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# Managing Contractors, Suppliers & Expectations

Every condominium has an annual budget with service contracts, repairs, maintenance, and other expenses. Budgets vary in size depending on the complexity of the building/property and the number of units. The value of the condominium's budget can range from \$500,000-\$8,000,000. Large or small, the use of contractors is inevitable in the day of a manager's life. It is part of the manager's job to ensure quality control and value for the condominium's money, which is done by managing contractors/suppliers and setting expectations.

Managers set expectations through various avenues; a minor issue is likely dealt with through a phone call to a reputable vendor they have used in the past. If there is a problem in the building that needs fixing, the steps are as simple as talking to the receptionist or service department of a company, ordering the repair, coordinating a service call, and getting the problem repaired.

For larger or more complex problems, a

manager might seek quotes for the repair. Initially, they may not know what the best repair method is. Managers learn by going with the various contractors and listening to recommendations, determining the best repair method and obtaining competitive pricing to obtain board approval eventually. Other times, the scope of work is sent out, and the various contractors will quote on the job based on the required service outlined in the document they received. At times, alternative repair methods may be recommended based on price or better quality products that may last longer.

Most management companies have template contracts for standard services in a condominium. These will outline the expectations for service and ensure that each contractor selected to tender is bidding on the same work.

Lastly, in the event of major work in a condominium, the board may use an expert (engineer or consultant) to draft the scope of work and use a CCDC contract (contracts created by the Government).

This document would set out expectations and hold the contractor to a certain standard of workmanship and warranties.

All of the above are the ways a manager can set expectations for work to be performed; some are more effective than others in ensuring you get the expected result.

Managing contractors is an entirely different task. This entails the property manager being in control and having an in-depth knowledge of the work being done at the property, scheduling, coordinating access and communicating with the concierge or superintendent that the contractor is coming to the site and what they are expected to complete. Knowing that the contractor has been at the site, the status of the work or knowing it is complete is vital for reporting the outcome to the board.

Once the work has been performed, an invoice will be issued. This is when quality control is essential; who viewed the work to ensure it was done to the specification or





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expectation and is fully completed before processing the invoice. Often the use of a superintendent that a manager can trust is crucial to success. They may accompany the contractor and oversee what is being done or be called to review the work before signing off the work order. Some managers without a superintendent or who have the time will review the work themselves or directly speak to the contractors to ensure they have all the facts. This due diligence provides peace of mind in processing the invoice and ensuring the corporation has received value for its money.

Service contracts are managed a little differently than an as-needed service. Managers can set expectations and manage the contractors by

having a schedule and by having the contractor attend the office when they come to the site and before leaving. For large contracts that provide staffing, a manager may set up a meeting monthly/quarterly with key account managers to speak about performance issues. The staff in a building are likely people's first impression of a well-run building; is the building clean; are the staff professional; do they look the part; are they representing you and the building well?

Believe it or not, having a vision or service expectation is essential to getting the desired results. Be sure to share your vision or expectation with the service providers and monitor performance to the bar you have set.

If the expectations are clear, it is far easier to bring them back into alignment when things are out of line. ■

**Laura Lee**, RCM, has over 33 years of experience as a property manager. She is currently VP of Operations at ND Energy Inc., a company specializing in energy management and sub-metering. She has been a member of ACMO for more than 30 years and is an active ACMO board member and past president. Her accomplishments include receiving the ACMO Manager of the Year Award in 2005, authoring the Administration and Human Relations manual for the ACMO and teaching all four RCM courses in-house and in colleges.



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