

# cm

condominium manager

Winter 2022

Keeping your condo  
community informed  
and engaged

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to maximize your verbal and  
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Staying cool in heated  
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## Magazine Theme

Communication is an essential skill required for the management and daily operations of a condominium community. Communicating effectively is the key to building successful relationships between boards, owners, or contractors.

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MANAGING CONTRACTORS, SUPPLIERS, AND EXPECTATIONS

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The Editor  
CM Condominium Manager  
c/o ACMO  
2121 Argentea Rd., Suite 101  
Mississauga, Ontario L5N 2X4  
Tel: 905-826-6890/1-800-265-3263  
Fax: 905-607-6172  
Email: [editor@acmo.org](mailto:editor@acmo.org)  
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## Core Values

ACMO is committed to the recognition, promotion and support of Professional Condominium Managers across Ontario, through education, member services, public awareness and a strict adherence to the highest ethical standards.

CM Condominium Manager magazine is the flagship quarterly publication of the Association of Condominium Managers of Ontario (ACMO) and for more than 30 years has served as the leading source of in-depth coverage of industry news, issues, information, education and best practices for condominium management professionals and service providers.

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# The Dawning of a New Era

October 31, 2022, marks the end of an era. This was the last day ACMO's industry-leading condominium management courses were accepted for the purposes of general licensing in Ontario. While licensing education is now the exclusive purview of the industry regulator, the groundbreaking work of countless ACMO members over the past 45 years led the way in building, transforming, and professionalizing condominium management in Ontario. It is this missionary work that paved the way for industry regulation.



The origins of ACMO's condominium management courses go back to the late 1970s when the condo industry was unregulated, unprofessional, and characterized as the "wild, wild west," and not in a good way! ACMO's founders realized that education and professional standards were the only way to tame the industry. As a result, in 1978, ACMO formed an education committee charged with the responsibility of developing proprietary courses in condominium management. In turn, these unprecedented courses became the educational foundation for the industry's first professional designation, ACMO's Registered Condominium Manager (RCM) designation, launched in 1983 and still the gold standard in condo management.

Jump forward to 2017, and the Ontario government stepped in to regulate the condominium industry by creating two new regulatory bodies, the Condominium Authority of Ontario (CAO) and the Condominium Management Regulatory Authority of

Ontario (CMRAO). Recognizing ACMO's leadership and expertise in condo management education, the government entered into a 5-year partnership with ACMO, designating our four courses as the mandatory educational requirement to attain a general license. The vast majority of licensed managers working today completed ACMO's management courses, either through our partner colleges (in person or online) or via in-house programs conducted by ACMO 2000 Certified management companies.

When one era ends, another begins, and again ACMO is leading the way by shifting focus to developing high-quality continuing education to give managers the knowledge they need to succeed in the ever-changing condominium world. This new era started last fall with the launch of ACMO Certificate Courses, a series of advanced online courses that delve into specific condominium management topics. Next year, Certificate Courses will form the basis of our more robust RCM designation program designed to exceed minimum licensing requirements by far, as it has since inception.

While October 31 went by without fanfare, the Ontario government and the entire condominium sector owe an incredible debt of gratitude to countless volunteers, instructors and staff that facilitated the education and development of today's managers. Let's all say thank you to those pioneers who built the field while looking forward to a new and improved era of condominium management. ■



Paul B. MacDonald  
Executive Director

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# Meeting Expectations

Governances are the structures and processes designed to ensure stewardship with accountability, responsiveness, stability, equity, and inclusiveness under the rule of law, with broad-based participation. So, why is good governance so difficult to achieve in Condoland? Or perhaps more appropriately asked, why do homeowners perceive their communities to be failing them on the governance front more than ever?

I have been a professional condominium manager for more than 20 years. However, I have only had properties under my purview requisition meetings in the last year or less. Yet, owners' rights to requisition a meeting have been embedded in the *Condominium Act*, 1998, for decades. We have more robust governance in Ontario compared to past years with the advent of the licensing of Condominium Managers, mandatory education of condominium directors, and the creation of the Condominium Management Regulatory Authority of Ontario (CMRAO) and the Condominium Authority of Ontario (CAO).



I might flippantly attribute the increase to the frequency of communications from the CAO telling homeowners of their right to requisition a meeting and how to do it.

I sometimes attribute this increase in requisitions to a COVID-19 hangover. Condominium owners and residents may want to take back control after the perceived lack of it felt during pandemic restrictions. Or they might be frustrated with escalating costs, higher utility prices, and increased project costs and delays (the result of supply and materials shortages and a glut of deferred work), all of which are uncontrollable by the manager and the board.

I could attribute the intense desire for more meetings in general (both information and requisitioned meetings) to the sheer complexity of the issues being addressed by condominiums, their boards and their managers. Such complex information is poorly received in notices or newsletters and is better understood when face-to-face interaction is possible.

Ultimately, the problem boils down to misunderstanding the authority of the

board, management and owners. With rights come responsibilities.

Achieving good governance should not be so difficult. Setting and meeting expectations should require straightforward obedience to regular, routinized standard rules of engagement. However, are the expectations changing? I dare say yes.

In routinely emphasizing the obligations of the condominium corporation, we have failed to identify the homeowner's responsibilities. I think the time has come for an Owner's Code of Ethics. Directors and managers have them. Notwithstanding, we have a duty to deliver professional service that homeowners will be satisfied with only once governance mechanisms are in place – ones designed to protect them if they understand them. More support from the CMRAO and the CAO should be identified and reinforced regarding owners' engagement with their boards. We are all on the same team. ■

Katherine Gow, RCM  
ACMO President

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# Snapshot



## A quick glance at what's happening with ACO and the condominium industry.

### Promoting the Profession

This year's 9-month digital advertising campaign featuring Google search and display ads and LinkedIn ads generated a whopping 6 million digital impressions and over 33,600 click-throughs to the ACO website. Visitors were clicking through for information on hiring RCMs and ACO 2000 Certified firms, joining ACO, earning the RCM designation, and subscribing to our e-newsletter.

Overall, a successful campaign for raising awareness of ACO and the value of our professional designations amongst management firms, condo boards, owners and the general public.

### Congratulations New RCMs

ACO wishes to recognize those members who recently achieved their RCM designation and have demonstrated a commitment to professionalism and a higher standard of condominium management. Congratulations!

*Tiffany van Dodewaard, RCM*

### ACO Condominium Management Award Recipients

Each year, ACO honours exceptional achievements in the condominium industry with its annual awards of excellence. This year's awards ceremony was held once again at an in-person luncheon on Friday, November 25, 2022, after two years of virtual ceremonies.

Individuals were nominated by fellow peers, board members, professionals, and trades in various award categories. Submissions were reviewed and evaluated by the 2022 Awards Selection Committee, comprised of Catherine Murdock, RCM (Chair), Armand Conant, Babak Aradalan, RCM, James Davidson, Peter Leong, Sally Thompson, and Vincent Bennett, RCM.

We are proud to recognize the following recipients of the ACO Condominium Management Awards. Congratulations to all the nominees and winners!

**Manager of the Year** was presented to **Ramazan Kellezi, RCM**, who has demonstrated an extraordinary commitment and dedication to professional condominium property management.

**Leader of the Year** was presented to **Laurie Adams, RCM**, who has demonstrated team leadership in business practices and/or in the development of professional property managers.

**The Donna Farr Award** was presented to **Claudia Damaren, RCM, Jennifer Ricci, RCM and Michael Sentenai, RCM**, ACO instructors who have demonstrated outstanding dedication to delivering the Registered Condominium Manager program.

**The Genesis Award** was presented to **Alfaz Rahemtulla, RCM**, who is new in the profession and has displayed exceptional service.

And the **Special Recognition Award** was presented to **Allan Rosenberg, Life RCM**, in recognition of their achievements that have positively impacted the condominium industry in Ontario.

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## **ACMO 2000 CERTIFICATION PROGRAM**

ACMO 2000 certifications are awarded to condominium management companies that have successfully completed the certification process as well as the required compliance audits.

The mission of the ACMO 2000 Certification Program is to equip condominium management firms with standards to provide a higher level of service and integrity by:

- developing a series of core operational standards and procedures;
- certifying those firms who meet the standards;
- providing a structure for ongoing measurement of the firm's performance; and
- promoting the benefits of ACMO 2000 Certification to the broader condominium community.

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## Welcome New ACMO Members

ACMO extends a warm welcome to our newest members who have chosen to elevate their careers or business by joining our professional community. We look forward to a mutually prosperous relationship.

### Individual Members

Babajide Adigun  
Matilda Agalliu  
Jonathan Bull  
Eric Cantelo  
Henry Cheung  
Aimee Jubinville  
Sureaga Karunakaran  
Yadunath Mattai  
Karen Rubin  
Media Taha  
Aziz Virani  
Edgar Zamudio Gomez

### Student Members

Jennifer Buwaka  
Ava Bo Cui  
Hamed Ghomashchi  
Polly Horvay  
Jie Huang  
Evan Lloyd  
Milena Prenda  
Vidur Takru  
Caroline Vandenberg

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Ontario Restoration Services  
RDQ Engineering Inc.  
Remodel Canada Carpet  
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Repair and Run Inc.  
RideAlike Inc.  
TNR Industrial Doors

## Another Successful ACMO Certificate Course in the Books

On September 21st, 2022, ACMO presented the "Advanced Plumbing and Water Management" Certificate Course with 59 condominium managers participating. The 3-hour online course was led by instructor Adam Bartman, Executive VP of Field Operations at Eddy Solutions. The certificate course was very well received, with 92% of participants suggesting that they would recommend the course to their peers and 94.5% suggesting it represented very good to excellent value.

One participant noted, "I was very happy with the practical application of the contents. Most of the webinars are based in theoretical talks." Another participant shared that the course was "very informative and a great way to learn. Adam was fantastic in his presentation. Adam makes a complicated and "hidden" core of the building matter on plumbing so precisely and easily understandable. Thumbs up to the team for organizing it."

The ACMO Certificate Program consists of a series of continuing education courses providing a higher level of knowledge in specific condominium management topics in alignment with the CMRAO Competency Profile. Gaining a certificate builds on the knowledge managers acquired through the RCM program and further differentiates them from those who only get the minimum General Licence. Starting in 2023, successfully completing Certificate Courses will become a requirement for those wishing to obtain the RCM designation.

ACMO will continue to introduce more courses under the Certificate Program covering a wide range of topics condominium managers need to stay current and competitive in today's market.

The following condominium managers successfully obtained their "Advanced Plumbing and Water Management" certificate:

Ahmed Alkaddour	Caroline M. Vandenberg
Babak Ardalan	Keren McDonald
Eileen Boles	Jyoti Mehta
Karen Boux	Monica Murad
Lissa A. Breault	Pranvera Musaraj
Feng-Yuan Chuang	Ram Nadarajah
Gail Cote	Phil Nagle
Mary Rose Darmanin	Kiera Niezen
Shane De Zilva	Ganna Oreshyna
Maria Delgado	George Pifti
Heather Dickenson	Olha Pulnyeva
Sally-Anne Dooman	Robert John Pusching
Annette Fleury	Ismail Qorri
Junida Galanxhi	Lamali Rajab
Cristina Gambino	Maria Laura Rasile
Catherine Greig	Nancy Roy
Nir Gurau	Michael Royston
Estela Imas	Gowri Shakthi
Lea Imfeld	Yvonne Sim
Lisa Grace Ioannou	James Stewart
Silvana Koka	Maria Tashos
Sheila Krivsky	Amber Taylor
Danielle L Casha	Carolin VandenHaak
Justina Lee	Grace Wu
Sachin Lingaratnam	Susan Zolfaghari
Selena Livingstone	

## 2022 Condoland Infographic

The ever-popular Condoland, a snapshot of the condominium industry in Ontario with updated statistics for 2022, is now available for download on the ACMO website.



# *Congratulations!*

*to the Graduating RCM Class of 2022*

ACMO wishes to recognize those managers who achieved their RCM designation this year, and have demonstrated a commitment to professionalism and a higher standard of condominium management.

RCM



Christopher Andrews



Shiva Behmanesh



Michael Bouchard



Feng-Yuan (Victor)  
Chuang



Christina Cirillo



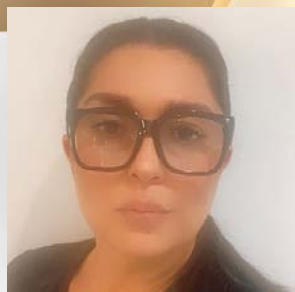
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Nicholas Conroy



Lazar Cvetkovski



Sepideh (Sophia)  
Khajehnouri



Asadullah Khan



Sheila Krivsky



Tom Lila





Jamie-Leigh  
McArthur



Doris Qoshja



Ka Yee Lo



Melissa Eleanor  
MacDonald



Alfaz Rahemtulla



Katina Rama



John Recker



Shantaram Sapkota



Artan Shahinaj



Yvonne Sim



Nicholas Alexander  
Dodds Sinclair



Lisa Skirten



Danielle Thomson

Not Pictured:  
Arber Kila  
Arpad Kovacs  
Maryna Mikhalkovich  
Stephanie Pollard  
Lamali Rajab  
Julia Margarida Santos  
Artan Tushe  
Tiffany Van Dodewaard

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**Linda Murphy-Kreimes**  
Senior Business Manager  
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# Your Residents Are Calling

Consumers are more demanding of products and services than ever, expecting instant responses and immediate results.

Businesses are under pressure to deliver and increasingly turn to technology to speed up customer communication via chatbots, SMS texts, and social media messaging. But is that how your residents want to communicate with you? Probably not. New research from Forbes Inc. suggests that more than half (56%) of business owners surveyed in 2021 said the most popular way for their customers to contact them was by telephone, with call volumes increasing by 16% since 2019. Notwithstanding advancements in digital customer service communication, this suggests that people want the reassurance of a human voice at the other end of the line.

### What is Phone Etiquette, and Why is it Important?

Proper phone etiquette includes your use of greetings, word choice, tone

of voice, active listening and general manners on the phone. A caller's first impression of you is often over the phone, and how you communicate with them might decide how the rest of the call proceeds. The benefits of maintaining good phone etiquette as you provide customer service include the following:

- **Making a good, long-lasting first impression:** Callers judge your business by how you interact with them, handle their requests, or answer their questions. Good communication is key to establishing and maintaining a positive relationship.

- **Compensating for the lack of nonverbal cues:** It can be challenging to communicate with customers over the phone since neither party can pick up on body language and other nonverbal cues. Setting phone etiquette standards and training your team to adhere to them can compensate for this gap.

- **Developing a great reputation:** Top-notch customer service can enhance your reputation. That's because 72% of your customers tell at least six people about their best customer service experiences.

- **Retaining relationships:** Bad phone etiquette leads to poor customer service, and bad customer service leads to conflict.

- **Identifying issues:** Great phone etiquette can expand beyond solving immediate problems by uncovering the underlying causes of an issue or by identifying other needs.

*Key takeaway: Your phone etiquette could be the difference between a pleasant interaction and the makings of a bad day.*

### Some Tips for Phone Etiquette That Will Improve the Quality of your Phone Calls Include:

#### 1. Be consistent.

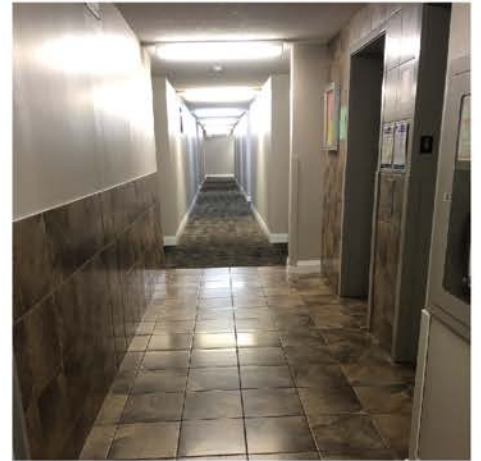
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caller wants to know they reached the correct number. Your “hello” should be brief. Train staff to use a professional greeting that mentions the corporation and personal name.

**2. Never interrupt.**

This one is pretty much self-explanatory. You wouldn’t interrupt someone in a regular conversation, so why would you interrupt your caller? Be patient and wait for them to finish before you speak.

**3. Get to know the hold button.**

Does everyone in your office know how to use your phone system? The hold button is your friend. Never put the phone to your chest to muffle the mouthpiece so you can speak among yourselves. The caller may hear things you don’t want them to hear.

**4. Answer a call within three rings**

You should always be available to callers if your position entails always being available. That means staying

focused and answering calls immediately; don’t keep a resident waiting after a string of endless ringing or send them to voicemail when they expect an answer.

**5. Keep residents informed.**

Tell the resident what your next steps will be. For example, say, “Mrs. Smith, here’s what I’m going to do. After we hang up, I’ll immediately call the heating contractor. It may take a few minutes to reach them because it is late. If you don’t receive a call from someone in the next 30 minutes, please call this number back.”

**6. Smile when you talk to customers.**

Did you know you can hear a smile? Research shows that smiling while speaking on the phone makes a detectable difference in your tone of voice, so make sure your team sounds happy to talk to residents.

**7. Eliminate background noise.**

Background noise is extremely distracting and unprofessional. To eliminate unwanted sounds, ensure you are in a quiet area, like a private office, and don’t use the speakerphone. If your typical workspace happens to be too loud, try taking the call elsewhere or asking those around you to lower their voices.

**8. Ask questions and take notes.**

If you’re unsure who the caller is and what they need from you, ask them. Make sure you jot down information like their name, number, unit number, etc., and precisely understand what they’re asking or requesting.

The value of the telephone is only as good as the person who answers it. Good relationships are at the heart of excellent customer service. Whether interacting with a long-term resident or a first-time buyer, ensure your caller has a positive experience. ■

**Linda Murphy-Kreimes** is the Senior Business Manager at Property Answer. She has worked with property management companies and associated trades for the past 27 years. Property Answer is a Division of Alliance Answer, a Kingston-based answering service that holds numerous awards for service excellence. Linda takes incredible pride in working for a company that strives to ensure client needs are our first priority. [propertyanswer.ca](http://propertyanswer.ca)



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# Essential Skills for Successful Communication

Essential skills for effective communication require email etiquette, understanding client preferences and adapting out of our comfort zone to accommodate communication requirements for our clients. Listening to the client and ensuring you empathize and understand their feelings is paramount. The problem is that we don't listen to understand; we listen to reply. Knowing the clients ensures that you have accurate records, and programming the client information into whatever technology or phone logs you must, ensures you know who your client is when they call.

When something goes wrong, pick up the phone and own it. Accountability is everything and will earn respect and trust. Good communication bridges

confusion and clarity, so communicate for clarity and resolve the confusion.

### Phone Etiquette

Phone calls require focus, listening skills, conciseness, clarity, note-taking, and follow-up with any parties that need to be part of the communication. It's often said that you can hear a smile, not just see it. Try smiling when talking, even through tough phone calls or complaints, but practice caution to ensure it's not misinterpreted as sarcasm. Communication is always a work in progress, but practice makes perfect.

Be cautious with humour, don't shoot from the hip, especially when you don't know the client. When in doubt, leave humour out. Do not use sarcasm or abbreviations. These leave

an impression of uncertainty; you must know the right time and situation to use humour.

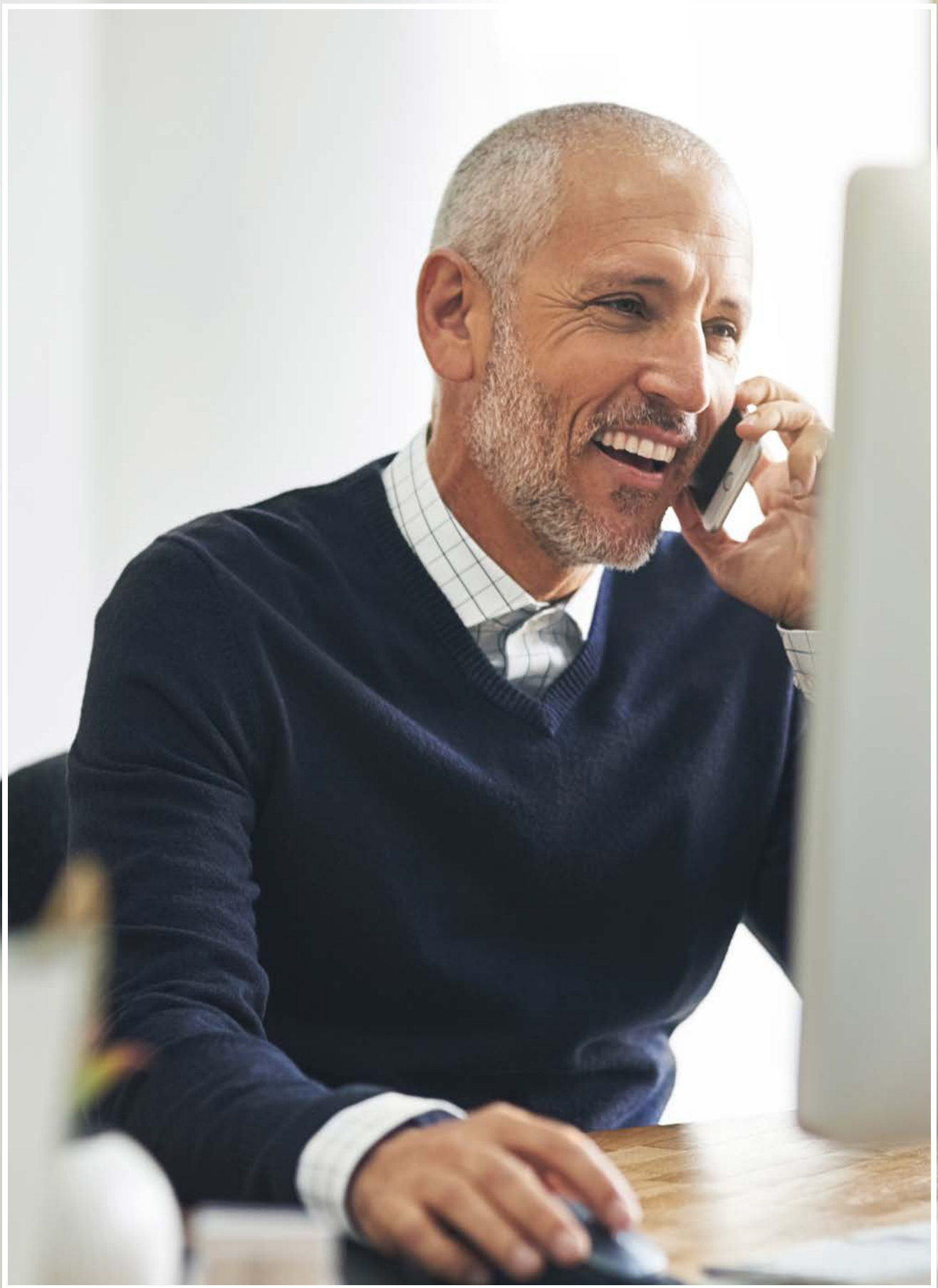
### Dictation

It's truly an efficient way to save time; however, it can have flaws! Proofreading is always the last step before hitting that button because we can't depend on technology to do this for us. Simple words such as "*there, their, or they're*" can easily be misused. While responding promptly is appreciated, accuracy is more important.

### Never Rush Communication

It takes time and practice to master essential skills for successful communication. When all the details are communicated and understood,







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you will receive better responses and quicker solutions to problems. Effective and successful communication allows for solid decision-making and more productivity. The day-to-day is busy enough; there isn't enough time to go back and forth over topics. Effective communication allows for better control, a better professional image, and a more robust business relationship with board members, staff, unit owners, contractors, trades, and your internal team.

Effective verbal, written or visual

communication will allow for better conflict management. It doesn't hurt to brainstorm how to communicate differently with industry colleagues. If you are working on big projects, call on the other professional parties involved. If you need information about financial positions or engineering, call on your financial advisors, lenders and engineers to help you with the appropriate language to ensure this is explained well and in layperson's terms for your audience. Don't be afraid to ask them to support your notices. Most

companies want to see the notices before sending them to your clients to ensure the message is correctly communicated. They are, after all, the professionals in those projects and tasks, and you must be part of the team. This reduces follow-up return communications and creates productivity. Ensure you understand the message before sending it to prevent communication barriers, and this will reduce misunderstandings and solve conflicts.

### In-person Communication

Ensure you are listening well. If you have in-person conversations, try to read the face of the person you are communicating with, listen to the tones being used, and only speak when required and do not interrupt or speak over them. Always remain calm, and turn discussions into conversations, not lectures. However, stay confident and be credible and trustworthy. If you are unsure, say so, and ensure the audience that you will investigate and follow up with a response. But most importantly, be true to your answers and acknowledge when you don't know. We can be a wealth of knowledge, but we are not Google.

We start our lives with picture books and colours; sometimes, it is essential to take it back to this step and provide visual communication. Just think of site signage. It often has a picture because the last thing you want is someone having to read and understand a paragraph of information. You want to get the message across to anyone receiving it immediately. You'd be surprised how much of your audience will go directly to the visual portion of your communication rather than the paragraphs of written information. Studies show that the average human brain retains approximately only 10% of what is read but 30% of what is seen. Consider this when preparing your communications. ■

**Courtney Cartmill**, RCM, is the Vice President of Client Relations & Senior Condominium Manager with High-Point Property Management Corp. She is a Registered Condominium Manager and carries her General License with the CMRAO. Courtney is currently an ACO Board Member and a mentor for Condominium Managers and is actively involved in many aspects of the Condominium Industry.  
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**Joel Berkovitz**  
Partner  
Shibley Righton LLP



**Armand Conant**  
Partner  
Shibley Righton LLP

# Communicating to Owners Going Above & Beyond the Legal Requirements

A condominium corporation is required by law to communicate with its owners about certain matters. Managers are by now familiar with the prescribed information certificates required by the 2017 amendments to the *Condominium Act, 1998* (the “Act”) – Periodic Information Certificates (PIC), Information Certificate Updates (ICU) and New Owner Information Certificates (NOIC). These are in addition to other prescribed communications, such as status certificates and notices to owners required by various sections of the Act.

While it is easy to see these prescribed communications as a ‘box-checking’ exercise, we would encourage managers and boards to view them as an opportunity to communicate with and educate their

owners and, in some cases, to advance the condominium’s legal interests.

Take, for example, a hallway refurbishment project. Some parts of this project may constitute an improvement to the common elements. In many cases, section 97 of the Act will require the board to provide a notice to the owners that describes the cost of the project, how it will be paid, and that owners can requisition a meeting to vote on the project if they wish. But this often leaves out the most essential information; why the project is undertaken.

We often encourage our clients to include the ‘why’ of the project in the section 97 notice. An owner seeing that the board is spending hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars to upgrade hallways

might see this as unnecessary. However, when placed in the appropriate context that, for example, the current hallway finishings are out-of-date or in disrepair, a reputable design firm has prepared the new design, and the project was subject to a competitive tendering process, the project might be much more palatable. Of course, drawing the connection between the investment in the building and its effect on unit values is always beneficial.

### Periodic Information Certificate

Another example is the PIC. The information provided in this form includes a list of upcoming reserve fund projects and their expected cost. While it would be easy to simply list this information and consider the job completed, this is



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another instance where going beyond the minimum requirements can be helpful. For example, suppose significant projects will take place in the coming year. It may be worthwhile to include a covering note with the PIC drawing the owner's attention to this, providing the estimated timing for when these projects will take place, and providing some basic information about expected impacts (e.g. noise, dust, loss of use of facilities).

### The Status Certificate

Also, consider the status certificate. The Act prescribes specific minimum requirements as to what must be disclosed in a status certificate. But going beyond these minimum requirements can often help shield the condominium from legal liability. For example, even though this is not a prescribed requirement, we often suggest including a disclaimer that the corporation has not inspected the unit to determine if there are any violations of the Act or the corporation's declaration, by-laws, or rules. If such breaches are discovered after the new owner takes title to the unit, this language can be relied upon to oblige the new owner to address the problems, even if the former owner caused them.

### Declaration, By-laws and Rules

Also note that corporations must include a copy of their declaration, by-laws and rules with the status certificate. But many potential owners will not read these documents, and those that do may not fully understand their implications. For this reason, many corporations choose

to draw attention to their most impactful rules in the status certificate. For example, it is much better for a potential owner who is a smoker to find out in the status certificate, which is usually issued very early in the purchasing process, that there is no smoking in the building than to learn this after they move into the building and start to receive complaints from neighbours and management.

Lastly, consider the much-maligned prescribed form of proxy. Even after five years of use, many owners complain that this form is difficult to understand and fill out, and we see many submitted incorrectly. It takes little effort to include a short guide or explanation on how to fill out the proxy correctly with the meeting package. Most management companies and condominium law firms can provide these guides free of charge.

### Open Communication

Prescribed communications should not be the *only* communications that owners receive. When possible, timely and thorough information about the happenings in the community should be provided year-round and in various formats as required (e.g. newsletters, town hall meetings). It is often said that the biggest problem in our industry is that owners do not understand what it means to own a condominium unit. Thus, everything that can reasonably be done to educate owners will only benefit the community and the running of the corporation. Like in real estate, the three most important aspects are "Location, Location, Location," but for condominium

corporations, they are "Communicate, Communicate, Communicate."

Given that prescribed communications are required by law, it only seems natural to use them in a productive fashion that best serves the community, without significantly increasing the workload on management and the boards. We encourage all to try their best. ■

**Joel Berkovitz** is a partner in Shibley Righton's Condominium Law group. Joel's condominium law practice includes all aspects of condominium law, focusing on drafting and negotiating contracts for condominium corporations, advising Boards, corporate governance, and compliance matters. Joel is also a member of the Canadian Condominium Institute (CCI) and the Association of Condo Managers of Ontario (ACMO).

**Armand Conant** heads up the condominium law group of Shibley Righton LLP and represents numerous condominium corporations of all types across Ontario. Armand is a Past-President of CCI (Toronto) and Past Chair of its Legislative Committee, on which he remains a contributing member. He co-chaired the joint Legislative Committee, which submitted the legislative brief with recommendations for changes to the Condominium Act, 1998. Armand is a recipient of ACMO's Special Recognition Award, President's Award, and Associate Member of the Year Award. In 2020, he also received CCI-T's Distinguished Service Award. [shibleyrighton.com](http://shibleyrighton.com)



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**Bill Colucci, RCM**  
Senior Property Manager

# Silk Glove or Iron Gauntlet

The classic comparison of a silk glove vs. an iron gauntlet regarding communication techniques is paramount in condominium management communication.

Most people are generous and patient. However, out of the hundreds of owners and tenants that property managers deal with, there may be a few who will use every potential matter to criticize. In our profession we interact with many diverse people, from lawyers to auditors, engineers, and other top professionals, to residents/owners who may still be learning basic communication skills in English. It is a challenging task, and I cannot criticize those less fluent in English since we, regardless

of our education, are illiterate in thousands of other languages. This can become an issue when people may be new to living near each other.

We deal with a broad spectrum of people daily, and as we study and learn this very daunting trade, we often rise to a higher level of literate communication. Condominium managers cannot simply remain street-level intellects while quickly reading contracts, financials, and legislation. This can harm our communications with those less familiar with the English language or condominium issues. We do not want to condescend, and this often involves board directors; however, we must communicate, and often in writing.

### A Friendly Reminder

Part of keeping it simple is communicating gently but functionally. Not only is this the best way to speak, but as we all know, any issue can potentially end up in court. Having had the experience of witnessing several court cases, I can attest that the judges appreciate and approve of constructive discipline on homeowners.

So how do we enforce Rules, Bylaws, and the *Condominium Act* while maintaining a gentle hand and not falling victim to writing a legal and officious letter when senior Ms. McGillicuty improperly recycles?

What I have found most helpful is practical, progressive discipline. I







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begin with a system I call the “friendly reminder.” I have deliberately crafted forms that look as different from a legal letter as possible. The reminders are 8.5” x 5.5” rather than an 8.5” x 11” paper. They are in assorted colours and have appropriate graphics. The text always starts with, “Did you forget...? to recycle; no construction noise on Sundays; dogs must be walked on leash... etc.”

It is not only our job but in our own best interest to de-escalate all potential conflicts because in property management, as in life, the best choice is always to avoid conflict.

Depending on our relationship with an owner or awareness of them, we may start the communication with a phone call. Most people will not likely become upset over a friendly word of advice. Others take everything as criticism and are challenged by any suggestion. It is a delicate balance.

We probably spend 80% of our efforts dealing with “people issues.” My humanities degree helps more than all my technical training combined in this social context. Understanding how boilers function is secondary to knowing how to interpret between the boiler mechanic and the resident with cold floors. Technical learning teaches us what to say; people skills teach us how to say it.

### A Friendly Letter

If or when the friendly reminder does not obtain the desired result, I

like to follow up with a “friendly letter.” Keep it social, not legal. Let the person know that you are on their side. Empathize sincerely; No threats of legal action or imposing penalties. Both the friendly reminder and the letter need time to work. Regretfully, if the problem is acute and immediate action is required, we would have to use the telephone or a more urgent letter. And please, do not apologize! You did not make the pipe leak or whatever the case may be. Saying it is “regrettable” is neutral, infers empathy, and suggests neither guilt nor blame.

### The Last Chance

When the situation requires it, you can follow up on the friendly letter with a more neutral letter, beginning with “Regretfully, your dog still barks while you are at work...” etc. At this point, it is good to suggest that the situation is best resolved quickly for the sake of the owner and the corporation. Let the owner know you do not want conflict and love dogs, but if an amicable solution cannot be reached, you will have no choice but to engage the corporation’s lawyer. Charging the responsible unit owner for the legal letter is usually appropriate. There are different times and situations for this, but your lawyer can best advise you. Inform your board of the situation, as they may be exposed to chatter in the elevator or directly engaged by the culpable owner.

### Contacting a Lawyer

I recommend engaging the lawyers only if and when the third communication fails. A legal letter is usually not friendly. Lawyers follow styles required by law, where sounding severe may be inescapable.

Once the matter has gone to the lawyer, it is no longer a minor issue. Failure to respond to the lawyer will usually result in legal enforcement, such as the CAT or the court system.

The philosophy behind my enforcement process is to correct errant behaviour, not to punish or victimize anyone. Many people just do not think of the consequences of their actions.

Should it become necessary to go to the CAT or the courts, the judge or arbitrator will likely recognize that management (on behalf of the corporation) tried to correct the problem in a friendly, non-threatening manner.

When dealing with residents and owners in a condominium building, a well-planned and gentle tap with a silk-gloved hand can achieve better results than an awkward punch with an iron gauntlet. ■

**William (Bill) Colucci**, RCM, OLCM, began his career in commercial property management in 1984. He has been in the condominium management industry since 2001 and is a member of ACMO and CCI. Bill also holds a BES Certificate from Seneca College and a Heating Technician Certificate from George Brown College.



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**Anthony Ing**  
Co-Founder,  
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# How to Stay Cool in Heated Conversations

I was recently in a virtual condo AGM where an owner asked about adding a night shift for security. The owner, a young woman, mentioned that thefts were reported in the underground parking and parcels had been stolen and suggested that adding a night guard could mitigate these thefts. The manager merely responded by saying that adding another guard would be cost-prohibitive. Within moments, the issue escalated into a 10-minute argument about how the board did not care about the safety or the needs of the owners.

Whether the issue is resident safety, unsightly garbage, common element deficiencies, or a chargeback, managers are regularly caught in heated conversations with irate owners and residents. Although de-escalating conflict is a hallmark of a great property manager, some property managers can struggle to communicate disagreements or differences without heightening tension. After all, there isn't

a simple one-size-fits-all method to take away an owner's anger when they feel like they've been wronged.

### Why Heated Conversations Take Place

One hallmark of a heated conversation is that people disagree. That being said, disagreement is not necessarily bad, nor does it always lead to a heated discussion. However, when an owner cares a lot about an issue, an argument may arise when the manager does not agree with what the owner wants them to agree with, and the manager doesn't do what the owner needs them to do. Often at the end of the day, both parties are left feeling frustrated, hurt, or misunderstood, with the argument ready to boil over again in the near future.

Another hallmark of a heated conversation is that managers will distill the issue to think the owners are the problem and that owners distill the issue down to believing the manager is the problem. Ultimately the

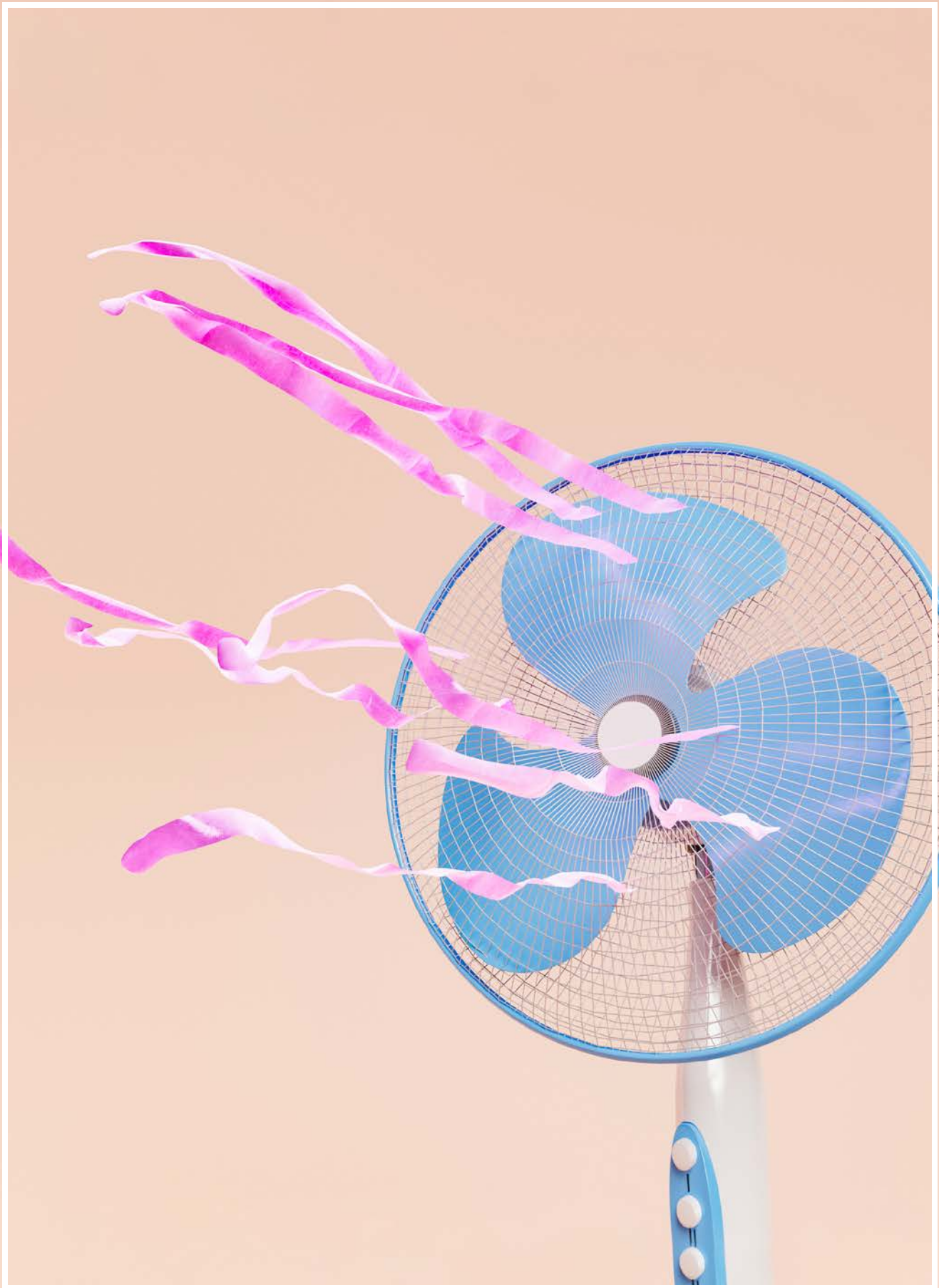
problem is "them," and both sides are left thinking, "they're selfish," "they're ignorant," or "they're controlling." If that's the issue, it's no wonder we all end up arguing!

### Transitioning to a Learning Conversation

While it may be difficult during the moment, if we can turn the conversation into a learning discussion, then we can keep it focused on the issue instead of degenerating into an unproductive "us versus them" scenario. We must not assume we know everything we need to know to formulate a response. We must explore what other information the person might have that we don't have. We must work to understand and acknowledge the owner's perceptions, interpretations and values more and avoid the inclination to prove a point or get them to do what you want.

We must assume that each party will bring different information and perspec-







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tives to the table. If we turn a potentially heated conversation into a productive learning discussion, we need to assume there is much we can learn from each other. Simply put, we must initially operate under the belief that there are likely vital things that each side doesn't know, and we must validate and acknowledge those gaps before we can come to a resolution.

A significant concern about validating and acknowledging an owner's perceptions, interpretations and values are that the manager may confuse that with agreeing with the owner. It's important to understand that you can still disagree with someone even if you validate their perspective. You are simply acknowledging the issue's importance to the owner, and it's valuable to hear their entire side of the story. You'll find that listening to them will ultimately help them listen to you later.

### Disarming Using a Learning Stance

Changing how you deal with heated conversations takes work, and mastering it is likely beyond the scope of this article. However, below I present some minor changes to how we communicate

that will guide the discussion toward a learning conversation and demonstrate that you value the other person or their perspectives.

- "Thanks for raising your concern. This is an important issue, and I hope you can help me understand your perspective better."
- "Given that you may come at this with a different perspective than me, I hope we can discuss this openly to understand your problem better."
- "I appreciate you making me aware of this. Can you say a little bit more about how you see things?"

To show that you're acknowledging their perspective and attempting to learn more, paraphrase what they said to check your understanding and validate that you've listened. Again, listening to them will ultimately help them listen to you later.

- "If I understand you correctly, the problem is \_\_\_\_\_. Is this correct?"
- "Based on what you said, this is about \_\_\_\_\_."
- "I'm beginning to get a sense for how you see things. You believe \_\_\_\_\_, is that correct?"

By listening and paraphrasing, you

hopefully remove the owner's need to keep repeating their issue and put yourself in a good position to continue sharing your perspective. Once you believe you've heard their perspective (and this can take time, so be patient!), you may be ready to share your story and move towards a mutually agreeable solution.

Changing the conversation to one focused on learning means inviting the other person to help us figure things out. You will run into situations where deciphering what happened is more complex than we initially expected. No matter the level of training, heated conversations will always be challenging. However, if you bring a learning mindset to a heated conversation, you can reduce defensiveness, stay focused on the issue and work towards solving the problem. ■

**Anthony Ing** is the Co-Founder of Condonexus, a leading electronic proxy collection, virtual meeting host, and notice delivery service provider. Condonexus is trusted to host over a thousand virtual owners' meetings across 50+ property management companies in Ontario. [condonexus.com](http://condonexus.com)



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# THE CONDO CONFERENCE

2022 was the year of getting back to normal. Restaurants, concerts, theatres, and public spaces started opening up again, and the Condominium Conference, jointly hosted by ACMO and CCI Toronto, was back in full swing! This year's event was all about reconnecting with peers and getting back to business as almost 800 people attended the education sessions and walked the trade show.

Education took centre stage. The various sessions were a highlight as moderators and panellists showed their expertise, and topics had something for everyone. There were many informative and enlightening "Rapid Fire" Q&A sessions where delegates could ask experts their questions.

Keynote speaker Steve Patterson, the host of CBC's The Debaters and award-winning comedian, brought

his lighthearted humour to the conference. His entertaining stories were a delightful addition to the day's events.

The trade show floor was buzzing with activity as 170 exhibitors, professional trades and service providers engaged with delegates. It was good to finally have in-person conversations again and share some new developments in the industry.

The sold-out networking event at The Rec Room was very successful, with attendees having the chance to meet and greet fellow managers, directors, and exhibitors, play a few games of pool, and enjoy some tasty appetizers.

Thanks are extended to everyone who attended. It was great to see everyone in person again. A special shout-out to those involved in the event's planning and to conference partner Deo Condominium Law.



CCI-T President, Murray Johnson. ACMO President, Katherine Gow, RCM



Best Booth Award Winners, Shibley Righton LLP















**Natalia Polis, BA, JD**  
Lawyer,  
Lash Condo Law

# Are You Dealing with Owner Complaints Effectively?

Condo managers know this truth – some owners can be professional complainers and are the most frequent visitors to the management office. Should you lock the door and close the blinds? The CMRAO lists “responding to owner complaints” as a typical example of a condominium manager’s responsibilities. As a manager, you would not want an unresolved complaint or unaddressed owner inquiry to be escalated as an ethics violation to ACMO or the CMRAO complaint process. This could result in severe reprimand and, worse case, your licence or ACMO designation being revoked.

### Management Agreement – Your Go-to Source

Management agreements are legal documents that set out the expectations of the hiring condominium corporation for the duties and obligations that the manager/management company is expected to perform. They include a comprehensive

list of the responsibilities related to the management of the affairs of the condominium corporation on behalf of the board of directors for a set period of time. Semi-regular reviews of the management agreement are recommended to reinforce the manager’s duties and, importantly, what the board is required to do to enable a manager to carry out their duties.

In addition to a host of managerial responsibilities, a well-defined management agreement will often include a section that details the expectation that the manager deal with all owner requests, inquiries and complaints in a timely fashion and then document these owner requests in writing and forward to the board, such as:

#### **Sample 1:**

#### **Relations with Owners and Residents**

a) The manager shall promptly and courteously deal with all reasonable requests or complaints by the board, any Owner or resident or any

mortgagee of a unit relating to the management of the Property or the duties or obligations of the manager pursuant hereto, and record in writing any such requests or complaints and the eventual disposition thereof;

b) The manager shall maintain business-like relations with owners and residents whose service requests relating to the common elements shall be received, considered and recorded in a systematic fashion in order to show the action taken with respect to each request. Complaints relating to common elements, the maintenance and repair of which are the responsibility of the corporation, shall be attended to by the manager in as prompt and diligent a manner as possible; and

c) The manager shall acknowledge the receipt of a request or complaint within one (1) business day.

From time to time, complaints or inquiries can be dealt with at the manag-

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er's discretion and may not require escalation to the board. These may be issues such as why the elevator is still not working after day 2 of onsite repairs. Or, too many non-visitor cars use visitor parking spaces without proper approval. In general, a manager should be able to deal with some common element complaints related to repairs and maintenance without involving the board.

Complaints that are more serious should be appropriately investigated and documented. Boards must be kept apprised of critical issues regarding noise, smoke and odours, harassment, records, pets etc. Conscientious condo managers will also offer recommendations to the board in dealing with serious unit owner complaints.

### Is There Ever a Reason to Disregard an Owner Complaint?

On occasion in a manager's career, the board of directors may advise you to disregard an owner's complaint. This presents a challenging situation that could become fraught with conflict. When a board gives instructions contrary to your specific obligation under the management agreement and against the responsibilities set out by the CMRAO for the licence you hold, it would be wise to get legal counsel to advise on your next steps. It may be as simple as sending a reminder letter to the board.

In any case, condo managers should take all complaints seriously, even those that may seem frivolous. Make time to meet with the unit owner and tell them you will look into the matter. Respond in writing, telling them your next steps. If you fail to investigate an owner complaint, you are failing to manage the corporation as outlined in the management agreement. You may even be costing the corporation money if an actual common element repair is needed to satisfy the complaint and/or if the unit owner pursues legal action against the corporation. Furthermore, ignoring a complaint could jeopardize your hard-earned condominium manager licence.

### Level Up on Your Owner Communication

Thorough management agreements will also address the communication to owners as the condo manager's responsibility. In addition to the distribution

of electronic or print newsletters and other pertinent information sheets and packages, it would be beneficial to include, from time to time, articles that outline the manager's responsibilities in carrying out the duties of the corporation, including the complaints investigation and response process. Educating owners about the manager's role and responsibilities is a good thing and helps them understand the working relationship between the board and the property manager.

#### Sample 2:

##### Communication to the owners

- Forthwith, after their enactment, communicate to all owners any implementation or changes to the By-laws or Rules or amendments thereto. Forthwith, after notification by the board, arrange the location of all general meetings of owners and undertake the preparation and distribution of all notices for the meeting, agenda and proxy forms together with minutes of the previous meeting, and any other material or reports pertinent to the agenda for the meeting and arrange for ballot boxes and other meeting essentials.

- Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, at the expense of the corporation, prepare and deliver Periodic Information Certificates, Information Certificate Updates and New Owner Information Certificates, as required, in accordance with Section 26.3 of the Act and as prescribed by the regulations.

- The manager shall respond to owner inquiries in a timely manner.

In conclusion, people will be who they are. While some complaints can be trivial, address them all in a detailed manner, and you can rest assured that you have fulfilled your duties as set out in the management agreement and under the CMRAO and ACMO. ■

**Natalia Polis**, BA, JD, is a lawyer at Lash Condo Law. Prior to attending law school, Natalia grew up working at her family's condo management company, where she developed a keen interest in everything condo. She offers a unique perspective and understands the difficulties managers often face. Natalia uses this perspective to provide her clients with practical and cost-driven results. [lashcondolaw.com](http://lashcondolaw.com)



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**Tania Haluk, RCM**  
Vice-President of Operations,  
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# What Did You Say?

This article will offer strategies to avoid hot water by staying cool and address why soft skills are becoming increasingly crucial in Condoland.

Let's review a hypothetical customer service scenario.

You enter a store to exchange a product. After a difficult search for staff, you find a group of employees chatting casually, and no one acknowledges your presence. You tap one of the people and get a sigh and an eye roll when it is noticed you have a return. The refund is processed, and you are dismissed without question. After this transaction, the person returns to the group chat, satisfied they have done their job.

### What Do You Do Next?

- a. Explain you didn't want a refund; you needed to make an exchange.
- b. Take your refund and shop elsewhere.

c. Leave quietly and go home to post a terrible review online.

d. Forget about it; you recognize that good customer service is a thing of the past, and nobody cares anymore. Regardless of the outcome, this establishment has lost a customer and possibly hurt its reputation.

Now change the situation to a condominium resident coming to the office to register a concern. They now feel how you felt in the retail situation, but the difference is that they are in their home, not in a retail shop. We are all human and have off days; however, we cannot allow that to impact our interactions with our customers – the owners and residents. Let's break down how the interaction could have improved with better 'ABCD' options.

**A – Acknowledge** someone who approaches you. No one wants to feel they are interrupting or being a

nuisance. If you are on the phone or otherwise engaged, you can signal to the person that they will have your attention next. If you know, you will be a while with your current engagement, take a pause, get the person's contact information and let them know you will call them with your full attention after. Answering or sending emails while someone is trying to talk to you will not establish confidence that you want to help them or are even listening.

**B – Be respectful.** Everyone in a condo is your client, regardless of ownership status. Listening to a concern means giving it your genuine attention without interruption or reaction until the other person finishes speaking.

**C – Clarify** what the person wants or needs. By asking questions, it shows you are interested in helping them, and any misunderstandings can also be sorted out.





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**D – Deliver** what was agreed upon in a reasonable amount of time. Not everything can be resolved in five minutes; give yourself the required time to devise a solution or provide resources if the matter needs self-resolution by the resident. Setting timelines will help manage expectations and reduce the need for repeated follow-ups by the resident.

### Soft Skills

Communication skills include both verbal and non-verbal messaging. Even if your tone is calm, what you say can be triggering. As a child, your parents may have ended a heated debate or further discussion with ‘because I said so.’ The condo version is ‘because that’s the rule’ – a sure-fire phrase to escalate instead of diffuse a situation. A helpful tactic would be empathizing with the current feelings and collaborating on solving the problem. Consider that it may be time to rewrite the rules if they are legitimately ineffective or unnecessary. Negative verbal communication can also be by phone. People can hear your tone and sense when you are not paying attention to what they are saying – think

typing sounds in the background or two conversations happening at once. It will reflect in your voice if you smile or think of something pleasant before answering a call. We have two ears and one mouth, so we should listen twice as much as we speak!

Body language or non-verbal communication can also have similar triggering effects. You may cross your arms because it is comfortable, but others perceive it as defensive. Hand positions are also important – hands in your pockets mean you want to leave, and hands under a desk mean you are hiding something. Eye contact is tricky because you need to be engaged; however, in some cultures, too much direct eye contact is deemed aggressive.

What is said versus what is heard or understood is a common miscommunication, especially in email, as you cannot infer tone; except your own, depending on your mood when you read it. Sometimes it’s better to make a call than start a lengthy email chain with increasing frustration. As managers, we are bombarded with emails and tasked with providing quick replies lest

we have a complaint filed against us. A short, curt, dismissive response without addressing or solving the issue is equally frustrating from the receiving end.

We are all surrounded by distractions; take a minute to recognize this before responding. People have different reference points, so there is value in taking a few moments to give context and explanation to validate the concern reported in addition to the response provided. A new condo resident is not expected to read and understand the legal jargon in volumes of documents – they just want a welcoming and comfortable home. It is up to us as managers to help show them the way with dignity and respect.

Everyone wins when you remember to be excellent to yourselves and each other! ■

**Tania Haluk**, RCM, is the Vice-President of Operations for the Toronto Office of Wilson Blanchard Management Inc. Her decades of condo experience include holding the RCM designation since 1997 and Past-President of CCI-Toronto and Area Chapter.  
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**Mark Charlinski**  
Chief Revenue Officer  
Condo Control

# What Does Effective Condo Communication Look Like For 2023?

It probably goes without saying, but this topic is so important for condominium managers that we will say it anyway. Effective communication is a critical component of every condominium's success. It is essential to keep the community informed and engaged. It helps managers and boards make more impactful decisions, making the community run more efficiently. And it can keep residents happy!

### **It is Easier and Harder to Reach Residents**

The paradox of communication is that it has gotten simpler and more complex, and property managers should consider this as we approach 2023. Residents have multiple communication streams to check each day. They are often overwhelmed by the amount of email they receive, so even if you send out emails

in addition to stuffing mailboxes with memos and letters, they aren't necessarily getting or retaining the information.

Communication preferences also vary, so communities must consider using multiple methods to maximize their reach. Email, text, voice memos and other forms of electronic communication should all be utilized to ensure community members stay informed. This may sound like time-consuming work, but automation tools and software can streamline these processes.

### **It's Essential to Prioritize Effective Communication**

Better communication leads to better condo operations, but there's more to it than that. There's money at stake. Effective communication will reduce costly errors and save the management staff's time, ultimately reducing labour costs.

And good communication will help with owner engagement leading to stronger turnouts at meetings. By reaching a quorum right away, boards can move ahead with the condo business instead of investing more resources trying to get owners to show up. In short, most corporations can't afford to endure the impacts of poor communication.

### **Communication Strategies for 2023**

1. Use multiple communication channels: Email is inexpensive, targeted, immediate and familiar. Even if some of your residents don't have a computer, they almost certainly have a phone and email account. Email is still one of the best ways to reach condo residents and board members, but these emails need to be short, concise, and have a specific call to action if someone's response is





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required. It's even better if that email is sent through a resident portal or condominium management platform. That's because recipients will recognize the sender (it usually appears as the name of the building) and will be less likely to overlook or delete the message. They also provide an ability to see what messages have been sent over time through easy reporting.

Furthermore, these online platforms serve professionals like you very well. They allow busy condominium managers to draft and schedule messages, attach documents, and send information to the entire community without manually adding email addresses. Better yet, some systems let managers use those same email messages and will also deliver the messages as phone alerts, texts and automated voice messages. You cover all of your bases with these three communication methods, but you can always print and mail letters to anyone who requests to receive physical copies of notices. Sometimes, you may not even use email at all but send community updates via the resident portal instead, freeing up resident inboxes while still delivering key messages.

2. Segment recipients to avoid information overload: There is such a thing as information overload. If too much irrelevant information comes in, members will become less attentive and more apathetic. That's why segmenting recipients into groups is so invaluable. Again, many condo management platforms will allow managers to sort staff, board members and residents into different groups. This way, sensitive messages can

be sent to board members, concierge, and security staff. You could even organize recipients by towers or floors so that only those who a water shutoff or elevator repair will impact will be alerted.

3. People will pay more attention to photos and videos: Video-based content is more attractive than any other type. People would almost always rather watch something than read something. We realize you may not have the time or desire to start a TikTok channel for your buildings. Still, you may consider incorporating small videos or photos when sharing information about important events or updates. You can easily attach multimedia files to the emails you send out. Your residents will pay more attention to what you're saying, and you might even find it fun to do something creative.

### Don't Forget; Communication is a Two-way Street

We've highlighted a few solid communication strategies, but all facilitate one-way communication from condo managers to boards, staff, or residents. To keep clients and residents happy, you will need to allow them to share their concerns and ideas.

Providing residents and board members with a tool that allows them to submit requests electronically, not through email, ensures that requests stay visible, can be tracked, and are promptly resolved.

Creating discussion forums for the community can be an optimal solution to get the honest feedback managers require without having to devote too much time

collecting it. Some members who don't usually attend meetings may be more inclined to participate in forums since they can think about what they want to say and contribute from the comfort of their homes. You can use a condo management platform that offers this functionality or try out a free and familiar platform like Facebook. Both allow you to keep forums free of harmful posts since you can moderate each post before it goes public.

### Conclusion

When you think about your 2023 goals, keep communication as one of your main priorities. It is not just a matter of happiness for residents. Think of the cost-saving benefits to property managers, front desk and security staff, and board members. While people like being happy, saving money makes them even happier. Consider using a variety of one- and two-way communication methods to maximize your reach and inspire engagement in the community. Ideally, you'll want to utilize software that can streamline your communication efforts and save you valuable time. ■

**Mark Charlinski** is the new Chief Revenue Officer of Condo Control, joining earlier this year. He brings a wealth of knowledge from hospitality, an industry with similar challenges to condo management. Mark's goal is to maximize clients' return on investment in Condo Control by helping solve the problems condo communities face today and in the future. [condocontrol.com](http://condocontrol.com)

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**Jeff Lack**  
Vice President,  
Communications and Technology  
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# Technology Tools to Aid in Effective Communication

One of the keys to effective communication is that it must be timely. Informing your residents that the water will be shut off the day after it happens, or an entire month before it happens, is ineffective because it is not a well-timed message.

To ensure your communications are managed in a timely manner, you must be efficient and organized. Yet, many fail to utilize the available tools to help us manage our daily responsibilities and communications. Let's review some best practices for organizing, planning, prioritizing and efficiently managing your daily duties so you can communicate effectively.

*(While many of the tips in this article refer to specific software and email as a means of communication, the fundamen-*

*tals can be applied to other systems and communication methods.)*

### Getting Organized

A lot of the anxiety, frustrations and stress in our lives are created by not managing our time well. Proper time management doesn't just happen by circumstance – it takes effort.

The first step in getting organized is to determine where you're currently spending most of your time and effort, and more importantly, where you can be more efficient. While MS Outlook has a "Journal" functionality that could be used, I find it too cumbersome to be useful – I'd recommend a simple time journal. It doesn't have to be complicated; the simpler, the better.

Monitor yourself in 15-minute increments for a few weeks. I would

recommend tracking this for both your work and personal time, which will highlight opportunities to be more focused, an ever-increasing challenge in today's world of remote work.

Use key questions to analyze the results. Here are some sample questions, though you can use your own as you see fit:

- a. What activities can be eliminated?
- b. What can be delegated to someone else?
- c. Where can I create efficiencies in what I'm doing?
- d. What am I doing that wastes other people's time?
- e. Where am I mixing personal & work commitments?

This will help you summarize areas where you can improve your time management to stay more organized,





thereby helping you be more efficient with your communications.

## Planning

Planning is a critical part of being a successful condominium manager. “Failing to plan is planning to fail” is especially relevant when communicating effectively. Many recurring communications must be sent by a manager – AGM notices, PICs, board packages, resident notices, etc. Each has a different schedule, so when we don’t properly plan for these events and their related communications, we are constantly reactive and risk missing something.

Using the calendar in Outlook to plan for these ensures your planning is directly linked to your primary communication source (email) and is available remotely. Tips for effectively using your calendar include:

- Schedule your annual & monthly communications. You may not know precisely when your AGM will be held, but you should know when you will have to start planning it.
- Schedule fixed commitments such as meetings and time to prepare for those events. For example, there is no

excuse for being caught unprepared for a Board meeting that is pre-scheduled in your calendar.

- Make a mental note of your high & low energy times of the day and use them to your advantage. Block off high-energy times for optimal creativity, such as crafting communications, and schedule meetings during your more idle times to stay productive.
- Beware of little things that use precious time, such as responding to emails, and schedule blocks of time for these quick tasks to help stay focussed.
- Learn to use your digital calendar’s features, such as automatic reminders, so you don’t miss anything.

## Prioritize

Calendars are great for long-term planning and more time-consuming items but are inefficient for smaller tasks. There’s no sense wasting time adding every 5-minute job to your calendar – this is where the task or to-do list comes in.

There are several options available, including the functionality in MS Outlook. Using the tools bundled with your email and calendar does have the advantage

of easy integration for features such as flagging emails. However, the relatively simplistic features may not be robust enough for some users. Check out the Apple or Google Play store if your task list needs additional details or options. In fact, there are so many available that the challenge is finding what works for you.

*(A note of caution: I would recommend against using your calendar as a dual appointment scheduler and task list, as it’s far too easy to “carry things forward” that you didn’t get done today. Likewise, be careful about using your email inbox as a task list – there is a tendency to lose track of older emails and lose focus by constantly reviewing and re-reading emails.)*

## The Eisenhower Matrix

The Eisenhower Matrix is more of a method to organize your tasks than a specific software, though some apps are built around this concept. The idea is to categorize all your tasks based on importance and urgency, so for a property manager, it may look like this:

- Items in Quadrant 1 are both urgent and important, so you should do them immediately – perhaps responding to a

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flood in your building, for example.

- Quadrant 2 items are important but not as urgent, so you should schedule a time to get these done, possibly even transferring these to your calendar. Communicating about your fire safety inspection is certainly important, but if you plan for it properly, it won't become urgent.

- Quadrant 3 items are your less important items that have specific deadlines – for example, your meeting minutes for the board. Where possible, delegate these items to someone else.

- And Items in Quadrant 4 are neither urgent nor important, which begs the question – why is it on your tasks list at all? (That being said, remember that just because something isn't important to you, doesn't mean that it's not important to someone else).

Your focus should be on Quadrant 2 to complete tasks before they become urgent (Quadrant 1). If you're always working in Quadrants 1 & 3, you will never be efficient, not to mention you will always feel under pressure. Quadrants 3 & 4 may be the "easy" tasks to accomplish, but they aren't where your focus as a manager should be. Even within the individual Quadrants, tasks need to be prioritized so you can accomplish the most important goals on your list.

## Email Focus

We've reviewed how to get organized (time tracker), plan (calendar) and prioritize (task list), but what about the other big elephant in the room... email! Effective email management has become increasingly challenging, especially in remote working environments and with a significant increase in volume, so here are some strategies to stay focused and tackle your emails.

- Turn off your email notifications (sounds & pop-ups), so you can focus on the current task at hand and do it well. Resist the temptation to monitor your email constantly. Check it at set points throughout the day to balance productivity with responsiveness.

- Keep separate work and personal email accounts. It's too easy to lose focus when you mix the two.

- Create a folder structure to file your email appropriately. Your goal is to keep your inbox organized so you can be efficient and not re-read emails multiple times.

- Learn how to set email rules to file

and organize your incoming emails automatically. (Be aware that this may result in multiple inboxes or folders to check if you automate unread emails from somewhere other than your inbox.)

- Take advantage of email flags and reminders to avoid reviewing old emails to see what you have and have not completed yet.

- Make use of custom categories to make emails easier to review and sort. This may mean one folder per client or perhaps one folder per project. Categories in Outlook are customizable, so you can use them as you see fit to meet your needs.

Most importantly, find a happy medium between staying on top of your email and letting your email become a distraction. Following the 4 D's of email, management can help to ensure your inbox stays organized so you can communicate more effectively. For every email, decide if you need to:

1. **Do it.** Act immediately, either because it is urgent or it would be inefficient not to do so.

2. **Delegate to someone else.** Where possible or more practical, delegate appropriately.

3. **Defer.** This involves appropriately utilizing your calendar or task list.

4. **Delete.** Let's face it, many of the emails we get are unnecessary.

Hopefully, the above suggestions will help you stay organized so you can accomplish one of your most significant responsibilities as a property manager – communicating effectively. ■

**Jeff Lack** is the Vice President of Communications and Technology for Wilson Blanchard Management, An Associa® Company (WB). He is responsible for the company's CRM & accounting systems, communications, internal operating systems and technology solutions for WB's team and clients. Before joining WB in 2004, Jeff worked in public accounting as an audit manager for a mid-sized firm for eight years. From 2017-2022, Jeff was an instructor for the "Financial Planning for Condominium Managers" course through ACMO and now teaches the "Condominium Management Financials" course through Humber College as part of the CMRAO licensing requirements. [wilsonblanchard.com](http://wilsonblanchard.com)



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# Engaging your Board Throughout the Entire Meeting

Let's imagine a typical meeting together. Ahead of the meeting, the manager creates an agenda of topics that they know are important, along with a management report. The agenda is then sent to the board members just one day before the meeting. During the meeting, it becomes evident that the board hasn't had time to read the management report, financials, or the previous minutes. They have misunderstandings about what needs to be accomplished during the meeting, and they want to talk about everything except what's on the agenda. It looks like it will be a lengthy, disorganized, and tiring meeting.

### How do we Make Meetings More Focused and Productive?

We must understand that the meeting doesn't just occur during the actual meet-

ing time slot – it's an entire process called the Meeting Cycle. Each part requires attention and participation.

The Meeting Cycle involves three elements:

1. Preparation for the meeting (agenda and management reports);
2. The meeting itself (discussion and decisions); and
3. Outcomes from the meeting (meeting minutes and actions to be taken).

The crucial, often missing element is that each meeting member needs to have an active (but structured) role in all three parts of the Meeting Cycle.

#### 1. Preparation for the Meeting:

**Agenda:** When creating the agenda, a draft should be provided to the board in advance of the final meeting package. This allows each member to add

any topics that are important to them and topics the manager may have missed or not known. These suggested topics can be added at the end of the 'New Business' section on the final agenda, along with the person's name. This way, when all On-Going Business and New Business (as determined by the manager) have been discussed, the board can then proceed with their additional items. If time is running short, some items can be deferred to a later date or not discussed depending on overall interest in the topic. Because each participant's topics are included on the final agenda, they will be less likely to interrupt another part of the meeting to bring up their own issue.

Also, remember that an agenda should contain all unresolved items from the previous meeting as On-Going Business, even if it's just to provide a simple



update. Otherwise, they should be noted as Completed Business. This maintains the topic flow from one meeting to the next while preventing interruptions about topics that appear to be missing.

*Tip: Except for items like the financial review and minutes review, keep the agenda simple with only three main sections: New Business, On-Going Business, and Completed Business. This will temporally track topics from start to finish over a series of multiple meetings.*

**Management Report:** The management report, although solely created by the manager, is a vital tool to help each participant understand why a topic is being discussed, what is being asked of them, or what is being recommended. A common mistake is to include an item on the agenda without any supporting information or guidance. It leaves room for the participants to speculate and create ideas that run off track. Instead, provide members with the correct information upfront, and they will come to the meeting equipped with better ideas to make faster, more effective decisions.

## 2. The Meeting Itself:

**Discussion:** During the discussion, each board member should be asked if they have anything to say. Using an open-ended question like “does anyone else have anything to add or ask?” is perfect. This ensures that everyone is encouraged to voice their thoughts and contribute to the conversation.

**Decisions:** When making a decision, it is essential to ensure that all participants are encouraged to weigh in. This especially applies to the vote of approval. Often, a majority will approve an item, but someone will remain silent. This can lead to the impression that the vote was unanimous when it was not; therefore, it's best to ask if everyone is clear on the proposal/resolution and if there are any objections. This reduces misunderstandings in the future. If someone objects against a majority approval, it's a good practice to ask whether they wish for their specific objection to be recorded in the minutes.

## 3. What Comes After the Meeting:

**Meeting Minutes:** The draft meeting minutes should be sent to the board members as soon as they are received. This allows participants to remind themselves of the recent meeting's outcomes, identify any corrections that may be needed, and ensure that their ideas are reflected correctly. If the minutes are only seen at the next meeting, the events of the meeting will be harder to remember, and the minutes will be more difficult to verify or correct; providing the minutes well in advance makes the approval process easier and faster at the next meeting.

**Actions To Be Taken:** The meeting minutes will also contain action items. Providing the minutes to all participants well in advance serves to remind each meeting participant of any responsibilities

ties they may have agreed to take part in. This leads to more items being completed before the next meeting, which ultimately means less re-tread at the next meeting, which is always a good thing.

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Several days before the meeting, the board receives a finalized agenda. Each member adds one or two items that are important to them. At the meeting, they approve the minutes right away, having read them well in advance. Because everyone is clear on the topics and recommendations from management before the meeting even begins, most items are discussed quickly, with good decisions being made almost effortlessly. Amazingly, there is little to no contention between the board members. The meeting follows the agenda in order, with the board waiting until all of the manager's topics are concluded before discussing their own. The meeting then ends in record time! ■

**Tim Bolivar** began as a Condominium Manager in 2013, ultimately overseeing a portfolio of properties across the GTA as a Registered Condominium Manager for six years. Following that, Tim became the Service Coordinator for Minutes On-Time, a professional condominium minute-taking service, where he now acts as their General Manager. [minutesontime.com](http://minutesontime.com)

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# Viewpoint

## 5 Years of Freaking Awful Forms

November 1, 2022, marked a dubious milestone for Ontario condominium corporations, their unit owners, directors and the professionals who manage, counsel and service them.



*Chris  
Jaglowitz*

It was the fifth anniversary of the freaking awful condo forms becoming mandatory in Ontario. Since then, condo managers and lawyers have endured the displeasure of handling those forms almost every working day.

In February 2018, I shared my thoughts on the first three months of using the forms. It wasn't pretty. Unfortunately, almost all those comments remain perfectly applicable. There has been little or no change since then, and most of us know several ways each form is confusing or doesn't address common scenarios.

And the long list of ways in which the forms are inadequate is still growing.

Worse, all the effort and frustration in preparing these lousy forms is wasted because the product is often ignored by the people they were made for – the owners – who usually cannot figure them out or don't care.

So to me, this fifth anniversary represents:

- Five years that most people still misunderstand how to fill out parts of the forms correctly or do not know what the forms mean.
- Five years of managers and lawyers being unable to easily explain how the forms should be filled out correctly, as there's no easy pinpointing.
- Five years of users unable to work with (or even view) these forms on a mobile device or without crashing desktop software.

- Five years of owners losing their voting rights by incorrectly completing their paper proxies for meetings.
- Five years of added costs of serving certificates and documents that many owners do not want and do not understand.
- Five years of many new types of legal disputes arising over things that used to be simple or uncontentious.
- Five years during which the Condo Authority of Ontario has abjectly failed to secure any appreciable improvement to the forms, either by asking the government to make changes or making its own changes since taking carriage of the forms in January 2020.

And here's another remarkable fact: The COVID-19 pandemic, which drastically changed many aspects of our entire civilization (including how condo corporations operate!), made absolutely no dent in the condo forms. If even Covid brings no changes to these forms, then we are truly forsaken.

Let us hope for improvements before the next five years pass us by.

**Update!** In response to a version of this article posted on LinkedIn, CAO said: "The forms are a priority for the CAO this year, and we will be working with the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery to make them more user-friendly." Time to dust off our lists and share the feedback. Be sure to share your comments with the CMRAO. ■

**Chris Jaglowitz** is the principal of Common Ground Condo Law and has cursed about the condo forms since November 2017.  
[commongroundcondolaw.ca](http://commongroundcondolaw.ca)



# Electrical Preventative Maintenance

By Joe Calabria, Vice President, Engineering & Operations, Trace Consulting Group Ltd.



Joe Calabria

Building owners and property managers should be aware of the importance of preventative maintenance procedures for electrical distribution and emergency generators and the responsibility to protect their longevity, safety, and critical infrastructure to avoid unexpected equipment failure. Professional engineers can provide the recommended measures to ensure your electrical distribution and emergency systems are safe, along with experienced electrical contractors.

Regular testing and preventative maintenance on electrical distribution equipment will ensure that electrical distribution and associated life safety equipment continue to perform at optimum levels. This helps to protect the electrical safety of all building occupants during routine and emergency operations.

When a facility's main switchboard or power supply fails, having a functioning emergency generator can make all the difference between a safe or unsafe environment. A failure in a building's primary power source can create hazardous conditions if the building's backup generator system is not functioning.

## The CSA C282 Standard

A CSA C282 standard describes how to design, install, operate and maintain emergency generators. Typically, this standard covers any power-generation systems used in buildings that provide an emergency power supply in case of power failure.

Electrical Maintenance Plan (EPM) is meant to prevent equipment failures which account for millions of dollars in damage and lost business every year. As electrical infrastructure ages, this problem will worsen unless preventative steps are taken through a routine EPM. A planned EPM program allows the equipment

owner to schedule the system outage at a time of their choosing before significant problems occur. An EPM should be developed, implemented, and completed by properly trained and qualified individuals. Actual maintenance activities and frequencies should be based on the specific operations and conditions of the equipment. Any EPM program should be performed in accordance with accepted industry standards and safety practices.

## The CSA-Z462 Standard

The workplace electrical safety standard, CSA-Z462, recommends that maintenance plans be created and documented for buildings, which will be verified by the Ministry of Labour and insurance companies as required. Electrical Safety Authority (ESA) has begun a program that will require that a maintenance plan be submitted that includes thermographic scanning and other intrusive testing procedures. Hydro utility companies like



Toronto Hydro require a maintenance plan to be submitted upon request before completing any electrical connections.

The following tests are examples that can help mitigate electrical risks: Power Distribution and circuit breaker tests (thermographic scanning); cable tests (megger); total harmonic distortion (Power quality metering); Power Studies (Short Circuit, Coordination and Arc Flash), updated single line As-builts, Transformer tests (Insulation Resistance and Winding resistance); Relay Tests

(Protective Relay); Motor tests (Vibration Monitoring, Lubrication Analysis, Hi-Pot); Emergency Generator tests (Load Capacity, CSA-282); UPS Testing; Surge Arrestor Watts-Loss testing; Leakage Current Tests and Grounding electrode circuit resistance tests.

Qualified professionals can prepare an optimized electrical maintenance plan that is site-specific to the building based on site investigation findings and their recommendations. Such tests, as mentioned above, are to be carried out by an appro-

priate and qualified electrical contractor and reviewed by a qualified engineer for technical compliance. EPM programs should aim to take into account the minimal impact on building operations and downtime. Deficiencies are to be identified in the Electrical Maintenance Shutdown Program (EMSP) for the electrical contractor to rectify during the implementation phase of the EMSP.

When creating a maintenance plan, your qualified professional engineer will consider the following:

**a. Building Complexity**

i. Services may include deployment of diagnostics testing (such as infrared & insulation resistance testing)

**b. Building Age**

i. To accommodate many changes to the Ontario Electrical Safety Code over the years

**c. Equipment Manufacturers' Service Manuals**

i. Gather records of previous maintenance to compare to each piece of equipment's service manual

**d. Applicable Standards**

- i. CSA Z463-18 "Maintenance of Electrical Systems"
- ii. ANSI/NETA MTS-2007
- iii. NFPA 80B

As enforced by ESA through Rule 12-300 of the Ontario Electrical Safety Code, "As a property Owner or Manager of a multi-unit residential building, you have a regulatory obligation, under the Ontario Electrical Safety Code, to conduct regular maintenance and repairs of all electrical distribution system to ensure they are in safe and proper working order." Several multi-unit residential building system failures in Ontario have led to tenant displacements and significant financial burdens for building owners. Taking a proactive approach to maintenance can lower the risk of a critical incident at substantially less cost to owners than after-the-fact repairs.

By getting the word out in our industry, we can ensure we all work together and keep our buildings electrically safe and properly maintained for years to come. ■

**Joe Calabria**, P.Eng. LEED Green Associate, Vice President of Engineering & Operations at Trace Consulting Group Ltd., has more than 24 years of Electrical Engineering experience in new construction, renovation and retrofit projects. [traceconsultinggroup.com](http://traceconsultinggroup.com)



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# Working with your Residents: Setting Expectations in EV Charging

By Joshua Paras



Joshua Paras

Every year, more Canadians switch to Electric Vehicles (EVs), with Quebec, British Columbia, and Ontario leading the way in vehicle sales and charging infrastructure. With the growing popularity of EVs, more and more residents will expect to be able to charge their vehicles in their own parking spots overnight. By working with your residents and getting ahead of the demand by planning for EV charging now, you can prevent costly time-sensitive work in the future while keeping your residents happy.

## Why EV Charging?

For the first time since 2018, Ontario surpassed British Columbia in new battery EV and plug-in hybrid EV registrations in Q4 2021, putting it in second

place behind Quebec. Statistics Canada's New Motor Vehicle Registrations data shows that Ontario's zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) sales have consistently increased since mid-2020. They are showing no signs of slowing down continuing into Q1 2022, where the province still sits ahead of British Columbia. Based on reports from Transportation Canada and Natural Resources Canada:

- About 40% of light-duty vehicles on Canadian roads could be ZEVs by 2035, with the ratio of ZEVs even higher in Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia. (Canada's Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) sales targets, Transportation Canada)
- As little as 2-15% of Multi-Unit Residential Buildings (MURBs) will have EV charging capability by 2025, making it both highly marketable and desirable for new and existing residents. (Updated Projections of Canada's

Public Charging Infrastructure Needs, Natural Resources Canada and Dunskey Energy + Climate Advisors)

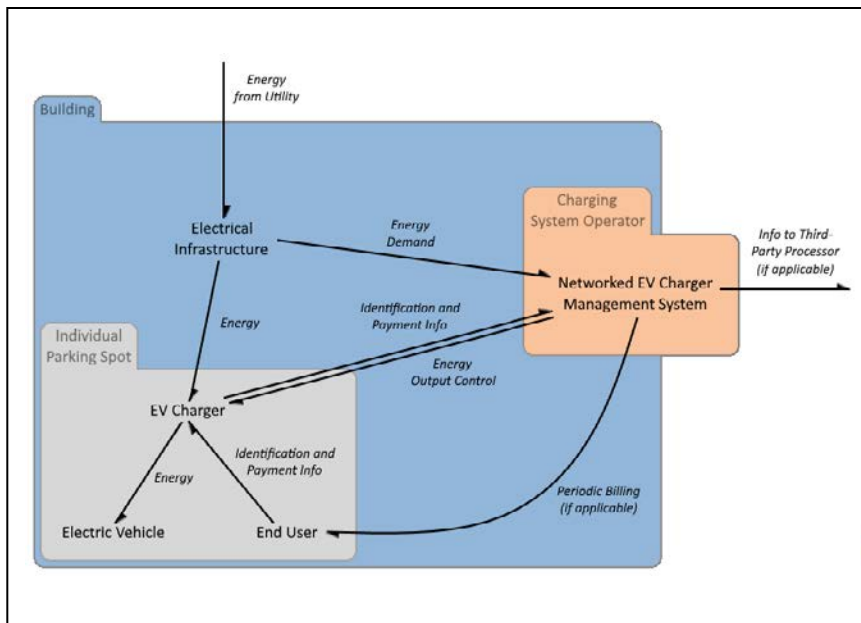
## Getting Started

Installing EV charging in your building is much more than letting residents plug a charger into their parking spot. We recommend a networked EV charging system with load management in MURBs to make the most of your existing spare electrical capacity without expensive utility upgrades. In condos where residents own their chargers, it is important to work with them and define what responsibilities belong to the condo board and the residents' responsibilities.

## Communicating Costs and Where to Draw the Line

A unique challenge in implementing an EV charging system in condos





The above diagram illustrates a typical EV Charging system in a building.

is deciding on ownership of system components and allocating costs accordingly.

One example we have seen is that the condo board covers the EV panel and its connection to the main switchboard, while the resident is responsible for the “last mile run,” including the charger itself. In this arrangement, the residents are responsible for the following:

- Wiring and infrastructure costs from the EV charger system panel to their parking spot
- The condo board and/or charging system operator is responsible for the following:
- Infrastructure and wiring from the main switchboard/electrical room and panel costs
- Centralized EV panel placement for fair resident-run costs
- Internet connectivity for the EV charging system
- User payment and billing system, if applicable
- Potential financial assistance for residents/early adopters that paid more for infrastructure

In addition to the points above, we recommend uniform chargers to simplify troubleshooting in the case of system malfunctions.

When installing a charging system, it is crucial to plan it out in cooperation with your residents. Networked systems are initially more expensive than installing individual chargers on request but

save more in the long run as they are easily expanded and avoid the need for electrical utility upgrades.

### Planning for the Future and Networked Charging Systems

While some buildings may have less immediate EV charging demand, preparing for the inevitable shift to EVs is essential. As mentioned earlier, networked EV charging systems provide scalability for future resident needs while meeting current charging demands.

The first step in implementing any charging system is to conduct a Building Electrical Load study. This will identify your building’s energy use patterns and determine its spare electrical capacity. Normally the spare capacity would act as a hard limit on the number of chargers installed. But, with a networked charging system, the chargers can be controlled to prevent overloading when the system is approaching its limit. With effective use of both the building energy use profile and charging system management, the number of chargers can be significantly extended with minimal impact on charging time.

### Billing

With residents owning the chargers and the condo board potentially operating the system, who is paying the bills?

On the utility side, in most cases, the

building owner pays for the electricity unless the system is metered for the system operator to pay.

On the charger side, it’s a bit more complicated. Ideally, in a private-use scenario, it would be easiest for each charger to be metered for regular, direct billing. However, as of writing this article, Measurement Canada does not allow system operators to bill users directly for the energy used, so operators often choose to bill for the time spent charging, a flat fee or they operate for free. However, by the end of 2022, Measurement Canada hopes to have some form of exception or “dispensation” for level 2 residential chargers (Electric vehicle charging stations, Measurement Canada).

Charging system operators can choose to bill regular users monthly, or if charging is available to guests and the public, they can accept payments on a per-use basis through a third-party payment platform for an additional processing fee. As part of the networked system’s load management, charging times may vary throughout the day depending on the building load, so it is essential to set expectations. Depending on the electrical demand, the system operator can set different charging rates to account for the loss in charger output.

### What do the Experts Have to Say?

It is vital to consult unbiased EV charging experts when starting an EV charging project that will partner with you through the entire process. Each step, from information gathering and demand forecasting, system selection, and installation to the operation, has its own challenges and opportunities that can make or break a project. As EV technology has developed in recent years, so have EV chargers, and experts can help you find the right solution for your needs. ■

**Joshua Paras** is an Energy Specialist at Mann Engineering and is a key member of their energy and EV charging team based in Toronto. With experience in energy projects, government incentives, EV charging and more, he and the team stay updated on developments in EV charging and the energy sector. [mannengineering.com](http://mannengineering.com)



# Signs Of Debt

By Sarah Stachiw



Sarah  
Stachiw

It seems that every time we scroll through our newsfeeds or watch the television these days, all we hear is more bad news. Between the recent interest rate hikes and the threat of more to come, piled on with inflation, shrinkflation and the never-ending food and gas prices, it's no surprise that Canadians are struggling. We know that more families than ever are struggling with debt, and many are too embarrassed to seek financial help. As a condo manager, you likely see signs from some of your owners but may not be aware that they are financially stressed. Let's look into some tell-tale signs that you can watch out for.

One of the first signs you will likely see is condo fees not being paid on time or at all. You may be annoyed or frustrated, but taking a step back is essential. Your owners are not avoiding payments to make things

difficult for you, even though it might feel that way at the moment! They are likely struggling with debt, feeling overwhelmed, and over their heads with worry and bills. Often debtors will avoid their creditors, and, in this case, they will avoid you! They may know your schedule and avoid leaving their suite when they know you are around in case they bump into you. They may be trying to juggle debt by bouncing cheques, transferring balances from one account to another and trying to pay minimum balances. One major problem is when debts aren't paid in full and will likely incur extra costs from credit card interest or bounced cheque fees. If possible, email them and let them know you want to work with them to set a payment plan. Letting them know that you aren't looking to add stress to their situation—whatever it may be – and that you need to have a payment plan set up to settle any outstanding balances.

Another sign that may indicate someone is struggling with debt is additional

mail, which may be stamped “Overdue” or “Past Due.” Often when someone is in debt, it's not just one bill they are avoiding, which means their creditors will be trying to get paid. If the debt continues, you may notice utilities being cut off.

One more significant sign that someone is in debt is that they are selling items or even going to the extremes of selling their condo. Often the first response will be to downsize to create more cash flow. This could be by subletting an extra room, selling off additional items, or choosing to downsize their living arrangement and sell their condo to pay off their debt.

More than half of all Canadians are living paycheck to paycheck. While that may not be a surprise, it means that every person who doesn't have savings is only one emergency away from being unable to handle their monthly bills. This could be anything from a medical expense, loss of a job, death of a loved one, car accident, or one of many



other situations. By keeping relationships with your owners, you will be able to have a handle on who may be one circumstance away from being in debt. You may consider having a social get-together with your owners. Giving people a social setting will not only provide comfort to those who may have been feeling isolated over the pandemic, but the owners will likely be more willing to be open and honest with you if they have a social relationship.

You may know that one of your owners is in debt, but what options do they have to get out of debt?

### Credit Counselling

Credit counselling can provide the tools and knowledge needed to take control of finances or debt from credit cards, payday loans, wage garnishments and more, and builds a secure financial future by better managing debt while staying out of unnecessary debt.

### Debt Consolidation

A debt consolidation loan consolidates all creditors into a single loan.

However, unlike other debt-relief options, the debtor is required to pay back 100% of the debt with interest.

### Consumer Proposal

A debt relief specialist will work within an individual's financial situation and budget to determine the terms of a proposal. Once terms are accepted by the individual and the proposal is submitted, relief is in sight. Right away, creditors must stop all actions. This includes you. If you are informed that an owner has filed for bankruptcy, you cannot call them asking for payment. For the person in debt, this option means no more phone calls, garnished wages, and any active lawsuits end. Typically assets are kept, and the individual has up to five years to pay off the agreed-upon amount.

### Bankruptcy

Before we recommend that someone declares bankruptcy, all other options, such as a Consumer Proposal, are examined in detail. However, in some cases, declaring bankruptcy can be the

best option to eliminate debt and allow the individual to start over with a clean slate. Declaring bankruptcy may be easier than you think. The time to make payments depends upon whether or not they have been previously bankrupt. A Licensed Insolvency Trustee can walk the individual through all the steps of bankruptcy before deciding if this is the right option.

By knowing what resources are available, you may be able to help your condo owners get back on track and keep them as owners! It is important to know that only a Licensed Insolvency can restructure and manage debt under Canada's bankruptcy and insolvency law. Debt can happen to anyone. Knowing there are options and how to seek help will give you the upper hand in managing debt. ■

**Sarah Stachiw** is the Communication PR Specialist with Bromwich+Smith. Sarah has a background in Property Management Marketing and social media. She enjoys sharing financial tips to make financial wellness accessible to all. [bromwichandsmith.com](http://bromwichandsmith.com)



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## Maria Desforbes, RCM

**Designation(s):** RCM, ACCI, General Licence

**Company:** J & W Condominium Management Ltd

**Year entered the profession:** 1997

**Year RCM obtained:** April 21, 2006

**Other education:** I am a graduate from Mohawk College in a general business course and later did part-time studies to obtain a Managerial Certificate at Mohawk College in Hamilton

**Mentor(s) in the industry:** You can say the CCI Golden Horseshoe Chapter members are mentors to me, as I have been a Director on the committee for approximately 18 years.

**What path brought you to a career as a condominium manager?** It was by accident I got into this field. Previously I had worked in health care for 20 years, and then suddenly, they cut back middle management, and I lost my job. At that time, I had just purchased a condo and got elected to the board. The property manager managing my condo stated they were looking for employees and had no luck. They hired two people as managers, and they lasted only a week. In dealing with me, she thought I would do well in this field and asked if I would be interested in giving it a go. I said sure, when do you want me to start? She said yesterday, and then my career path in property management commenced.

I was hired, shadowed a property manager, and then signed up for courses available through ACMO and CCI. I learned from hands-on experience. During that time, with my hands-on experience and the courses I had taken, I signed up to write my RCM exam, which I successfully obtained in 2006.

**How has your membership in ACMO helped you in your career?** Yes, my membership has helped significantly.

The educational material we received, the quarterly *CM Magazine*, which are excellent, and the yearly conferences and courses that I attended made me more knowledgeable in the field. Always great networking opportunities.

**What is one must-have skill for a condominium manager? Why?** The primary must-have skills for a condominium manager are people skills and patience. Especially nowadays, it has been considerably more stressful dealing with some of the residents and boards in

another 5-7 years, no matter the challenges I have encountered! I will not give it up at this time.

**What's your biggest challenge as a manager?** The biggest challenge as a manager is finding tradespeople to do minor repairs. The contractors are having a hard time finding supplies, to begin with, e.g. glass is hard to get, so replacing a sealed unit could take up to 3 months, and clients do not understand why it is taking so long. Also, the costs of supplies, such as wood, glass,

*You can never learn enough, so attending as many conferences, webinars, and educational sessions as possible is essential to keep ahead of the game.*

a condo due to what has been happening with COVID, the economy, and, more notably, more cases of mental illness in the condominium population. As a manager, we tend to take a lot of abuse from different clients, etc., and you must be able to remove yourself and find a way to relax and remove yourself from harmful negative situations.

**Tell us about a personal success story on the job.** There are so many success stories in my life, being in the industry for 25 years, and it isn't easy to highlight one as they are all equally important. The fact that I have stuck to this field for the last 25 years is a success in itself, and I want to stay at least for

and concrete, have increased considerably, and it costs a lot more money to do repairs in a condo. Then you have the challenge of explaining to people why their condo fees have increased considerably.

**What's your favourite part of the job?** My favourite part of the job is meeting so many people from all walks of life, condo owners, professionals such as other Property Managers, lawyers, engineers, contractors, etc. I learn a lot from the professionals I deal with. But every situation is different. I am a people person and enjoy people in general, and if I can help them out, I go the extra mile for them. I enjoy attending all the



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condominium-related conferences and trade shows as I can network with all aspects of people who service the condominium industry. I have been an ACMO member since 2000 (22 years) and have learned much. I've enjoyed attending the yearly conference since 2000 and have not missed any except for the last two years due to COVID.

**Best business advice you ever received.** You can never learn enough, so attending as many conferences, webinars, and educational sessions as possible is essential to keep ahead of the game. As things change almost monthly, you must be on top of your education. But I believe things are changing for the better!

**Answer this statement – I am an RCM because...** I am an RCM because it is important to me. With my many years of experience, I can be proud to have achieved that level in my career! It also shows that I am a professional and expert in the field. I can't believe I have been doing this for the past 25 years - my silver anniversary!

**Where do you see yourself in five years?** Well, I am getting close to retirement, but I plan to keep going in this

field for at least another 5 to 7 years! I cannot see myself not doing this work! I have amazing clients, most of whom I have managed for many years!

**What recent project that you completed can we highlight?** I was involved in a corridor refurbishment in a 19-storey high-rise building in Kitchener that is approximately 45 years old. It made quite a difference in the looks of the building, and the value of the units doubled. We found a company that assessed the property and came up with different options on colours, flooring, wall covering etc. We formed a small committee with a couple of owners, two board members and myself. When the designer brought in the proposal, the committee came up with two options as to what they liked in flooring, wall covering, colour, doors, etc.

Interestingly, everyone was on the same page and wanted the same choices. The work was done well, and the building looks like new. A real estate agent commented that he could not believe how wonderful the site looked and that whoever chose the colour scheme material did an amazing job. ■

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*Georgio Kosmidis, RCM*

In 2008, Arthex decided to focus on progressively growing its business to service the Hamilton and Niagara Region and recognized the importance of having a set of principles, practices and standards to ensure it serviced its clients professionally and humanly. That is where the ACMO 2000 Certification became a goal for the team to achieve.

Arthex is proud to have obtained the prestigious ACMO 2000 Certification in 2010, which distinguishes professional property management firms. It gave the Arthex team clarity on how to operate and create standard operating procedures and processes to provide uncommon service. This built confidence and capabilities, ensuring continual sustainable growth.

The initial certification process was a learning experience the material required to review and prepare before the actual audit was an educational endeavour showing us where we were strong and needed improvement. Our first auditor was patient and very gracious with their time and guidance, assuring us we were on the right track. It truly gave us a direction to focus on continual progress, constantly learning effective and simpler ways to service our clients properly.

Our future compliance audits, which occur every three years, have been smoother as we focus on meeting the standards and surpassing them. We proudly inform current and potential clients of our ACMO 2000 Certification and its significance to our industry by sharing our certification and compliance letters in our proposals. We also advertise our ACMO 2000 Certification everywhere and anytime we are able from our website, letterheads, promotion material and in our signatures.

Arthex Property Management's mission is to provide a "harmonious," safe, and peaceful environment ensuring a financially secure future for all our properties. Quality service is not the main objective of our company; it is the "only" objective. We aspire to amaze our owners, members, clients and tenants with the highest level of management expertise. We do this by abiding by the ACMO Code of Corporate Ethics displayed in our office. This Code contributes to the continued development of mutually beneficial relationships among condominium managers, condominium corporations, condominium residents, suppliers, employers of managers and the general public.

We are currently completing our fifth compliance audit and look forward to another successful achievement. ■

**Georgio Kosmidis, RCM**, began his career in the Hospitality Industry working for various Hotel Chains and has been an entrepreneur for the last 25 years. He is the Chief Visionary Officer for Arthex Property Management (1983) Inc. He obtained his RCM Designation in 2012 and has managed people and businesses successfully for the last three decades.  
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