


Amenity Booking

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Guest Suite #2




Swimming Pool

No Fee



Yoga Room

\$80.00
Flat rate per reservation



SHARED Billiard Room

No Fee

Let's Get Digital and Build Happier, Healthier Condo Communities

By Phillip Livingston



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Winter can be hard enough without a global pandemic. People are tired of restrictions, tired of dealing with their noisy neighbours, and tired of being stuck in their units. But in Ontario, COVID-19 case numbers continue to climb, so we are being asked to sit tight for a while longer.

January has always been the month for kickstarting health routines. Gyms become hotspots before and after work, and you're lucky to find a free treadmill at 6 pm. Not so this year. All Ontario gyms, including condo gyms, ceased operations as the entire province went into lockdown after Christmas.

Once gyms are permitted to open again, people will be itching to get in, and Condo boards and managers should have a plan in place for when this occurs. Some corporations may

come to the difficult conclusion that they cannot safely reopen their gyms. While there may be pushback from residents, know that there is nothing wrong with taking this route. Every corporation has the option to keep non-essential facilities such as gyms closed during the pandemic. Other buildings may be ready to reopen as soon as they get the green light. Either way, condo corporations cannot be silent on this matter. Residents will need regular communication about amenities, as well as other matters that will impact them in the coming months so that they don't check out or lash out. The fees that residents pay go towards many things, including amenities, and residents are already upset about having to pay for facilities that were closed for much of 2020.

Communication has always been important for condo communities, but it's even more essential now. If you are reopening your gym to residents, how

will you ensure they are up-to-date on the latest rules or policies? How will you ensure overcrowding doesn't occur? Using a safe and accessible form of digital communication, boards and property managers can safely reopen gyms and other facilities and allow residents to run, lift, and sweat again.

Digital Communication Methods are More Flexible and Efficient

Rules and policies regarding shared facilities are constantly changing, which is one reason why it makes sense to maintain communications through a residents' portal, property management software, or email. Most condos require applicants to include their email addresses when applying for a unit, making it easier to invite them to sign up for a digital communications platform. It's so much easier, not to mention cost-effective, to send your residents

messages about new gym policies online than it is to print and hand-deliver them. If a rule changes overnight, you can let everyone know within minutes.

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Create a Process for Safe Amenity Bookings by Making Timeslots Available Online

Another great thing about digital communications is that you can help owners solve problems without having to speak to them in person. Take online amenity bookings as an example. There are a number of software programs that will facilitate gym bookings for condo communities. Admins can create time slots and limit the number of people who can book at one time to ensure guidelines set out by the province are being followed. Some platforms will even allow you to limit the number of times a resident can book the gym each week and block off cleaning time automatically so that cleaning staff don't have to work around gymgoers. Best of all, you can send out an electronic message to residents explaining everything from gym

times, capacity limitations, and how to use the amenity booking feature or program. You can also provide them with a contact address should they have more questions or concerns.

While people won't be able to use the gym in the same way that they did before the pandemic, this process at least

gives them an opportunity to start their workout routines again. Being physically active is important to your residents' physical and mental health. And when it's cold outside, the gym may act as more of a sanctuary than a workout room to people who need to burn off some stress.

Keeping the Peace

There will almost always be someone who doesn't follow the rules. When this occurs, be vigilant about enforcing them. You can send warning letters to residents and let them know what will happen next if they continue to ignore the rules. This applies to gym usage, the wearing of masks, noise, etc. Enforcing rules is essential as it maintains peace, especially now that most residents are working from home.

Connectivity Through Communication

Digital communication platforms can facilitate two-way communication between residents, as well. Discussion forums give residents the opportunity to socialize or suggest new ideas to encourage community building during this challenging time. Some residents live alone, and a community forum could be the thing they need to help them feel less isolated.

Forums can be public, or you can use a more secure forum through condo management software so that you can still moderate conversations when necessary.

Conclusion

Even after the pandemic has ended, digital communications will become the norm, not the exception. Incorporating digital tools in your communication strategy saves money, allows for more immediate notices, helps keep your community informed and connected, and lets management achieve more in less time. Furthermore, it will help eliminate long lineups for the treadmills and allow residents to use their time more efficiently. ■

Phillip Livingston is the marketing manager for Condo Control. He works closely with condo boards and managers and has acquired a deep understanding of the challenges they face and the solutions they need. Phillip uses strategy and creativity to help his clients stay ahead of the curve and control their properties. condocontrolcentral.com

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