6 Tips to Handle Packages at the Concierge Desk

The ways in which Canadians shop are changing. Consumers can now shop online from anywhere, find exactly what they are looking for and take advantage of rapid shipping for a nominal fee. Whether it is for food, small electronics or large furniture, online shopping is expected to continue to grow, potentially creating a delivery package overload at a building's concierge desk if not managed correctly.

Managing the delivery of packages depends on the number and demographics of the residents in the building. However, these six tips can help to manage and prevent an overload:

1 Delegate

Delegate the right amount of manpower. Do you have enough staff to manage packages without taking security personnel away from their core duties, such as surveillance and access control? If your team is unable to uphold their core duties, consider adding personnel or the use of remote concierge and monitoring.

2 Dedicate

Have a dedicated storage space for packages. It is important to have a space that is big enough and within close proximity to where they are received. This ensures the concierge does not leave the front desk unattended for too long. The space should also have limited access. Entry should only be given to management and security staff, never residents. This space should also be video-monitored guaranteeing the environment is secure, similar to the bike room.

3 Record

Keep the right records and avoid a messy log book. It is recommended that a building have a concierge software platform that gives the security team the ability to log parcels, notify the resident and record package collection. This software should include the proper verification processes such as signature capture and package tracking. This software has benefits for management, allowing for activity tracking and future resource planning.

4 Limit

Limit your liability. It is important that a building has a parcel waiver form that protects the corporation, management, and the concierge from liability of damaged or lost parcels. Security should never receive damaged parcels, nor should they accept foods, cash, flowers, medication or suite keys. If a package is not collected after a reasonable period it should be returned to the sender, freeing up storage space. Buildings should also set restrictions on the size and weight of parcels they receive.

5 Perform

Perform package inventory. A parcel audit should be conducted at every shift change to ensure that all parcels are accounted for and accurately reflected in the concierge software.

6 Manage

Manage the relationship with the delivery company. Before concierge signs for a package the courier should attempt to contact the recipient and deliver it. If initial delivery is unsuccessful, each couriered package should be individually scanned by the delivery company. This allows concierge to verify that the resident lives in the building and that each package is intended for the correct address.

As online shopping becomes the norm, continuing to analyze the traffic from a building's concierge software platform and regularly revising a building's liability policy can help manage future packages and the way they are handled.

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Front Desk Parcels

The growth of parcel delivery has been exponential. Just a few years ago, with the exception of December holiday time, we would receive less than 10 parcels per day for the over 500 units in the building. Today, we average 60 parcels every day. This has resulted in a number of stresses on the management of the building.

- Receiving, logging, storing and delivering the parcels has added to concierge responsibilities and often results in residents and contractors waiting to be serviced.

- Improper disposal of recycled cardboard has increased the number of incidents of jammed chutes. Compactor repairs have increased as the tri-sorter jams and stresses the actuator arm.

- The added volume of cardboard has resulted in the need for additional recycling bins. Superintendents spend more time moving bins for the recycling trucks.

- The parcel storage room, that was more than adequate when the building was constructed, is now reaching capacity.

There are some ways to alleviate the stress

Several software packages are available that streamline much of the parcel notification process. Email notification with intensified messaging for perishable parcels and electronic signature capture are two of the features that ensure proper delivery and reduce the manual efforts of concierge staff.

Robotic systems are available for the storage and delivery of parcels but they require a significant footprint. They will move much of the manual process from the concierge staff to the couriers delivering the parcels to the building. When selecting a system it is important to realize two points: 1) There will always be a parcel too big for the locker, and 2) there will always be a day when there is not enough lockers for all the parcels. There will always be a need for a manual process to handle these exceptions.

The volume can only increase as bricks and mortar stores either hop on the bandwagon or disappear from the retail landscape. Putting a flexible process in place is essential. And holiday shopping is only seven months away.

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