



Vince Bennett, RCM
President
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Promote Rapport within Your Communities

Why can't we all get along? This is a question every condominium manager will ask throughout the course of their career. Whether you're managing a small condominium, a townhouse complex, or a large tower with shared facilities, you are going to need the same set of skills as any manager to do your part to keep harmony within your condominium community. And that is exactly it, you're managing a community. Within that community you are going to find people with many different types of personalities, backgrounds, perspectives and ideas. Many of these can add enjoyment to your career and assist in your ability to manage, and in some cases, can add turmoil and stress.

One of the most important things I believe you can do, is to take a good look at the property you're managing. No, not physically look at the property

— although it's important you do that too — but take a good look at the property from the perspective of an owner of a unit within that community. Place yourself in a position of ownership so you can fully appreciate and understand the community and what exactly you are managing. By doing this, you're able to establish the ability to relate to the property and the residents living there. You're building a rapport. There are a few basic musts that will help with keeping harmony within your community:

Communication: This is always a hot topic and always an area that can be improved upon. The more people know, in advance, the more likely they are to receive news with reason and understanding. When people know the who, what, where, why and how, the less questions you can expect to receive. Be as informative as

you can be, while keeping it as simple as possible. Owners want the facts. Communicating in a proactive way helps prepare people, and owners who can prepare are more understanding and reasonable.

Good financial stewardship: Remember, this isn't your money. This money belongs to the condominium corporation and was contributed by hard-working people who expect you to spend it wisely and responsibly. It's your job to make sure that your condominium corporation is receiving good value for its money. And this doesn't necessarily mean selecting the cheapest service provider. When awarding work or selecting a service provider, it's important that the condominium corporation is receiving a good quality product for the cost. Do your homework on service providers that you are not familiar with. Reach out to other



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property managers – our industry has an abundance of knowledge within the experienced managers. As a manager, you have to make yourself familiar with the quality of service you are receiving from your service providers. Always be mindful that you are spending someone's hard-earned money, and when owners know that their money is being spent well, their confidence in you should bring a level of comfort to everyone.

Tell them the truth!: Sometimes the truth isn't what we want to hear, but the sooner we face the reality of a situation, the sooner we can find a solution and work through it. Often a manager's job is to deliver bad news – a boiler has quit prematurely, a reserve project is going to cost more than budgeted, the roofing contractor is issuing a change order because the sheathing needs to be replaced, or the corporation needs a special assessment because they don't have enough money to pay their bills. Don't wait until it's too late. Gather as much information as you can and, if possible, provide solutions or options when presenting less desirable news. As soon as you have information that will impact the corporation in a negative way, be up front with your board of directors and owners. Dealing with negative circumstances early on will build trust and rapport with your owners and in many cases be less expensive than if they had been ignored.

Be decisive, be a leader: It was August 2018 during a record rainstorm when I received a call from the superintendent of a highrise condo reporting a flood on

the amenities level. Fortunately, I was at a neighbouring building and was able to be there within just a few minutes. When I arrived, the amenities level (located on A level), was under six inches of water and leaking into the basement level – which was also under about 3–4 inches of water. The recently renovated lounge had water pouring into it from a roof drain fitting

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that had blown apart. Owners who had heard came down to view the damage and the looks on their faces was of devastation. I had been involved in floods before, but nothing like this. I knew the only way to get the water cleaned up, keep everyone calm and minimize damages was to take charge. I immediately called our in-house remediation team, a third-party remediation company, our electrician (the water had set the fire alarm off as well), a vacuum truck company, and of course our insurance company. Water pumping and extraction began within 30 minutes. An adjuster and estimator arrived shortly after and soon provided an estimate of damages of roughly \$400,000. Almost nine hours later, 18,000 litres of water had been extracted and damaged building material removed. I returned on site the follow-

ing morning with trades to continue to clean up. By making decisions quickly and taking immediate action, the total costs were under \$100,000 and were able to be paid from a self-insurance fund the corporation had been maintaining. Residents were given notices immediately and then regular, sometimes daily, updates on progress. In the end, every bit

of feedback we received from our residents was positive. As a manager, you will be looked to for problem-solving by boards and by residents. Be prepared, and know that each incident adds to your experience as a manager.

We all want to get along and keep harmony within our condominium communities. This is achieved by communicating effectively, understanding the community we are managing, and treating it as if it is our own. ■

Vincent Bennett, RCM is president of Bendale, a family-run condominium management company headquartered in Kingston. He was awarded ACMO's Manager of the Year for 2018. Most recently, Vince was elected to ACMO's Board of Directors representing eastern Ontario. Bendale.ca



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