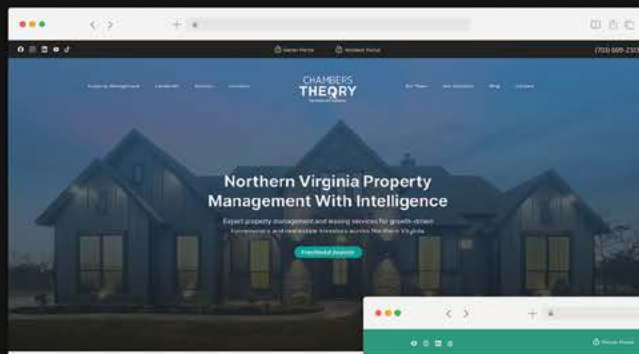
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Jessica Foster with Blue Palm Property Management in Daytona Beach, Florida, is a 2026 NARPM® Director and has over two decades of experience in the property management industry. She is the Past President of NARPM®'s Orlando/Central Florida Chapter and NARPM® Florida State and has also held many board and executive board positions for both Chapters since 2016. She was awarded NARPM® National Volunteer of the Year in 2024.

Busy isn't a business strategy: A reflection on leadership in creating capacity through people, processes, and purpose

It's 8:30 p.m. Your phone buzzes again. You've already been late to school pickup, answered emails during dinner, sent a rental analysis from the sidelines of your child's soccer game, and responded to three owner texts that could have waited until morning. You joke on social media that it's "just another day in property management." Everyone laughs, comments sarcastically, or shares a meme because they have lived it — or are living it, too.

But what if we've mistaken constant activity for professional success?

Why do we admire people who never stop working, respond within minutes, never take vacations, know every answer, and solve every emergency?

Somewhere along the way, "busy" became synonymous with "successful."

I remember a season in my career when my calendar was packed, my phone never stopped ringing, and every decision seemed to require my approval. At the time, I wore that busyness like a badge of honor. If

everyone came to me with questions, I told myself it meant I was valuable. If I was answering emails late at night and taking calls on weekends, I believed it showed commitment.

If I was adding new doors, I believed it proved I was the best.

Looking back, I realized I had confused being needed with being effective.

My constant availability wasn't a sign of top-tier professionalism — it was a sign that the business had become too dependent on me. I had become the bottleneck!

"What if the goal isn't to be the person everyone depends on, but to build a business that doesn't have to depend on one person at all?"

That question changed how I viewed leadership. It shifted my mindset from simply surviving each day to intentionally building something that could thrive.

The hidden cost of being indispensable is that the business begins to revolve around one person instead of reliable systems. Team members hesitate to make decisions because they are waiting for approval. Owners experience delays because every issue lands on the same desk.

Opportunities to improve processes are pushed aside because there is always another urgent matter demanding attention.

The work never slows, and neither does the exhaustion.

Being indispensable may feel like leadership, but over time it can become something else entirely. When leaders hold tightly to every decision, they unintentionally limit the confidence of the people around them. The irony is that the more essential one person becomes, the more fragile the business becomes.

Real leadership is not measured by how many

people need us. It is measured by how many people we empower to lead.

For many leaders, the realization eventually comes that the constant interruptions are not always caused by growth. Sometimes they are caused by systems that have not evolved with the business.

Busy is often less about the amount of work and more about how the work is designed. Undefined processes, unclear expectations, inconsistent communication, poor delegation, and decision bottlenecks create an endless cycle of interruptions. We spend our days solving yesterday's problems instead of building better ways to prevent them

“What if the goal isn't to be the person everyone depends on, but to build a business that doesn't have to depend on one person at all?”

Continued on next page

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tomorrow. The question worth asking is:

Is this truly an emergency, or is this a process that hasn't been built yet?

The answer is not always simple, and building better systems is never a one-time project. It is an ongoing commitment to creating clarity, developing people, and strengthening the organization so it can continue serving clients well — even when the leader is not the person holding every piece together.

The property management profession will always demand responsiveness, compassion, and resilience. Those qualities are what make this industry meaningful and are why so many professionals dedicate their careers to serving owners, residents, and communities.

But perhaps the opportunity before us is to redefine what great leadership looks like. It is not measured by how many fires we put out, how late we stay, or how much we personally carry. It is reflected in the teams we develop, the systems we create, and the future leaders we empower.

The most impactful leaders are not those who make themselves impossible to replace. They are the ones who create organizations where others have the confidence and capability to succeed.

There will always be more to do, more challenges to solve, and more opportunities to grow. But busy isn't the goal.

Building something that creates lasting impact is. 🏡



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incredibly valuable. We are stronger as an industry when we learn from each other.

My favorite NARPM® benefit is: The people and the relationships. The education and resources are fantastic, but being able to pick up the phone and call another property manager who has already dealt with the problem you're facing is priceless. Those **relationships have helped me professionally and personally.**

My best advice for those who want to get involved in NARPM® is: Just raise your hand! You don't have to know exactly what you want to do or have everything figured out. Volunteer for a committee, attend a local Chapter event, introduce yourself to someone new, or say "yes" when an opportunity comes your way. You get out of NARPM® what you put into it, and some of the best opportunities and friendships come from simply being willing to get involved.

My favorite pastimes are: Spending time with my family, traveling, shopping, and enjoying time with friends. I also love music and live events, and I'm always up for a glass of Savvy B or a latte!

Fellow NARPM® Members would be surprised to know: I love trying new things, and I'm usually willing to say "yes" to an experience that gives a laugh and makes a good story later. I also believe pretty strongly that you can never take yourself too seriously, especially when you're surrounded by good people! 🏡

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MasterKey Property Management
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Taylor Laurence, RMP®
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Realvest Property Management
Pearland, Texas

July 2026

Hana Goodrich, MPM®
Hardee Property Management
Boise, Idaho

Megan Titcher, MPM®
Summit Residential Services
Tucson, Arizona

Leslie Kazen, RMP®
1st Choice Property Management
Fort Worth, Texas

Tammy Wilson, RMP®
28th State Premier Properties
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The Professional Development Committee now approves Designation Packets monthly.

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NARPM® designations* are earned with a combination of property management experience, NARPM® and industry education, and service to the association through volunteer activities. You may have taken clock-hour courses to maintain your license. Imagine the gains when the courses are specifically focused on what you do as a property manager and are being taught by a property management professional. Take it one step further and envision networking with other experienced property managers from across the country. Earning your NARPM® designation will bring a whole new dimension to your daily tasks.

Many of you have already started the designation process, and some of you have all the necessary items to complete your designation. You just have to send them in. What's stopping you?



Patrick Hurley is the founder of PM Broker Group (<https://pmbrokersgroup.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.

Build value, not just size

Growth is exciting.

Adding doors, entering new markets, and announcing acquisitions all feel like progress. But after years of operating property management companies and helping owners buy and sell them, I've learned something important: Not all growth creates value.

I've seen companies double in size while becoming harder to operate, less profitable, and ultimately less attractive to buyers. I've also seen companies make one strategic acquisition that dramatically increased the value of the entire business.

The difference isn't how much they grew. It's how they grew.

Every acquisition should begin with a simple question: Will this make my company more valuable?

That's a different question than, "Will this make my company bigger?"

Those two things aren't always the same.

Before pursuing an acquisition, you should have a clear vision for what you're trying to build. Maybe your goal is to expand into a neighboring market. Maybe it's increasing density in a market you already serve. Maybe you're looking for a stronger team, better systems, a higher-quality owner base, or an opportunity to improve revenue through more appropriate management fees.

Whatever your objective is, every acquisition should move you closer to it. If it doesn't, you're probably just collecting doors.

One of the biggest mistakes I see is owners trying to solve operational problems with an acquisition.

If your company struggles with communication, inconsistent processes, poor financial reporting, or weak leadership, buying another company won't fix those issues. In fact, it usually magnifies them. You're simply introducing more owners, more tenants, more employees, and more complexity into an organization that hasn't yet mastered what it already has.

The strongest acquisitions happen when a healthy

company acquires another healthy company — or when a healthy company acquires one that it knows exactly how to improve.

That brings me to another point.

Don't just evaluate what you're buying today. Evaluate what it could become under your leadership.

Some of the best acquisitions aren't companies with the highest management fees or the newest technology. They're companies with loyal owners, a solid reputation, and untapped potential. Maybe the systems are outdated. Maybe communication has slipped. Maybe management fees haven't kept up with the market. Those are opportunities to create value — not simply inherit it.

The key is knowing where you can make meaningful improvements without creating unnecessary disruption.

Every acquisition should make the combined company stronger than either business was independently.

It should improve your leadership team, strengthen your systems, expand your market position, or create efficiencies that wouldn't have existed otherwise. If the only thing that changes is your door

count, you've probably missed the bigger opportunity.

There's one final point that gets overlooked: Many owners focus on what an acquisition will do for them today. Instead, they should think about what it will do for them someday when it's their turn to sell.

The market rewards businesses that are scalable, profitable, and easy to understand. Buyers pay premiums for companies with strong systems, quality leadership, consistent financial performance, and a clear growth story. Those characteristics aren't built when you decide to sell — they're built with every decision you make along the way.

Growth is important. But the goal shouldn't be to own the biggest property management company. The goal should be to build the most valuable one.

Because when the day comes to sell, that's what the market rewards. 🏠





Jarrett Lau is the owner of Green Ocean Property Management, a Boston-area firm managing residential rentals and condo associations across New England. He also runs SmoothOperations.ai, where he builds AI and automation systems for service businesses — most of which are tested first inside his own company. He spends most of his time looking for ways to make his team's work easier and his company run more sharply.

Stop re-prompting: Build the playbook

If you've read the first two pieces in this series, you learned how to pick your first AI project and how to instruct the tool so it doesn't hand you generic junk. If you've done both, you've probably had your first real win: a maintenance email that came out sounding like you and an owner update that took 2 minutes instead of 20.

Here's what happens next.

Tuesday you write that great prompt. It works. Thursday you need the same thing, and you rewrite the whole prompt from memory, a little worse this time. The following week someone on your team tries it, doesn't know the trick, and produces something you'd never send. The win never compounds. It lives in your head, and your head doesn't scale.

That's not an AI problem. That's a systems problem. And it's the exact place most operators quietly give up.

owners who want to be copied on everything. The promises you never make. In the last article, you were pasting this into every single prompt by hand. You don't have to. Every major tool now lets you save it once.

In ChatGPT, it's "custom instructions" and saved memory. In ChatGPT or Claude, you can build a "Project" or a "Custom GPT," load in a one-page description of your company, and every conversation inside it already knows who you are. You write it one afternoon. You never write it again.

Pro tip No. 1: You can even have the AI help you write it. Ask it to interview you about your business, then draft the one-pager for you.

The second is your process, how you do it.

This is the actual recipe for a repeated task. Not "write a tenant email," but the full set of instructions you worked out last article: the role, the tone, the

Think about a good employee. You don't re-onboard them every morning. You teach them once, they learn how you operate, and from then on they just do the work. You'd never tolerate re-training a hire from scratch every day.

The fix is the same instinct that runs your whole company. Don't re-explain. Document.

Think about a good employee. You don't re-onboard them every morning. You teach them once, they learn how you operate, and from then on they just do the work. You'd never tolerate re-training a hire from scratch every day. But that's exactly what you're doing every time you open a blank chat and start over.

So, stop starting over. There are two things worth saving, and once you save them, the tool stops being a blank slate.

The first is your context. Who you are.

This is everything about your business the AI shouldn't have to be told twice. Your company name and voice. The kinds of buildings you manage. The

length, the things to avoid, the example that sounds like you. That whole thing is an asset. Treat it like an SOP, not a text message.

Save your best ones in a simple doc. "Maintenance update to a tenant." "Owner update after an inspection." "First response to a leasing inquiry." Each one is a recipe your team can pull off the shelf and run, and get the same quality you would, whether you're in the office or on a plane.

Put those two together, and the task stops depending on you.

Pro tip No. 2: Claude Desktop now has a record button that captures what you do on screen while you talk through it, so you can show the AI a process

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out loud instead of typing every step.

The difference between "I use AI" and "my company uses AI" is whether the good version of a task lives in one person's head or in a place your team can reach.

The owner who writes down ten of these recipes this quarter buys back a real day every week, and every person on the team performs like your best person on that one task. The owner still re-prompting from scratch is just typing faster than they used to.

None of this needs a budget or a developer, just a doc and the discipline to save the thing that worked instead of throwing it away.

Here's what to do this week. Pull up the last AI task you were actually happy with. Copy the prompt that produced it into a doc and give it a name. That's your first recipe. Then write down, in five plain sentences, the things about your company you keep explaining over and over,

and paste that into your tool's saved memory or a project. That's your context. You've just built the first two pages of a playbook that, a year from now, will run half the writing in your office.

Once you have a shelf of these, there's a next step we'll cover another time: connecting the AI to the systems where your information already lives, so it stops guessing and works off your real data.

Pro tip No. 3: If you're happy with how a specific prompt or process worked, you can ask Claude to save it as a "skill" it can reference and reuse on its own the next time.

Start with the task you hate most, same as always. Just this time, don't delete the recipe when you're done.

Be well. 🙌



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David Yifrach owns Seaside Garage Door Experts, a family-owned garage door repair and installation company serving the Hampton Roads area of Virginia since 2013. He and his team handle thousands of residential and light-commercial door jobs a year. He was featured on 13News Now in July 2026 as a local garage-door expert. Reach him at seasidegde@gmail.com, or visit seasidegaragedoorexports.com.

The 15-minute garage door check that prevents after-hours calls

The garage door is the largest moving object on most of the homes you manage, and it is usually the last thing anyone looks at between tenants. That is a shame, because it is also one of the most common emergency maintenance calls we run, and almost every one of them was preventable with a few minutes of attention at turnover.

Here is what a good turnover check looks like, and why each item matters to your budget and your liability.

Run the balance test first. Pull the release cord, lift the door by hand to about waist height, and let go. A properly balanced door stays put. If it slams down or shoots up, the springs are worn or out of adjustment. An unbalanced door burns out openers early and is the classic setup for a spring that snaps at the worst possible time. The test takes 30 seconds and tells you more about the door's health than anything else.

Look at the springs, cables, and rollers. Torsion springs are rated in cycles, usually 10,000 to 20,000, which works out to roughly seven to 12 years of normal use. If a door is near that age, or you see gaps in the coil, frayed cables, or rollers that wobble, budget for it now rather than during a move-in weekend. Replacing a spring on your schedule is a modest repair. Replacing one after it strands a tenant's car is an after-hours call at a premium.

Test the safety reverse. This is the 30-second

item that protects you most. Every opener built since 1993 is required to reverse when the door meets an obstruction. Lay a flat board or a roll of paper towels on the floor under the door and press the button to close. The door should touch it and reverse immediately. Then test the photo-eye sensors near the floor: Start the door closing and wave your foot through the beam. It should stop and go back up. A door that does not reverse is a real hazard, especially in family rentals, and it is exactly the kind of thing that becomes a liability claim. If either test fails, take the door out of service until it is fixed.

Check the bottom seal. A quarter-inch gap along the bottom is all it takes for water, mice, and insects to get in, and the garage is often where they enter the rest of the house. Between tenants is the easy time to swap a cracked or flattened seal. It is a cheap part that quietly prevents water damage and pest complaints down the line.

Know the difference between a repair and a replacement. Most calls are wear items: a spring, a cable, a set of rollers, an opener gear. Those are repairs, and any honest company will tell you so and quote them in writing. A full door replacement is a much bigger number, and it is only warranted when panels are bent, rotted, or rusted through. If a technician's first move is to sell you a whole new door for a broken spring, get a second opinion. Ask for the license number and a written, line-item quote before any work starts. In Virginia, you can look up a contractor's license in about a minute, and every state has its own version of that lookup.

Build it into your turnover checklist. None of this requires a specialist. Your maintenance tech can run the balance test, the two safety tests, and a quick visual check in about 15 minutes, then flag anything real for a pro. Doing it on a schedule turns surprise emergencies into planned, low-cost maintenance, and it keeps a preventable failure from landing on a Friday night.

The garage door does not ask for much. A short look at every turnover keeps it off your emergency and liability lists, and it costs almost nothing but the time to do it. 🛠️



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Cliff Hockley Consulting, LLC's **Clifford A. Hockley, MBA**, is a Certified Property Manager® (CPM) and a Certified Commercial Investment Member (CCIM). He joined Bluestone and Hockley Real Estate Services in 1986 and successfully grew and then merged with Criteria Properties in 2021 to establish Bluestone Real Estate Services. Cliff is the managing member of a real estate consulting practice. He has successfully coached real estate investors and CEOs throughout the United States since 2015. He holds an MBA from Willamette University and a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from Claremont McKenna College. He is a frequent contributor to industry newsletters and served as an adjunct professor at Portland State University, where he taught real estate-related topics. Cliff is the author of two books, "21 Fables" and "Successful Real Estate Investing: Invest Wisely Avoid Costly Mistakes and Make Money." Reach him at Cliffhockley@outlook.com or via <https://www.hockleyconsulting.com/contact-us>.

Employee bonus ideas for property managers

As the owner of a property management company, you face a constant challenge: motivating your team to deliver results that bolster both your firm's profitability and that of your clients.

One of the most effective ways to improve the bottom line is to develop employee incentives aligned with your business goals. Base pay alone often fails to drive peak performance, especially when managing average or ageing assets. Strategic incentives are the "secret sauce" for keeping high-quality managers motivated, productive, and loyal to your firm.

COMMON INCENTIVE OPTIONS

Developing successful incentives in property management has historically been difficult. When management income is tight, owners must look for creative ways to boost wages and reduce turnover. Common incentives used to motivate teams include:

- Leasing and renewal bonuses
- Comprehensive benefits (Medical and 401K)
- Company-paid professional development
- Year-end profit sharing
- Construction coordination/management fee splits
- Bonuses tied to company net-operating-income (NOI) growth
- Bonuses tied to property-specific NOI growth
- Management commission sharing
- Key Performance Indicator (KPI) bonuses

Implementing these requires significant planning. It requires coordination between leadership, accounting, and department heads to set fair and measurable targets.

THE POWER OF KPI-BASED BONUSES

Many owners find success with a quarterly KPI-based bonus system (which often proves more stable than monthly payouts). This system ties rewards to property success, focusing on rental income, delinquency reduction, and task completion.

To implement this, group properties by manager and compare their portfolio's actual financial results against the budget. Recommended KPIs for this

program include:

- Occupancy: Maintaining 95% or higher
- Renewals: Achieving 80%-90% retention (with a focus on early renewals)
- Collections: Maintaining 98%–100% on-time rent collection
- Efficiency: Shorter vacancy days and faster lease-ups
- Responsiveness: Maintenance first response within 24 hours
- Growth: NOI growth compared to the budget or prior year
- Satisfaction: High Tenant Survey or Net Promoter Score (NPS) results
- Budgeting: Keeping maintenance costs in line with projections

OVERCOMING RESISTANCE

Property managers may push back on being held responsible for commercial vacancies, as they are rarely the leasing agents and cannot control market rental rates or concessions.

However, managers do affect leasing speed by ensuring vacancies are "market-ready"— clean, trash-free, and functional. Regular vacancy reviews and "turn-around" bonuses can significantly accelerate the rental of vacant units.

Investing in Professional Growth

Including professional development in your KPIs encourages skill improvement. Incentivize managers to gain certifications from industry leaders like:

- NARPM® (National Association of Residential Property Managers): RMP® (Residential Management Professional), MPM® (Master Property Manager), and CRMC® (Certified Residential Management Company).
- IREM® (Institute of Real Estate Management): CPM (Certified Property Manager)
- BOMA (Building Owners and Managers Association): RPA (Real Property Administrator)

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Anne Lackey is the co-founder of HireSmart Virtual Employees, hiresmartvirtualemployees.com, a full-service HR firm helping others recruit, hire & train top global talent. She has coached and trained hundreds of people in the U.S. and Canada in creating successful businesses to be more profitable and to create the lifestyle they desire. She can be reached at anne@hiresmartvirtualemployees.com or at meetwithanne.com.

The company only you can run

You are at the kitchen table with your daughter on a day you set aside for family when your phone rings, and the name on the screen belongs to an owner who has been with you for six years. You know before you answer that nothing about the call is urgent, but you answer anyway.

Twenty minutes later, you hang up after talking about a matter that could have waited until Monday. And during the call, your daughter waved goodbye and headed out the door.

Of course, you know all the work-life balance advice. You hear about putting the phone down and deciding in advance what actually counts as an emergency. That advice is correct as far as it goes, and it still fails, for a reason that has nothing to do with willpower. You take the call because you are the only person in your company that the owner

request because you gave her the number years ago, and she does not want to bother the office. He asks for a version of the owner statement broken out the way his accountant likes it, which your software does not produce, so somebody rebuilds it by hand each quarter. Another wants to be called before any repair over \$100, even though your management agreement sets the threshold at \$400, because you agreed to it during onboarding when he seemed nervous, and you wanted him to feel taken care of.

None of those exceptions felt like a decision when you made them. Each one felt like quality service, and yes, it is, but it's not properly structured. Now each one lives somewhere outside your normal operating system. Before long, your company is operating on two sets of rules: the documented ones and the ones stored only in your memory.

If you want a place to begin, start with the owner you would least want to hand off. The instinct is to move the easy ones first and work up, which lets you spend a year on the easy ones while never reaching the client who is actually consuming your time.

expects to make things happen, and on some level you both understand that.

This is a structural issue, and those calls and interruptions don't stop unless you address matters at a foundational level.

Owners grow accustomed to reaching a real person quickly, and over time they begin to expect the same responsiveness they have always received. Telling them to wait until the next business day feels like a step backward, even when it is entirely reasonable. So the goal cannot be a company where nobody answers after five. The goal is a company where the answer does not have to come from you.

THE HIDDEN COST OF SMALL ACCOMMODATIONS

The owners who create the heaviest drag on your operation are often the pleasant, appreciative, long-tenured clients who ask for small favors.

She texts your cell instead of submitting the

request because you gave her the number years ago, and she does not want to bother the office. He asks for a version of the owner statement broken out the way his accountant likes it, which your software does not produce, so somebody rebuilds it by hand each quarter. Another wants to be called before any repair over \$100, even though your management agreement sets the threshold at \$400, because you agreed to it during onboarding when he seemed nervous, and you wanted him to feel taken care of.

WHAT YOUR TEAM LOSES

The part of this that goes unnoticed the longest is what it does to the people who work for you.

When an owner's real relationship runs through your personal phone, your team is working from an incomplete file. They see the maintenance request in the system, but they do not see the text you received last week where the owner mentioned he was thinking about selling. They quote the standard policy and get corrected by an owner who knows

Continued on next page

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about an arrangement they were never told about.

None of that is anyone's fault. Your team is simply operating from the information you have given them. When part of the client relationship lives in your memory instead of your system, employees are forced to guess where the exceptions begin and end.

Your staff learns from that. What they learn is that the documented process is provisional, that certain clients operate under rules they cannot see, and that the safest response whenever something unusual comes up is to hand it to you. Then you look at your week and conclude your team cannot handle complexity, when what they cannot handle is a set of commitments they never knew existed.

There is a slower cost underneath that one. The quarterly report someone rebuilds by hand because one owner wants it broken out a certain way is an hour of work the system would have done in a minute, and the person doing that work knows it. Good employees can tell when they are being asked to do work that serves an exception instead of the business, and over time that becomes discouraging.

Without realizing it, you become the constraint on almost everything. Questions route through one person, so the speed of the company is limited by your attention. When you're underwater, work waits. When you're away, it waits even longer.

MOVING THE RELATIONSHIP, NOT THE CLIENT

The answer is not a script that pushes people into the portal because the portal isn't the relationship. Owners want a person, and the solution is giving them a different person.

That means every owner has one person on your team who knows their properties and becomes their primary contact. When someone calls that person and does not get an immediate answer, the reaction is different from the reaction to an unanswered main line. People will usually wait for someone they know.

The handoff has to be deliberate, and it has to come from you. A note saying you are stepping back from day-to-day

communication feels like abandonment. It lands very differently when you tell the owner that Maria will now be their primary contact because she can respond more quickly than you can, that she has already reviewed the portfolio, and that you have asked her to call this week about the two open items. Then stay on the next few email threads without answering first. Let the owner see that Maria responds and that you are still paying attention.

Before you do any of that, take inventory of the special arrangements you've made over the years: a lower approval threshold here, a custom report there, an owner who always gets a phone call instead of an email. You'll probably discover a few you've forgotten about. Decide which ones genuinely improve service and deserve to become part of the way your company operates. Others may exist simply because it felt easier to say yes in the moment. Either way, if an arrangement is worth keeping, it shouldn't depend on your memory.

WHERE TO BEGIN

If you want a place to begin, start with the owner you would least want to hand off. The instinct is to move the easy ones first and work up, which lets you spend a year on the easy ones while never reaching the client who is actually consuming your time. That relationship is usually the most entrenched, which is exactly why it belongs at the front of the list.

Pull that file this week and write down every commitment you have made that is not in the management agreement. Then introduce that owner to the person taking over on a call you make yourself.

That first handoff tells you a great deal about the business you've built. The challenge is making sure that trust eventually extends to the people and the systems around you. Without that, every accommodation entrenches your client's dependence on you and quietly weakens the business that is supposed to serve every client.

That's how companies become businesses only one person can run. And that's how you end up waving goodbye in the personal moments that matter. 📌



Continued from page 27 "Bonus"

- NAA (National Apartment Association): CAM (Certified Apartment Manager)
- CAI (Community Associations Institute): CMCA (Certified Manager of Community Associations)

Expertise leads to better decision-making and higher client retention, which ultimately increases company revenue.

CULTURAL BENEFITS

An incentive process encourages a culture of communication. It fosters:

- 1-on-1 meetings: Monthly reviews between department heads and managers to resolve client issues

- Weekly team meetings: Constant information flow regarding vacancies and internal education
- Healthy competition: Friendly rivalry between managers that drives both property and corporate revenue

Leadership is a balancing act between delivering value to property owners and providing fair compensation to employees. A well-balanced system that rewards the financial health of the assets ensures long-term business success. While implementing a plan involves trial and error, refining a system that aligns everyone's interests will lead to a more profitable and satisfied team. 📌

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