

Five "Must Haves" to win over prospective residents

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Today, more than ever, prospective residents do online background checks when considering a new landlord, even if recommended by a friend. According to a recent YouGov survey of 2,000 consumers under 35 years of age, 55% use social media to vent about a bad customer service. The percentage of online venting consumers will only grow over time. My guess is that it was in the low teens just a few years ago. It doesn't take the inventor of the Internet, Al Gore, to know the fastest and most effective way to learn everything you can about an apartment complex is to go online. Now let's look at the residents thought process and determine what you may want to consider to "cover all your bases."

1. Residents look for a solid website with fantastic, relevant, current content such as events, facilities, etc. This can be an overwhelming task for some property managers, but you must have a foundation to post content quickly when you want. Your Website content should showcase your strengths. If you don't have it today you are either sunk or quickly sinking.
2. Residents look for reviews. 65% of consumers are more likely to buy from a business that has positive online review, according to the 2013 BrightLocals Consumer Survey. Residents are no different. They look for online reviews on Apartment ratings, Google Plus, Yelp! or other social media/review sites. Google Plus is the key place to focus to get reviews since it is a leverage play. It helps your search engine ranking as well as sits nicely under your website listing when they find you while searching apartments. An easy way to drive five star reviews is to build redirects into your online survey process. Make it easy for loyal residents to leave a review. Three percent of those taking a survey will give you a nice plug if they see a nice landing page when they hit submit. Over time you will have a growing list of reviews helping both your online search ranking and resident background checks.
3. Residents want references and to scan testimonials on your website. You must have an easy way to post positive testimonials to your website continuously. Again, these can be gathered through your survey process. Overwhelm those looking at your Website with dozens of testimonials a month that feed from your survey process. There is no reason why even a small property can't get at least 10 fresh testimonials per month with no effort by leveraging an online survey process. Don't forget to put a date stamp on every testimonial when placing on your Website. Let them know that the testimonials are not from 10 years ago and the cherry picked ones, but instead recent residents who are WOWed.
4. Residents will throw out a wide net to their Facebook community asking for recommendations. Make sure you are participating in these places and have a nice company profile. If they put your property in the search for Facebook or Google they should see a nice profile with active participation.
5. Residents will type your company name or the words "apartments city state" i.e. "Apartments

Waltham MA" into the browser search bar to see what comes back. What will they find? You hope the search results reveal lots of positive references to your property, and the online reviews on Google Plus are right there on the first page. Make sure you preserve your brand with pushing five star reviews, posting relevant content to your Website, and pushing out press releases or articles. Put your best foot forward. It is a new ballgame. Well a five-year-old ballgame that is not going to end soon.

Keep in mind you must stake claim to your Google Plus company profile and build out your company specific social media pages. For most properties they put a radius around their property and look for any prospective residents within that territory. Do the same thing online so they find you in that online radius. It is now the cost of doing business. If you can't do it yourself, find someone. Many companies out there will manage this for you, but make sure to do a background check on them! Make sure they are covering all THEIR bases. Good luck.

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