

**DO
ONE
THING
BETTER**

Forecasts and Trends :: 2017 Community Management

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Celebrating 30 years in the Community Association business, has me reflecting on how this industry is changing, has changed and may be modified shortly. The impact of advances in technology, methods of environmental monitoring, cultural shifts, and uncertainty in general financial conditions is necessitating significant changes in day-to-day practices of association management firms.

50%

of owners pay maint.. fees online

75%

of office contact is electronic

**SCANNING
=
NEW FAXING**

95%

of boards approve expenditures electronically

While CAI (and specifically the Foundation for Community Association Research (FCAR), continues to publish expert solutions for changing needs and provides reliable information about the newest and best practices, the everyday routine and standard service profile for 2017 is very different from just a few years ago.

CHANGES

- ◆ More than 50% of owners pay their maintenance fees electronically
- ◆ 95% of client Boards approve expenditures electronically
- ◆ 75% of office contact from clients, other professionals and vendors is electronic
- ◆ Scanning is the new faxing
- ◆ Digital files are required & hard copy files are often redundant
- ◆ Computer security and data safety is a major concern and insurance issue
- ◆ Regular mail is not a sure and reliable way to communicate- since mail delays, label and bar code errors are "de rigeur"
- ◆ Immediate response is an expectation
Reliance on voice mail has decreased
Photographs are requirements for everything
- ◆ Everyone thinks they are well informed because we are all on some form of social media; and forget about anything that they do not regularly see on social media.
- ◆ Most people do not write physical checks- the debit cards and the phone are replacing cash and checks
- ◆ Machines we use every day cannot be fixed by a knowledge of general mechanics- every machine has a computer or electronic operating system
- ◆ Everyone wants more personalized contact, even while demanding regular texts and robo-calls.

NEW PRACTICES

- ◆ Management firms now have online payment systems available for each association and can immediately scan checks received directly into the bank account of each association,
- ◆ Management firms must now have more than one digital "backup system" in place (the "cloud," a mirror drive, an off sight electronic back-up service and/or a second server is the norm).
- ◆ Data insurance is a regular business expense that is dependent on protocols and systems utilized every day.
- ◆ The number of people who have access to a "server" is further complicated by constantly expiring passwords and how information is processed dictates rates and premiums, cyber security is as important as a physical alarm system. Being able to assure and prove to clients that the proper insurance and safety systems are in place for the community data is a new specification for all management firms.
- ◆ Paper facsimiles are now being replaced by scanning directly to computers for email transmission. A good tracking system for daily emails is necessary. Such systems as Microsoft 365 allow for all emails to be saved in folders and to print lists of correspondences.
- ◆ Managers now must have a "smart phone" so they have immediate access to emails, texts, calls, and that they can communicate responses as quickly as possible. Fortunately, it takes far less time to read and respond to an email, which quickly identifies who the message is from and what the subject is, than it does to handle a phone conversation. In addition, managers can now utilize their phones to send global emails, global phone messages and global texts.
- ◆ Smart phones now are utilized daily for photographing property conditions and tracking contractor work.
- ◆ It is essential for management firms to maintain social media accounts and to institute meaningful regular social media posts to keep clients updated and engaged. Social media is a great way to communicate with residents and transmit important updates. A social media posting schedule also serves to let owners know that the management is working and is engaged in day-to-day happenings.
- ◆ Service contracts must now be in place for every machine that is used with any regularity: copier/scanners, computers, postage machines, mailing machines, HVAC systems, fire suppression systems, irrigation systems, pools, etc.
- ◆ Online and Phone support must now be made available for all software used daily. Real people need to answer phones in a service industry, since voicemail is to impersonal. All forms need to be available online so that owners can complete them and submit them automatically.

***The information included in this section is based off an individual property management companies own experience and data. Information may not be reflective of all communities.

FORECASTING

Forecasts include what we need to do a better job and what we need from suppliers and contractors to provide the best service.

The following are changes and/or additions to existing systems that are needed and will most likely be routine soon:

- Since so many owners now make their monthly payments electronically, the accounting software suppliers need to have a better way to track who needs paper coupons and who doesn't so that management firms can easily provide the correct information to coupon printing services.
- Management firms can now utilize a custom app for both Android and Apple devices that allows residents to automatically report a condition or send a photo directly to management when they see something that needs attention.
- Robo-calls now allow a call, a text, and/or an email to be sent to every person based on the message submitted by the manager to the appropriate group. These systems will become increasingly prevalent.
- Board meetings will be held more often via Skype/Facetime/Google chat etc. and- hopefully, during the day time hours!!
- Association elections will be conducted over secure Internet connections with appropriate account number certifications.
- Contractors will all have to utilize wonderful work ticketing tracking so that warranties are easier to "collect on" without having to produce all the records by searching paper files.

Interested in writing
for the Do One Thing
Better Section of
Community Trends?

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