



Viewpoint

The Misunderstood Manager and Social Media Bullying

It takes a special kind of person to become a condominium manager. Frankly, it's a job I do not envy, especially lately, as we deal with the fall-out of a pandemic that has gone on longer than anyone ever expected. Not only are managers expected to know something about everything, from condo law to plumbing, but they are also often caught in the middle between owners and boards and seen as the "bad guy" or someone to hate.



Tracey
Doherty

As a condo owner myself, I hear my neighbours complaining about the management of the building all the time; "Why won't the manager open the pool since gyms are allowed open now;" and "since the facilities have been closed, why don't they give me a refund on my condo fees;" or "the manager sent me an email telling me I'm not allowed to park in visitor parking anymore, how dare they!" I have to remind them that managers did not make these rules; it's just their job to enforce them. The manager merely communicates the decisions made by the board of directors we elected. I explain the role of a condominium manager, and I am always met with "Oh, I didn't know that."

The Role of a Manager

I've learned enough in my few years working for ACMO about the responsibilities of a condominium manager. They respond to owner complaints, ensuring the maintenance and repair of the property. They hire the service companies and contractors and negotiate the contracts on the owners' behalf, but they have no control over supply shortages or delays in service. They supervise all regular operations like preventive maintenance of the mechanical equipment, elevators, fire safety system, emergency generator, etc. But they don't decide which service provider is chosen for the job. They draft the annual budget and oversee the reserve fund, ensuring that it is spent most efficiently. But they don't decide if the common expense fees increase. Managers also advise the condo boards on financial responsibilities and compliance with the *Condominium Act, 1998*, to ensure that board decisions do not break

any laws. But they don't tell the board what to do. They do much more, but as you can see, most of their job is running the day-to-day business of the condominium corporation on behalf of all owners. Very little has to do with making rules to restrict your freedoms.

Living in a condominium community is different from a single-family home, where all you have to think about is yourself. Rules and by-laws are created for condos to maintain order, keep the community safe, keep property values high, and allow all the owners and residents to live peacefully together, sharing the property. Unfortunately, some owners and residents are unaware of the rules, even though they were all given a copy of the corporation's constitution when they moved in. Or they may simply disagree with the rules and refuse to abide by them. In any case, when the manager or security confronts them, they deflect the blame and accuse the manager of unfair treatment, and some go as far as to share their anger on social media.

Social Media Trolls

Recently, there has been a lot of news about smear campaigns on social media against managers and management firms. Some have been downright harassing and implying violence, making some pretty serious allegations without factual proof.

It's easy to vent frustration and post angry comments on social media when you are hiding behind a wall of anonymity, hoping that others will agree with you, join in, and affirm your feelings of being mistreated. Misery loves company. More often than not, these are people who feel the rules don't apply to them; the same people who park in accessible parking spaces or fire lanes because they are in a hurry, feel they don't have to wait in line with the rest of us, don't pick up after their dogs, won't wear a mask on an elevator, troll people online for fun – I could go on and on. Their angry posts are usually the result of being caught and fined for breaking a rule or not getting their way with management.

Unfortunately, the people reading these posts have no idea of the events leading up to these posts or the facts of a situation. And if there are enough negative comments, people may start to believe them. The Illusion of Truth Effect (or Illusory Truth

Effect) is a psychological phenomenon where repetition makes statements easier to process relative to new or unrepeatable statements, leading people to believe that the repeated conclusion is more truthful, whether it is or not. Because of this phenomenon, people then tend to think false information is correct after repeated exposure. This is why disgruntled people post many comments, repeating their negative views and hoping that others will add to the discourse validating their anger. Once a post is out there, the damage could already be done even if it

is deleted right away. Therefore it must be responded to immediately.

As a marketing professional for over two decades, I want to assure managers and management companies that, although these attacks seem personal and extremely hurtful and demotivating, they can be managed professionally. Most users of social media are becoming more savvy and aware of internet trolls, taking bad reviews with a grain of salt.

The best way to address these emails is to acknowledge the post and move the discussion offline to resolve it. When

responding, don't apologize or admit to any accusations, but show empathy and rephrase their concern. Use facts and avoid getting emotional, defensive or argumentative. Offer a phone number that they may contact you at to discuss their concerns. You want other readers to see that you are not avoiding a complaint but addressing it professionally. This usually stops the troll from posting more angry comments when they didn't get the fuel they wanted to keep the fight going. And, it lets other readers know that you are taking the comment seriously but have the courage of your convictions. This is also the best policy for legitimate complaints and reviews as well.

A Word of Encouragement

Being a condo manager is hard enough without the added stress of negative social media; one wonders why they would keep doing it. The answer is passion. Condominium managers are some of the most passionate people I have met. They love their jobs, as stressful as they might be. They thrive in managing budgets and major projects, problem-solving, and helping owners and residents – all with little recognition or thanks. They enjoy taking on challenges and learning new skills to make them better condominium managers. They pride themselves on this. Personal attacks on social media against their character by those who don't understand their role are undeserved.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all condominium managers and management firms for their dedication and hard work during the pandemic in keeping our condo communities running safe and sound. The silent majority of owners and residents appreciate all you do by the mere fact that they don't need to concern themselves with the management of their property – because you do.

I encourage all owners to take some time to thank their condominium managers for all they do. It just may give them the encouragement they need to overcome the negativity they face daily. ■

Tracey Doherty is the Manager of Marketing and Communications for ACMO and the Editor for CM Magazine. She is also a graphic designer with over 20 years of experience in creative marketing for various industries and consumer products.
acmo.org

INNOVATION • INTEGRITY • ACCOUNTABILITY



MANAGEMENT GROUP INC.

Your Condominium Management
Experts in the GTA



Request a Free Proposal at
www.b1managementgroup.com
info@b1managementgroup.com
1-289-379-9458

