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The Impact of Governance and Management on Condominium Lifestyle

Condo communities are often at the mercy of the board, which governs regulations and policies, and the property management companies who carry out the orders of the day. Collectively their job is to ensure the owners' right to quiet enjoyment while also considering the type of lifestyle the condo community provides.

When the two parties fail to manage the property effectively, its value, amenities, social aspects, and the residents' lifestyle is negatively impacted.

Here we explore governance and management strategies that property managers and boards can implement to positively impact the lifestyles of residents and unit owners.

A United Front

While condo boards shape the condo community's direction, the property managers carry out the duties to ensure the community's needs are met. Strong communities increase resident satisfac-

tion while reducing disputes between the board and fellow residents. This creates a happier community.

Condominium boards can help ensure their governance positively impacts community lifestyle by providing clear instructions to their property management and adopting effective management policies.

Adhere to the Condo Act

When the board or property managers follow the rules, it shows respect for residents' rights. A commitment to the Condo Act compliance is a commitment to the community. By remaining transparent in how the property is managed, where common expense funds are spent, and why bylaws exist and must be followed, you instill a sense of trust in the board and their ability to govern. However, you can also effectively reduce complaints because you provide less fodder for resident dissatisfaction by remaining compliant.

Respond to Resident Complaints

Striving to avoid resident complaints is part of the board's job. However, diverse communities face daily challenges to keep every single resident happy. As a result, your board must be prepared to respond to resident complaints promptly. When you acknowledge complaints, you make it clear that community members are heard. Even if a complaint seems frivolous or unwarranted, placing equal importance on each complaint is crucial for optics. Ensuring you and your property management team follow the same process to resolve issues keeps everyone in the community on the same level. This contributes to a more peaceful lifestyle.

Communication Between Owners and Directors

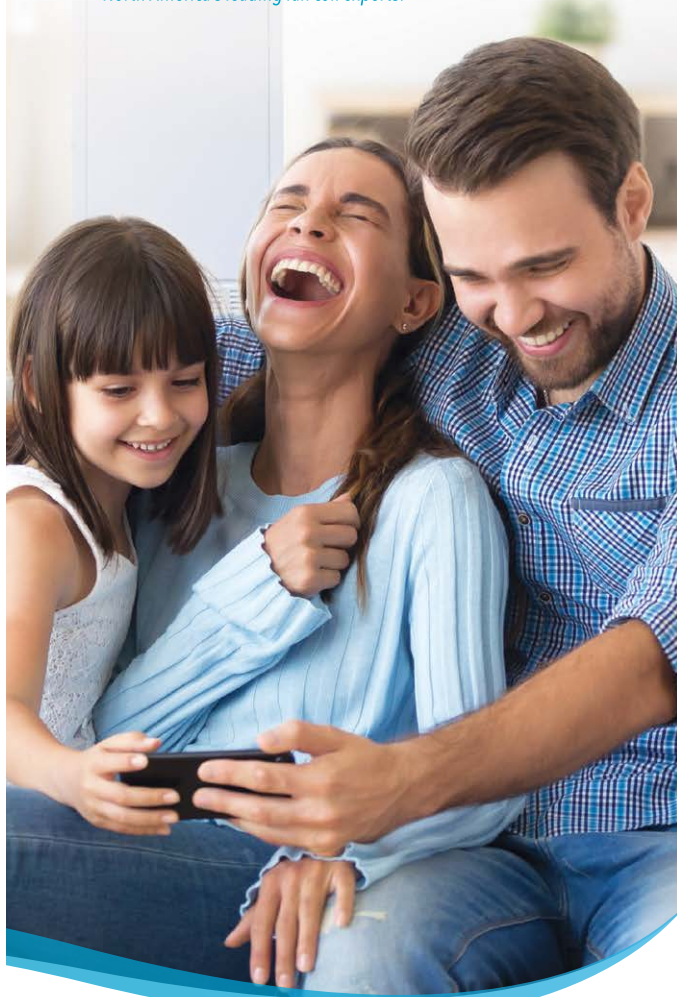
In hand with improved complaint response, boards should be equally attentive to all resident enquiries. Overlooked



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questions can lead to discontent and cause owners to make ill-informed decisions. In turn, owners' actions can negatively impact the neighbours, community happiness and even condo property values. As a result, all questions should be answered as soon as possible, so owners have the information they need to enjoy their homes.

Publish Community Newsletters

Boards have a responsibility to keep owners updated on what is happening in the community. Although some residents might not even glance at a monthly newsletter, the effort shows your commitment to keeping the community informed. Newsletters should be shared once a month, with special editions as required. Including local news that might impact lifestyle such as new shops and restaurants, an upsweep in crime, changes to local bus routes, etc., keeps residents up to date on their living environment.

Communicate Using Proper Channels

Communication should also meet the needs of each resident. A survey to find out how people prefer to be contacted will help determine the best way to distribute information. While this might be more time consuming, each resident has a right to receive information in a user-friendly format. It also keeps certain groups from feeling uninvolved. Older residents might prefer email, while younger residents might want a continuous feed on social media. Remaining sensitive to the different

demographics of the community keeps everyone equally informed.

Encourage Meeting Attendance

Providing information about upcoming meetings and AGMs can help encourage more people to attend. Giving fair warning while also providing information on how owners can vote by proxy ensures everyone has equal opportunity to participate in crucial decisions that affect the community lifestyle. A summary of the agenda also ensures all residents remain informed of emerging issues and upcoming votes. The more people that attend meetings or submit their votes, the better the decisions will reflect the overall community's needs.

Create Condo Committees

Boards can become overburdened with tasks and special projects needing attention. While property managers offer tremendous support in operating a condo's business effectively, one may overlook many tasks related to a community lifestyle. An excellent option to help improve lifestyle is creating committees.

Committees work exceptionally well as they are inclusive and help promote diversity. As more people become involved, more residents become accountable for their contributions to the community. Committees may be used for many different roles, from advisors to the board to special project managers and from entertainment committees to data collection.

Use Surveys and Bulletin Boards

Surveys provide insight into the community's needs. They are the best way to create a lifestyle suited to your residents. Asking outright "Would you like more social events?" or "What types of social events would you attend?" will help you extend your efforts where they will be most appreciated.

For example, many condo owners are quite content living in their private units. This insight can save a lot of time trying to find ways for owners to interact with their neighbours. In diverse communities, it's difficult to plan events that resonate with everyone. Efforts might be better aimed at ways of promoting a more engaged condominium lifestyle, such as setting up a community garden plot or asking for articles for your newsletter. An online bulletin board where residents share ideas, surveys are posted, and volunteers are recruited, keeps the paths of communication open.

Through a united relationship between those who govern and those who complete the day to day tasks, residents are more likely to enjoy a positive condominium lifestyle. By refocusing your board's strategy to include community-centric goals, your residents and owners will feel the positive effects on their lifestyle. ■

Vadim Koyen is the President of CPO Management Inc., a full-service property management company specializing in residential and commercial condominiums in Toronto and the GTA.
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