



Dave Williams

## PART II

# Condo Communications Matter... the Mediums

*What follows is the second of three articles on the thorny issue of Condominium Communications. At the end, I have provided my email address. I hope you will take time to pass along your comments, thoughts and ideas. I am sure there are Condo Corps that are doing a great job of communicating back and forth with their residents. Why not all?*

Our article in the Spring edition of Condo News suggested that the time may have come for Condo Boards to elect directors with differing background experiences. In fact, taking the idea a step further, it is also probably time for your condo to develop a "Strategic Plan" that will incorporate good communication practices alongside a board diversity matrix and a succession plan.

CondoHive, a consulting company to condominiums, suggests that every condo should have a strategic plan. A good plan will outline a vision for the condo and the steps and priorities to reach that vision. The greatest outcome from a strategic plan is creating consensus on the direction which results in a harmonious community in the condo. They go on to say; "A condo with a strategic plan creates happy board members, happy residents and happy managers, and that means a happier community for all". An important part of the CondoHive strategic planning directly addresses **Communication**.

*continued...*



## Governments are leading the way in communicating

Governments at all levels are leading the way by ramping-up communication efforts. Councilor Brenda Johnson, City of Hamilton, Ward 11, communicates with her residents regularly by email blast and through her website.

The City of Hamilton reaches out to residents in the form of consultations; transportation planning, residential development and commercial development planning.

The Federal Government and Provincial Governments have held daily pressers for months now to keep the electorate informed around COVID. Yes, there have been contradictions, but in general there are few Canadians that could claim ignorance to the number of cases and where vaccinations stand.

So, what are the mediums here?

Websites, email blasts, consultations, press conferences..... are all methods open to Condominium Boards. There are still other methods available..... some simple and others requiring a little more expertise.

## A simple.....but creative message!

Traffic calming is always a challenge in many condo communities. On a small street in downtown Hamilton, "a flag man" does his thing very silently. He is brightly colored as you can see from the picture, with one word painted on his back that being "slow". The street is small and narrow and always has vehicles parked on one side, so it is somewhat dangerous.

Turn onto the street and the first thing



you see is "flagman"; simple, but effective.

## A larger problem requires a little more help!

A large high-rise complex in Mississauga was experiencing problems with residents throwing garbage and litter

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from their balconies. Yes, it included dog waste.

What to do?

Sue Langlois' company "Digi-Notice" to the rescue. Digi-Notice describes itself as "ad-free Digital Signage for Condos". The signage is in the form of a television screen (electronic billboard if you wish) that conveys either "still" or "animated" messaging. The screen is mounted in elevators or on walls where people cannot miss catching the message.

Did I hear you ask how the campaign to stop the garbage throwing went? You can watch the video on the Digi-Notice website to see for yourself. The good news.....the garbage throwing stopped within a couple of weeks. The other good news.....a new sense of community emerged most likely from everyone coming together to accomplish a common goal.

### The Condo Communication Conundrum

There are many communication approaches available to Condo Boards... ..we have seen some good examples above.

There are others. Module 4 in the Condo Authority's "Director Training Course," suggests one responsibility of board directors is communicating information to resident/owners. The module

goes on to suggest flyers, email and bulletin boards as communication mediums open to boards. To this list we can add town-hall meetings and round table discussions.

Townhall meetings are intended to be "two-way" not "one way" opportunities open to condo boards and residents. Conducted in the proper manner, the atmosphere can be very productive towards generating the sense of "harmony" referred to by CondoHive. The two-way communication also allows boards to pick-up on the thinking of its residents.

Still, there are folks that do not feel comfortable standing in front of 100 people to ask a question or raise a point. Yet that point could be important to the success of the condo.

This, then, is where a "round-table" discussion can be effective.

On a periodic basis, two directors will make themselves available for small, round-table meetings when one or two residents can make an appointment to discuss an issue or make a suggestion. It is of course incumbent upon the directors to acknowledge the input and follow through if the idea is sound. Conversely, if the point made is not workable then the condo board director should provide a direct answer with sound reasoning behind it.

### One other point.....

It almost seems reasonable to talk about condo communications as being necessary dialogue.....residents to board members and vice versa. The word dialogue implies ongoing.

It is often said that the first 20 years of a condo's existence is like "the honeymoon" in that nothing much goes wrong. However, as the building or the community matures, things start to happen, replacement costs start to rise and therefore methods of keeping up with the expense need to be discussed.

Developing the right communication practices early and often can avoid bad feelings emerging.

For the fall edition, we will talk about strategy.....what information needs to be communicated, how often, and when. Meanwhile, if you wish to comment on this article or our earlier article on condo communication (spring edition), we would like to hear your thoughts. You can reach us at [williamsdavem7@gmail.com](mailto:williamsdavem7@gmail.com).

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Thanks to: Sue Langlois of Digi-Notice Inc., [info@digi-notice.com](mailto:info@digi-notice.com); Steve Ilkiw of CondoHive, [info@condohive.ca](mailto:info@condohive.ca); and Councilor Brenda Johnson, City of Hamilton

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