



New technologies help gain efficiency

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Good commercial property management, by definition, is pretty simple. Buildings are well maintained and attractive, systems do what they should do, and tenant needs are addressed promptly and thoroughly. Quality property management ranks right up there with location as a key to attracting and, even more importantly, retaining tenants.

But beneath the surface, a huge number of moving parts must work properly - and in concert - to provide best-in-class building operations. Much of this hinges on how processes are managed. Today, new and advancing technologies provide tools that enable property managers to increase efficiency in our day-to-day work flow and be more responsive to tenants than ever before.

Online work order programs offer a great example. At Prism Property Services, our "prisimfixit.com" web portal is customized from Angus Systems' Angus AnyWhere software. Tenants at all of our properties can file their service requests online, and the system automatically - and immediately - dispatches a work order to their building's director of operations. From start to finish, every step in the job is tracked online.

Blackberries and other PDA devices enable technicians to receive and update the online work orders remotely - a great advantage in terms of response time. Tenants can log on to see their work order and check on its progress, which improves communication. And management can use the logged info to check job times, completion ratios and other trends.

Web-based building management systems also have done wonders for efficiency in building operations. If a property manager gets a call from a tenant on a Saturday morning requesting that their air conditioning be turned on, he or she can log in through their home computer and do it. This not only saves the time associated with a drive to the building, but allows immediate service.

This type of web access is beneficial in system diagnostics and in long-term tracking of issues. We can see what is going on without always having to be onsite, which allows for more management oversight.

Yet while technology is providing some great new tools to help property managers be more effective while saving time and money, it will never replace the importance of having quality people on the front lines. Every building must have a face and it's important to have team members who come to the table with a deep sense of responsibility, who are customer oriented and who take pride in the buildings in their care. A careful balance of aptitude and attitude - and the incorporation of tools that make life a little easier - provide the winning formula for impeccable property management and, in turn, highly satisfied tenants.

Jonathan Hoff, RPA, CPM, is a senior VP at Prism Property Services, Bloomfield, N.J.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540