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# Customer Service

## Excellence in Property Management

Top performing companies strive to deliver consistent and efficient services through systems, infrastructure, policies, and on the front line by hiring and training the right people with the personality and attitude suited to positive interaction with customers on a daily basis.

In today's fast-paced environment, technology and automation play an increasingly important role in our lives. With a single click, screen tap or simple voice command, we can control remotely locks, lights or heat in our homes; find a great dining place nearby; order a car ride in the city; make online purchases; and pay bills from the kitchen table.

Yet, the virtual space doesn't teach us how to win over people or create relationships in our personal and professional lives. You can ask "Alexa" for help, but she probably won't get it right.

Internet and social media empower customers by offering a wide variety of product and service options complete with reviews, opinions and advice. Customers tell us that we have no choice but to listen to their voice, not talk about what "we think" they need.

### Current Trends

Nowadays, customer expectations can be identified with one phrase: "Their Way". Current trends in customer service include:

- Customers are driven by *their* needs – they know what they want, when they want it and how they want it;
- Customers dislike being told why they can't have something – well-informed customers tend to have more reasonable expectations;
- Companies need to find appropriate ways to provide customers with what

they want – when this does not happen, customers will turn to another option;

- Customers have constantly changing expectations – companies need to have open lines of communication and adjust services according to these changes; and

- Customers judge service based on their perception. We need to observe and listen to them and address their needs.

### Trends in Condominium Management

This couldn't be further from the truth for the property management field. The difference between good and excellent customer experience is attained when the management team reaches past the basics of what's expected to create an emotional connection with people, and exceed their expectations.

At my company, one of the largest



# DO YOU PLAY HOCKEY?

## JOIN TEAM ACMO!

As part of our Canada150 celebration, we are pleased to be participating in the inaugural Condo Cup Charity Hockey Game!

We are currently looking for players to complete our roster.



Please visit

**[www.CondoCup.ca](http://www.CondoCup.ca)**

**for additional information, including game rules.**

If you – or someone you know – plays and has interest in joining Team ACMO, please visit the website and complete the Interested Player Form.

Contact [info@CondoCup.ca](mailto:info@CondoCup.ca) with any questions.

**Wednesday, October 25th**

Puck drop 3:30 pm

**Mastercard Centre  
for Hockey Excellence**

Rink 2 – the official practice rink  
of the Toronto Maple Leafs



We regrettably cannot guarantee that there will be roster space to accommodate all interested in playing.

condominium property management companies in Ontario, managing close to 80,000 condominium units, our leaders understood this concept and implemented a strategic approach for excellent customer service delivery.

*...the virtual space doesn't teach us how to win over people or create relationships in our personal and professional lives. You can ask "Alexa" for help, but she probably won't get it right.*

The company's mission statement says that continued success is dependent on creating a true partnership with our boards, residents and building employees. This partnership is founded on the principles of mutual honesty and integrity, and nurtured by the highest standards of performance and service.

Beyond the technical knowledge, professional accreditation and all of the staff training, ultimately your success as a property manager is dependent on your ability to connect with people.

### Resident Satisfaction Starts with Empathy

During my experience managing large condominium properties and communities in Toronto and the GTA, I realized that most residents don't expect perfection, just a resolution to their need or problem. Residents want to know their management team is human; the team has heart and empathy; and sincerely cares about each resident's unique experience.

Removing phrases like "According to your Declaration", or "Per our community Rules" is a great place to start. Incorporating more empathetic language like "I'm so sorry to hear that", "You know what? Let me double check," or "I understand how this is frustrating to you. Let me see how I can help" softens your response.

### Deal with the Problem and Take Responsibility

*Clarify the concern* – actively listen to the customer with an open mind and let them finish. Let them tell you exactly what they want and ask "what can I do to help you right now?" Repeat the facts into a concise manner.

*Take action* – Discuss options and

agree on a solution you know can be delivered to the customer's satisfaction.

Refer the customer to the proper authority – if you don't have the authority to effectively deal with the concern, refer the customer to some-

one who does. Maintain responsibility for solving the problem; escort the customer to the proper authority and explain the situation as you see it.

### Be Professional When Dealing with Difficult Customers

When I began my journey in condominium property management my long-time mentor, Judy Duffus, taught me a very valuable lesson: to be a good property manager, one has to observe the laws, rules and regulations and firmly impose

them without exceptions, for the betterment of the entire community, even at the risk of making a few customers unhappy.

Let's be honest and admit that as a property manager you can't please everyone; there will always be difficult customers in any community. Learn how to defuse a tense situation in a calm and professional manner, by moving the person from the emotional state into a logical state where reasoning could lead to an acceptable resolution.

### Follow Up Promptly and Ensure Customer Satisfaction

Check that the course of action agreed upon is carried out as soon as possible and the customer is satisfied with the result.

Remember, these few simple steps can help you and your company to advance your customer service to the best possible level. ■

**Cerasela Hornea**, RCM is a senior property manager with Brookfield Condominium Services Ltd. She is also the recipient of the ACMO 2015 Manager of the Year Award. Brookfieldcs.com

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