



Maryan Florio, RCM
Del Property Management

Condo Culture:

Crossing Global Borders to Strengthen Neighbourly Bonds

I firmly believe that bringing residents together to form neighbourly bonds helps to foster a sense of belonging, and that leads to residents who take extra care in the use of their home and the common elements they share.

Understanding your building's cultural demographics is essential to build a sense of community, especially if there is a heavy concentration of residents in the building with ties to the same culture or region of the world. Condo management is very much about listening. Not just comprehending the question asked on the surface, but rather, understanding why the question was asked in the first place. I've found this to be especially important when trying to serve as a bridge between residents from different backgrounds, and the common elements and amenities they're equally entitled to.

My very first building had a small but strong cadre of Muslim families, and I got to know quite a few of the young mothers who'd come to my office wearing hijabs and Levis, or flowing abayas, bouncing adorable toddlers. Sometimes their English was perfect; sometimes, it was the hesitant speech of the new Canadian. But once I'd learned a few of the basic terms like "monthly fees" and "visitor parking" in Turkish or Arabic, it eased a lot of the communication difficulties. Granted, I had to consult my handy list written in phonetic English every single time, which made my residents chuckle, but at least they knew they could ask and that I was there to help and not hinder.

One such resident was bemoaning the idea of hosting a bridal shower in her unit for her sister because there would

be more than 25 women and she didn't have space. When I suggested that she reserve the party room, the idea was quickly dismissed for a reason that surprised me. The French doors leading into the room didn't have frosted glass, so her guests wouldn't feel comfortable uncovering their hair, especially if the security company sent a male guard. "Could we go without a guard?" she asked, but the rules didn't allow for that given the group size. Taking the time to open a dialogue with the resident allowed me to realize that a straightforward solution was possible. A quick call to the security company to request a female security officer was a simple thing, as was the suggestion of a folding screen in front of the doors to block the view from anyone in the corridor. Suddenly the party room was an amenity



DEDICATED

LOCAL

PROFESSIONAL



LET US BE YOUR ENGINEER . . .

BECAUSE YOUR COMMUNITY IS OUR COMMUNITY

RESERVE FUND STUDIES

PERFORMANCE AUDITS

CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION

For the Life of Your Community

#trustthetriangle

www.criterium-jansen.com

1.888.940.0571



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.

The following condominium management firms have elevated their status:

Companies Passing the ACMO 2000 Compliance Audit

Effective January 2020

Arthex Property Management (1983) Inc.
Comfort Property Management Inc.
ICC Property Management Ltd.

KÜNG Property Management
TAG - The Active Group

she could use, and more importantly, so could others. There were a lot more party room bookings after that, and our security company even learned to ask, “will you need a female guard?”

Changing Dynamics

An exceptionally beautiful building that I managed some years ago had very low owner turnover with most guests having lived there from day one. Their traditions were long-standing and cherished. For example, they went all out at Christmas, decorating the party room and the lobby so that it looked like a Currier & Ives postcard. The front foyer even featured a gorgeous manger scene that everybody loved until a letter to the board was received, politely requesting that the holiday decorations be kept to a secular theme because not everyone is Christian. “It’s my home, too,” they wrote, and rightly so.

The manger had become a favourite piece in the decorations over the years, but the dynamics of the building had changed. To take it away would be heartbreaking, but to keep it would make people uncomfortable in their own home.

As a manager who likes to keep everyone happy, my suggestion was to add instead of subtract. Put a menorah on the mantle, I suggested, with a new candle (battery-powered, of course) lit for every night of Hanukkah, and right beside it, the seven candles for Kwanzaa. A Christmas piñata hung in honour of Las Posadas would thrill the visiting grandchildren, and pinecones and cloves draped over the end tables for the Winter Solstice would add a pretty fragrance to the shortest day of the year. They opted instead to take the manger away, which resulted in more than a few grumbles.

From a professional perspective, I was glad to have been able to offer a range of options so they could move forward towards more significant inclusion in a way that the board, with their nuanced understanding of the community, was comfortable with.

Proactive Inclusion

Inclusion does not need only to be reactive; managers can help create an atmosphere of active inclusion, by encouraging our boards and social committees to host events that help find commonalities and embrace differences at the same time.

I’ve found that an end-of-summer potluck party is a nice way to welcome

cooler weather and allows for neighbours to enjoy something social at a time of year that isn’t so busy, like the winter holidays or high summer. Residents can be encouraged to bring their cultural dishes; there is nothing like plates piled high with spanakopita, bahn mi, and pizza to foster pleasant conversation!

In fact, at one such party, I was the happy witness to strangers becoming dear friends because they bonded over their shared love of phở and Dungeons & Dragons. From that conversation, a

remarkably successful monthly games night in the party room was born, further boosting my belief that it takes a village of neighbours to make a condominium feel like a home. ■

Maryann Florio, RCM, is a recent winner of DEL’s Innovation Award for her contribution to Deaf & Hard of Hearing accessibility within the workplace. She is a General Licensed RCM, but thinks “Chaos Wrangler” is a more fitting title. delpropertymanagement.com

CONDO & RESIDENTIAL SECURITY



We provide customized concierge and security solutions to ensure the needs of your condominium or residential community.

P: 416.876.9792 E: INFO@FPSECURITY.CA

FPSECURITY.CA