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What First-Time Managers Should Know

As a new condominium manager, there are a few realities of the job one should know. This is not your typical 9-to-5 job. The job bears great responsibility. We not only manage bricks and mortar or building systems, but we also manage communities, manage people and, most importantly, we must be able to manage expectations on both ends of the aisle. Your residents' lives depend on us, on our ability to manage, to be thorough with our work and to pay a lot of attention to detail. Compassion and dedication should always be at the forefront of our activity. Now let's dive into the subject.

How to Acquire Job-specific Knowledge

Of course, you are probably enrolled to complete the four ACMO courses, mandatory for the CMRAO

licence, but you must remember the courses are designed to only provide a basic understanding of the legal and operational framework of the job. The material is general at best and does not provide exhaustive knowledge. Knowledge is something that you, as a first-time manager, should strive to acquire. The best way to do this is to learn from others. You have a lot of resources at your disposal. You can learn from your colleagues, your staff, your clients, your supervisors and most importantly you can learn from your service providers. Ask questions, don't be afraid if you sound "green;" everybody knows you are "green." Rest assured everyone will appreciate the fact that you are eager to learn.

As an example, one day your HVAC serviceperson walks into your office

and advises you that one of the heat exchangers needs cleanup. Use the opportunity and ask the technician if he can show you the equipment in question. Use this time to your advantage, ask your questions: why the equipment needs clean up, how the equipment works, what its role is as part of the system, why he thinks the cleanup is necessary.

The answers to all these simple questions will, in time, form your bank of knowledge. The fact that you took your time to inspect the equipment creates in-depth knowledge. Now you have the visual representation of the equipment, you know its location and you acquired knowledge specific to that building system. You can apply this example in many other situations expanding your job-specific know-how.

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If You Are not Sure about what Decision to Make, It's Best to Ask

The wrong decision in our line of work could be very costly and, in some instances, could have even more serious consequences than just the financial implications. Remember, there is no shame in asking when not sure. Everyone will appreciate the fact that you want to make sure you are taking all necessary steps to ensure the right decision will be made, both on behalf of

your employer and your client. Remember, we all started exactly where you are starting today. Your supervisor or senior manager should be able and willing to coach you. As a piece of advice, if you must ask for help making a decision, never go asking empty-handed. Before you ask for help you need to follow a few steps. First, have a good understanding of the matter at hand. Second, collect all the pertinent information. Third, have ready at least three possible approaches to resolve the problem. People will

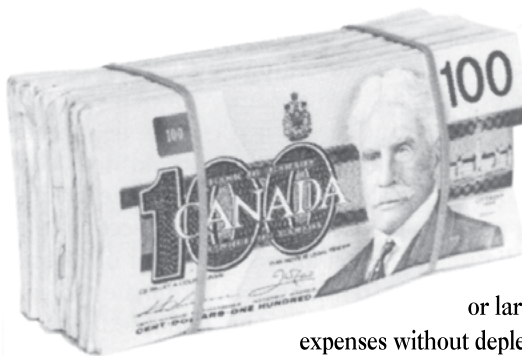
appreciate the fact that you gave the matter thorough thinking, and you are also suggesting solutions. This approach will make your supervisor more prone to help as you are not taking too much time, plus it sends the message that people can cooperate with you. You will also create a long-lasting impression as someone that is trying hard to become better at his/her job.

Don't Be Afraid to Ask for Feedback. Use the "How am I doing?" Approach

To know where you stand with your level of problem-solving and in general with your performance is a key indicator of how you achieve and apply knowledge. Depending on the firm you work for, you will eventually have annual performance reviews. The problem with these reviews, besides the fact that they are becoming obsolete, is that they only show one side of the coin, so to speak. They heavily represent the employer's opinion based on that company's internal operating procedures. What should be of most importance to you is how you develop your problem-solving skills. Say, for example, a resident calls with a question, at the end of the conversation always ask, "Did I manage to answer your question?" By simply asking just that, a few things will happen. First, the person on the other end will know you care and genuinely try to solve their problem. Regardless of the answer, you will get some feedback on how you performed. If the answer is negative, don't get discouraged, you can continue by asking "What should I have done to answer better?" At the end of the exercise, you will know which areas of your expertise you need to improve upon. ■

Bogdan Alexe, B.A.Sc., RCM, is the founder and CEO of B1 Management Group Inc. He has over 20 years' experience in condominium management. He is passionate about condominium managers' education and coaching. Never stops learning, he is enrolled to complete his Project Management Professional designation. In his free time Bogdan, a car enthusiast, spends time working on his project cars. b1managementgroup.com

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