8 speed & accuracy areas to consider that drive tenant loyalty - Part 1

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Reviewing a sampling of the 12,000 customer satisfaction surveys we collected in first quarter of 2012 revealed that speed and accuracy are mentioned consistently when praising or complaining about their service experience. While courtesy and friendliness are top satisfiers in Rhode Island's top industry, hospitality, that isn't the case for most industries including the apartment rental industry.

Yes, courtesy is important, but you take too long to fix a problem or don't get back to a tenant too many times and they don't care how friendly you are. Helping make their living experience pleasant without hassles is what matters. The biggest check they cut each month is their rent check. After a long day of work - you must make them feel good. If you do they will tell their bosses, friends, work colleagues, and acquaintances. You may just get future tenants pounding on your door if you don't already.

Four main processes that need speed:

1. Speed of processing the maintenance request. Logging the request and acknowledging when you will be there all in less than a day impresses them and shows discipline. It gives them more confidence that you will get the job done timely. It shows you know what it takes. Track your performance. Track the time from "tenant request date" and "job completion date."

2. Speed of answering emails and phone calls. When contacted by a tenant, respond immediately with a personal acknowledgement from a warm body unless your approach is totally self-service. A warm body response is sometimes confused with that auto-reply sent by Outlook. There is a place for that approach, but try to minimize automated response and make things personal. Similarly, phone calls should be answered or the voice mail message acknowledged by someone within a few hours. Do you measure the speed of answering emails or phone calls for each property?

3. Speed of job status updates. Tenants want to know the status of their maintenance requests either online or by calling or emailing to get an immediate update. How long does it take for you to discover the status of a maintenance request? Do an audit of your speed by asking about any random maintenance request.

4. Speed of turning around requests. It all comes down to deadlines—knowing when the tenant would like it done, and hitting that mark. This is the biggest satisfier for tenants in the realm of speed. Set realistic expectations and educate the tenant on how to collapse turnaround time. Many times the tenant doesn't help you turn projects quickly, but explaining what you need and by when clearly can speed things up for both of you—working as a team with the tenant.

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