

10 Things

I've Learned in 10 Years in the Apartment Industry

1. Hire Well. “Take your time and hire the right person the first time. Hiring the wrong person for the job not only makes your life harder, but it also sets the entire team up for failure. Individuals must be team players and understand that every team member plays an important role in the success of the community.”

2. Do the Right Thing. “There is something to be said for toeing the company line, but sometimes you have to look at the big picture and challenge authority. If you feel that a situation goes against the management company’s policy and you feel strongly that the policy is wrong, speak up. It’s better for senior management to know your opinion and make its decision with this information than for you to sit back and say nothing.”

3. Trust, But Verify. “If you are in a management position, your goal should not only be to succeed in your career, but also to bring your team up the ladder. The best way to do this is to delegate. This not only makes your job easier—it empowers your team. You also need to ensure that the tasks you delegate actually are completed.”

4. The Importance of Curb Appeal. “We hear it all the time—‘inspect what you expect’—but how many community managers actually take inventory of their properties every day? Curb appeal is one of the most important aspects of a marketing campaign. If the first impression of your community isn’t a positive one, you may as well have saved your money.”

5. Marketing Strategies. “Look at all aspects of your marketing campaign and figure out what is working and what is not. As a former account executive, I have heard many times that something ‘just isn’t in the budget.’ But there is always wiggle room, especially if occupancy is tanking.”

6. Networking. “Whether you attend local association events, join committees at your local associations or go to the annual NAA conference, networking is vital. It provides an opportunity to share new ideas, meet new people with common interests and build on existing knowledge of what is going on in the market.”

7. Customer Service. “The way you treat people will come back to you twofold. Although property management has its fair share of challenges, it seems that whenever I use sympathy and empathy in communicating, the results are always positive.”

8. Education. “Continue to grow your career in the apartment industry—you never know where it will take you. By taking designation courses through NAA, you will continue to obtain the latest information in the industry and learn the skills to make your job easier. Holding designations shows industry professionals that you took the time to learn about the industry and grow in your career.”

9. Attitude Is Your Latitude. “It’s not only about doing a good job; it’s about having fun along the way. If you aren’t happy with your career choice, find a new path. What makes the apartment industry so inviting is the people in it. You have to do what you love!”

10. Health and Family. “Over the years, I have learned to keep things in perspective and about the importance of maintaining a healthy work/life balance. My career success is wonderful but would be meaningless without the support of my husband, Phil, and my children, Bryce and Brady.”

If you would like to be considered for a future *End Points* column, please contact Kerry Sullivan at 703/797-0678 or kerry@naahq.org.



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