



Onsite Solutions

What Your On-Site People Would Tell You, If Only They Could

BY LISA TROSIEN

Your on-site staffs are the key to your success. They retain residents, get new residents to rent unoccupied apartment homes and maintain the grounds and the buildings in your apartment communities. But do you get the kind of feedback you need from them to help them do their jobs more efficiently? Do you get the information you need to retain good employees in this job market? Do you know the major issues your on-site staffs deal with on a regular basis?

Probably not. On-site staff may be reluctant to be as honest and blunt necessary to communicate their needs, suggestions and complaints about their workplaces. Following, are 10 things that your on-site people want you to know.

Site Visits

Please don't conduct site visits on Mondays. Let's face it ... do you want your boss hanging out with you all day on Monday? Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays are great days for site visits. Also, when you come to visit, could you please arrive about an hour after the leasing office has opened for the day? We've got calls to return, rent checks to post, packages to handout, service requests to write up and about a hundred other things to do. Yes, we know we could come in early but we hardly ever take lunch anyway, we work late quite often, and we just really don't want to come in early. It would really help if you would give us just a little time.

Attire

Let's chat for a minute here about career apparel. How are we supposed to buy in to this whole idea of career apparel when you don't even wear it? And can we please get a reprieve from the khaki pants and the denim shirts? (We're so tired of those!) By the way, not all of us look great in golf shirts and shorts during the summertime, so can we have a little variety?

Traffic vs. Closing Percentages

Okay, we'll admit it. We aren't very accurate at counting our unqualified traffic on our traffic sheets. Want to know why? Because it affects our closing percentages. If you eased up on us about our closing percentages, we'd be more accurate in our traffic. Really. After all, it's not our fault that we can't close someone who only makes about half the money they need to make to live at our community.

On-Site Staff

The maintenance, housekeeping and grounds teams don't get enough recognition from the corporate staff and owners. They're the "Retention Ambassadors" of every community, but they rarely receive much attention. And they don't get enough training either. Fair housing, customer service ... the "softer skills" don't get trained to team members outside of the leasing and management offices.

Internet

We'd like Internet access for our leasing office. It would make us more competitive and better prepared to move forward technologically. We know you'll install that software that tracks where we go, and we'll do our best to use the Internet strictly for business.

Maintenance Budget

How come there's always money for parties, seasonal flowers and Resident Appreciation Week? But when the maintenance team really needs something, we're told "there's no money in the budget." Can you please explain that to us?

Selling Rent Increases

Can you please teach us how to sell a rent increase to a resident? And how to sell without concessions? We've had concessions for so

long, it's difficult to sell without them. We need training on that.

Industry Publications

We like to receive industry publications that help us improve in our profession. But we don't like getting one that's been photocopied and sent to us so the company can save money. It makes us feel like we're not good enough to get our own subscriptions.

Recognition

We want to be respected for the hard work that we do as on-site employees. We know that the residents pay our salary, but if it weren't for us, you wouldn't have a salary.

Property Management Experience

If you're our supervisor and you don't have any property management experience, we'd appreciate it if you would get some. Come and sit with us for a week or two. The first and last weeks of the month are always good. We'll let you answer the phone, write up some service requests, plunge a few toilets and clean some hallways and some vacants. You'll learn a lot about the industry and about us. And we'll respect you even more. ■

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