

How is your property resident satisfaction? Do an employee survey.

April 25, 2013 - Front Section

Water flows down hill. If property owners or executive management treat property managers and their staff with respect and care, then residents will be treated the same way. The reverse is true as well. The best run property operations treat everyone with respect and it starts at the very top. Don't under estimate the importance of the comments that flow from the president, vice presidents, or managers when speaking to staff, other managers, or residents. Consistency is important. Operations with a solid executive management team are way ahead of the game. Yes, they must be sharp, but surveys show that people rather be lead by someone they can trust and who cares far more than the brightest bulb on the shelf. Trustworthiness trumps intelligence on every industry study conducted. If you want to make sure that your residents are treated right and your reputation and brand are preserved in the market, then make sure your employees feel good about working for you. Here is how you do this.

Survey your employees. Ask them their opinion in an anonymous fashion which respects their privacy to drive candid feedback. Many of the best run companies managing properties have this as an ongoing process to ensure everyone is on the same page and employees enjoy their work. If employees enjoy their work, they will enjoy working with other employees, and the end result is that the residents will see the benefits as well. Don't be afraid to hear what your employees have to say. Most companies fear the worst that it will be a complaining session, but this is rarely the case. If done right it can be a very positive experience for all. The key is to be prepared to read the responses and have an action plan to acknowledge and do what you can to promote the positive and address some of the areas for improvement.

Here are the nuts and bolts of an effective employee survey project.

- * Top management sponsorship and support;
- * Go with an online survey to make it easy and inexpensive for everyone;
- * Put a 3rd party in the middle to respect the privacy of employees;
- * Shoot for over 90% participation. You will probably get close to 100%;
- * Create a simple, one page SWOT Report (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats); and
- * Have a plan in place that engages your team to acknowledge and take action.

If you are willing to take action on the feedback, then you are way ahead of the game. This last bullet is the most important part of the project. Most of the time there are little things that, when acted on, make a big difference to the staff. Think of your resident survey responses. Most of the time there are little things you do to turn a customer into a passionate promoter of your brand. It is the same for middle management and staff.

Michael Casey is president of Survey Advantage, Jamestown, R.I.