



Dave Williams

PART III

Condo Communications Matter... Boards and Residents... Even the Blue Jays do it!

This will be the third article on condo communications and at this point I would like to add the term transparency to the equation. Transparency is simply being “open and straightforward” about condo operations, at least in a business sense.

I need also to admit that there are still a lot of unresolved questions like “why are some condo boards so reluctant to communicate with resident/owners?” “Why are resident/owners afraid to ask questions of their boards?” In a way, it is good medicine for both parties to have the proper process working.

In an excellent article on Communications in HelpGuide.org, Jean Segal (PhD), Melinda Smith (M.A.) and Lawrence Robinson write the following: “as well as being able to clearly convey a message, you need to also listen in a way that gains full meaning of what’s being said and make the other person feel heard and understood”.

Aaaaaaah! Listening... a great idea!

continued...



Communication Content... what content! People to People

Communication strategy needs to include information that is important to resident/owners... the people that condo boards are accountable to. An annual survey of residents is a good place to start to see where their interests and concerns lie.

Regardless of the medium to be used, topics to be considered for regular communications to residents might be social activities, sporting leagues that might exist (bocce), reporting on past events as well as upcoming events.

Maybe a new resident section that introduces new folks to the community and bids farewell and good luck to those moving on.

The business of the community

Boards need to remember that the condo unit is one of the biggest investments in a resident/owner's life. They depend on their investment adviser to provide advice on stock-performance so they have a right to know about the financial performance of their condo investment as well.

Start simple.... Financial information is sometimes tough for people to understand. Not everyone is a trained accountant. Everyone understands expense reporting to budget and last year. The Reserve Fund is important from the point of view is it properly aligned with future capital projects?

An ongoing discussion/explanation should address the pros and cons of adequate "monthly fee" funding of the reserve as opposed to periodic lump sum assessments.

Help from the Authority.... "The Annual Condominium Requirements Guide"

In our earlier article we discussed the benefits of "strategic planning" by condo boards. Now, the Condo Authority is

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recommending the development of an "Annual Plan." The authority's release suggests the plan should include all governance and operational requirements the condo board needs to address during the next fiscal year, the critical dates for accomplishment and the individual responsible for ensuring compliance with each requirement.

We would take this a step further to include starting with a SWOT analysis that identifies: *Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats*. Strategies and Action plans will fall out of this analysis. The plan should also be for 5 years which provides for updates annually to see what was accomplished and what was not.

The plan and its updates should provide for reports to the resident/owners allowing for yet another opportunity to communicate.

Another feature of the Authority's "Best Practices" announcement is the Vendor and Service Review. The bulletin goes on to recommend four factors as follows:

- (1) The vendors or service providers the condo corporation will continue to use
- (2) The vendors or service providers the condo corporation will replace

- (3) If there are any goods or services that the condo corporation no longer needs
- (4) If the condo corporation has any material needs that they should procure goods and/or services for.

Once again, a great time for the Condo Board to reach out by way of survey to determine any input that resident owners may wish to contribute to the conversation.

The work load for Boards increases... and will no doubt dictate the need to initialize committees to help. Appointments to committees is a good practice because it prepares folks for taking on future board director positions. This, in turn, begins to build a template for succession planning.

In Part II of our series, we quoted the company CondoHive in their assertion that "the greatest outcome from a strategic plan is creating consensus on the direction which results in a harmonious community in the condo."

It does begin with great communication practices and the desire of Condo Boards to carry on open and constructive conversations with their residents. This also includes pursuing good listening skills..... all part of that elusive topic called "Communications."

When Vlad Guerraro Jr and his Blue Jay teammates pass baseballs to children in the crowd..... they are communicating with their fans. They are saying... thank you for your support!

Boards and residents.... *you too can communicate!*

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