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The state of Resident Experience Management report

Fresh industry insights from multifamily operators and recommendations on improving the resident experience.

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Executive summary

“Resident experience” has gone from being a buzzword in the multifamily industry to a significant area of focus for apartment operators. That’s because renters’ priorities have evolved, and retention is trickier than ever. While residents once prized amenities, now they heavily value convenience, connections within the community, and meaningful living experiences. In other words, their decision to renew is often determined by how the community makes them feel.

Resident experience is somewhat of an abstract concept. Companies have differing ideas on what it means, and how to deliver living experiences that retain residents. Because there are so many differing opinions on what comprises an ideal resident experience, we at Zego (Powered by PayLease) partnered with a third-party research firm to survey multifamily professionals about the topic. This report analyzes the key findings:

- **Turnover costs are approximately \$4,000 per unit.**
- **Industry average retention rate is 58% but top performers are achieving 65%**
- **The majority of churn drivers are controllable by management**
- **Sense of community continues to be a value driver for residents**
- **Apartment operators think that offering a modern living experience is the most important component of Resident Experience Management**
- **Managers are planning to provide more digital option across key resident touchpoints**
- **Managers’ & residents’ communication preferences are not aligned**



Resident Experience Management defined

Starting with the move-in experience and ending with move-out or renewal, and encompassing everything in between, “resident experience” is the curation of personalized and frictionless touch points throughout a renter’s tenancy.

As renters’ expectations have evolved, so has the need for curated lifestyle offerings that go beyond the physical spaces and feel-good aspects of a community. The modern renter finds value rooted in experiences and seeks greater convenience, connectivity, and self-service when it comes to day-to-day apartment living. Resident Experience Management is the manner in which all resident touchpoints can be improved in order to deliver remarkable community living experiences.

Resident experience spans the renter lifecycle and includes:

Onboarding new residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Move-in process▪ Pet, vehicle, and visitor registration
Managing current resident touchpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Monthly rent & utility payment▪ Day-to-day home management (e.g., package management, repairs, etc.)▪ Unit access▪ Smart home devices▪ Streamlined two-way resident communication▪ Amenity reservations▪ Exclusive local community offerings (i.e. discounts to local shops/services)▪ Social and holiday calendar coordination, event planning, and decoration▪ Emergency communication & support (e.g. COVID-19 related lockdowns, inclement weather, etc.)
Renewing or off-boarding residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Lease renewal▪ Move-out process
Benefits of Resident Experience Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Higher resident and staff satisfaction▪ Increased renewal rates▪ Higher occupancy▪ Reduced turnover expenses

**What is the resident
experience and why
does it matter?**



Multifamily communities are designed with features that are intended to attract residents. Pools. Big closets. Sparkling new kitchens. But there's something about a community that's begun to overshadow the most sought-after apartment features.

It's something that can give your community a leg up over the most trendy or competitively-priced buildings. And if it's poorly managed you'll have a harder time getting new residents. Not to mention keeping them once they're there.

We're talking about the resident experience. It has become one of the most important selling points of a community. Renters certainly still want a nice apartment unit at a fair price. But their expectations have expanded beyond the four walls they live in. Now, they're also interested in the lifestyle they'll have while living in the community. How will the community offer convenience in their everyday life? Will living in the community enhance their life in any way?

The resident experience also goes beyond the feel-good aspects of the community. How renters interact with you, and how they conduct apartment-related tasks (paying rent, granting

access to visitors, reserving amenities, etc.) all shape the resident experience. Anyone who's ever lived in an apartment community will attest that these day-to-day apartment aspects have some level of friction. Modern renters have little patience for that. Now, residents increasingly expect service-oriented, tech-enabled experiences within their community.

Companies at the top of their game have already intensified efforts into refining the resident experience. Resident Experience Management – the concept of improving all resident touchpoints and creating a remarkable community living experience – is steadily becoming a top priority for apartment operators.

Because the concept is becoming increasingly important, we wanted to find out how multifamily operators are managing the resident experience. This report reveals why the resident experience is such a critical business priority and how companies manage its various aspects.

Resident Experience Management

The concept of improving all resident touchpoints and creating a remarkable community living experience



Resident Experience impacts reputation & occupancy rates

When people have been treated exceptionally well by a business, they like to talk about it. That's one of the biggest reasons why prioritizing resident satisfaction can be a game changer for multifamily companies.

It starts when renters are on the hunt for an apartment. They can visit a community and see for themselves just how nice your units are. What they can't gauge is the living experience. So, they turn to your former and current renters for that information. Before prospects tour your community, it's almost certain they've read up on what others have to say about it. According to [a study by Apartments.com](#), 98% of apartment shoppers rely on reviews and ratings when looking for their next home. And, they really take to heart what those reviews reveal.

If your community reviews are negative, they may never come through the door. Seventy-nine percent of respondents to [NMHC's Apartment Resident Preferences Report](#) said that during an apartment hunt, they didn't visit a community solely because the ratings and reviews were not favorable.

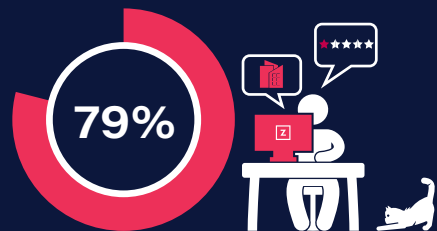
The good news is that positive reviews linger in the minds of apartment hunters, too. Eighty-five percent of respondents to NMHC's survey said that reviews influenced their decision to rent their current apartment.

It's a full circle process. Residents who are happy serve as your advocates by posting good reviews. Those stellar reviews pull in prospective renters and influence their decision to rent. Conversely, residents who have not had a pleasant experience frighten off potential renters with scathing reviews.

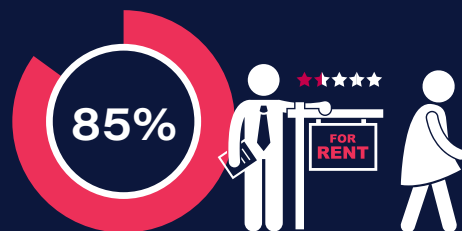
The power of positive reviews



98% of apartment shoppers rely on reviews and ratings when looking for their next home.



79% of apartment shoppers didn't visit a community solely because the ratings and reviews were not favorable.



85% of apartment shoppers said that reviews influenced their decision to rent their current apartment.

Resident-focused service leads to renewals and lower turnover costs

Believing in the importance of the resident experience and delivering on it is a tough balancing act for many organizations. After all, community managers have plenty of operational tasks to juggle on a daily basis. It's easy for the operational aspects of running a community to overshadow resident experience-focused initiatives.

But that mindset brings consequences. Because the turnover that stems from underwhelmed residents creates a constant cycle of additional work that falls on your on-site teams to deal with. There are financial impacts, too. The average turnover cost for one unit is approximately \$4,000. Here's how it all adds up:

Average cost to turn a resident

Cost driver	Cost
Advertising & marketing costs (including leasing commission)	\$340
Unit repair costs	\$780
Concessions	\$1,200
Unit vacancy costs (lost rent)	\$1,530
Total cost of turnover	\$3,850

One way to think about the impact of resident turnover is by considering the amount of time that it takes to recover all of the costs associated with turning a unit. Say, for example, that you lose a resident and are able to find a new resident willing to pay \$200 more per month. It's still going to take you 19 months ($\$3,850/\200) to recover the cost of losing the resident. That's over a year and a half!

Conversely, communities that make an impact on renters see reduced turnover and have an opportunity to thrive. According to [Forbes](#), "Seven in 10 U.S. consumers say they've spent more money to do business with a company that delivers great service." In terms of multifamily companies, this translates to residents staying in their community longer. Because there's nowhere else where great service is more appreciated than within the place you call home.

The cost of resident turnover



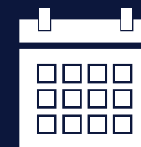
\$3,850

Average cost to turn a resident



7 out of 10

US consumers that say they've spent more money to do business with a company that delivers great service



19 months

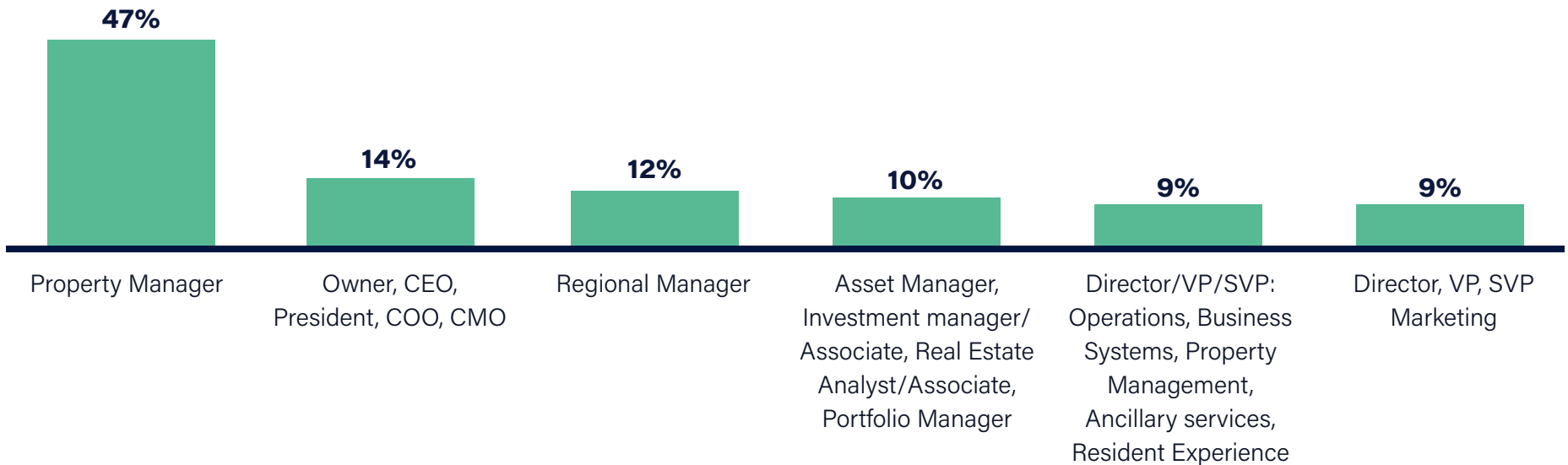
The time it takes to recover the cost of losing a resident

Resident Experience Management survey results

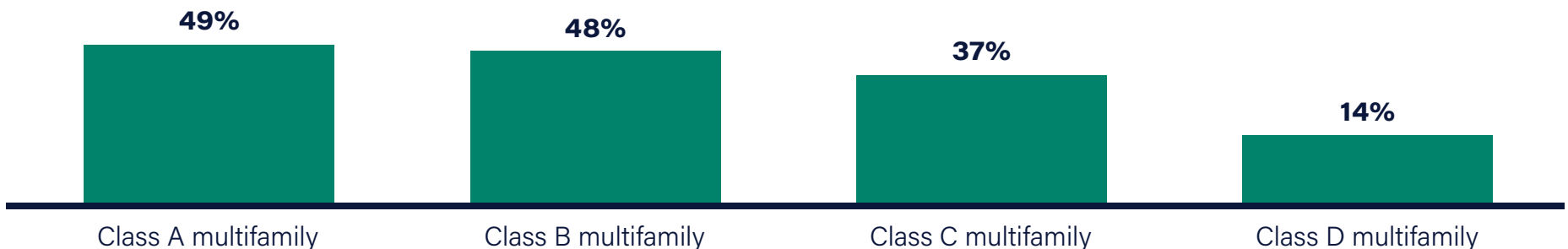
Respondent demographics

In partnership with [Strategy Analytics](#), a third-party research firm, close to 700 multifamily companies were surveyed to understand today's Resident Experience Management strategies. Surveys were conducted in April 2021 and were completed by professionals that manage a minimum of 250 multifamily units. Here is a breakdown of the respondent demographics:

Job role



Property classification





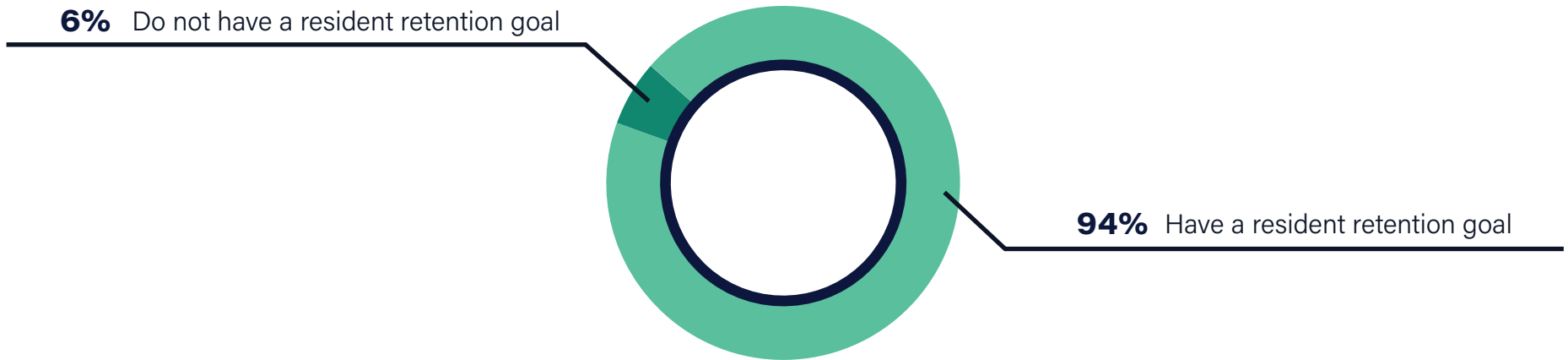
Key takeaway #1

Industry average retention rate is 58% but top performers are achieving 65%

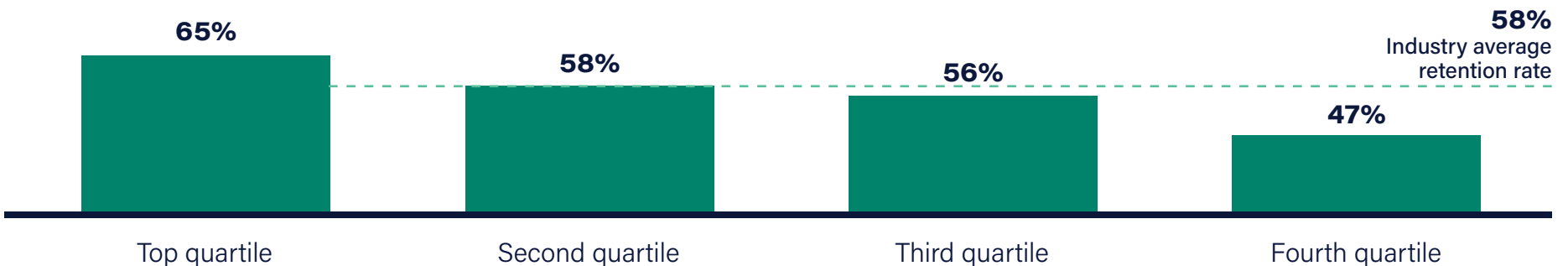
The importance of retaining residents and giving them a positive living experience is clearly growing. But how many multifamily companies make this a targeted initiative?



Survey Question: Thinking about retaining residents and reducing turnover, do you have a specific resident retention goal/target across your property or portfolio?



Survey Question: What is your current resident retention rate?



The top performing quartile of property management companies is achieving a 65% resident retention rate. On the flip side, the bottom third & fourth quartile are falling below the industry average retention rate of 58%. There is nearly a 20% difference in retention rates between the top quartile & the bottom quartile. While some churn is to be expected, the gap between the top & bottom quartile begs the question, what are the top performers doing differently?



What this means for the resident experience

Luckily, the overwhelming majority of companies realize the financial impacts of retaining residents. Ninety-four percent of management companies have a retention goal they strive to hit. Most companies (77 percent) are aiming for 50 percent retention or higher.

This is a healthy and realistic goal. It also accounts for non-controllable instances that prevent residents from renewing (job location change, life circumstances, etc). But survey data shows that most companies fall short of their goal, particularly those who manage fewer than 1,000 units.

This suggests that not enough resources are being devoted to resident satisfaction. Companies are likely putting more emphasis on what, traditionally, has been a top business priority: acquiring new residents. And while that should still remain an important focus, it's not enough to stay competitive. With turnover costs being what they are, management companies need to focus on creating exceptional resident experiences to keep occupancy rates at goal.



Key takeaway #2

Majority of churn drivers are controllable by management

Sometimes residents are happy with their community but can't stay when it's time to renew. Maybe they got a new job that's farther away. Or their life circumstances have changed.



But more often than not, the decision to leave stems from unhappiness with the community management. In fact, [NMHC's Apartment Resident Preferences Report](#) cites this as the second most common reason residents move away from their community (behind seeking lower rent).

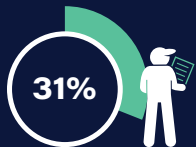
Because it is so costly to replace residents, we wanted to understand what causes churn. We started by looking at the reasons residents report moving to a different community. We then broke the responses down into two categories: controllable by management and not controllable by management to get a better understanding of why residents choose to leave a community.

The 10 most common reasons why residents choose not to renew their lease according to the NMHC/Kingsley 2020 Apartment Resident Preferences Report

Controllable by management



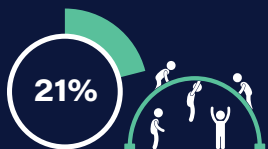
Seeking lower rent



Seeking better apartment management



Seeking better apartment features



Seeking better community amenities



Seeking newer building/community

Not controllable by management



Seeking better apartment floorplan/layout



Seeking better location/neighborhood



Seeking more living space



Moving to a new city



Changing marital/job/family status

What this means for the resident experience

There will always be reasons that residents leave the community that are out of management's hands. Moving to a new city or a change in family status are unavoidable life changes and a healthy reason for churn.

However, by a factor of nearly 2:1 residents choose to leave a community due to a reason that is within management's control. They are things like seeking better apartment management, seeking lower rent, seeking better apartment features. By focusing on improving the resident experience operators can make a material impact on reducing churn.

For example, "seeking better apartment management" is a broad bucket that can encompass the way residents retrieve their packages to the way you manage maintenance requests and everything in between. By examining the key resident touch points across the resident lifecycle and finding ways to optimize them for your residents you can improve their living experience within your community and eliminate their reasons for leaving.





Key takeaway #3

“Sense of community” continues to be a value driver for residents

There are certain factors that residents value about an apartment community. Overwhelmingly, residents say that a sense of community is the top driver of value for where they live.



Every year [SatisFacts surveys residents](#) to track their top drivers of value. Through their initial study they found that a resident's perception of value had a direct link to their likelihood of renewing their lease. Based on that discovery, they dove deeper into "what actually creates an elevated perception of value among residents."

The chart on the next page represents resident's top 5 value drivers and how they have changed since the survey launched in 2013. One thing that remains steadfast for residents is that "sense of community" is the number 1 driver of value.

SatisFacts 2021 Top 5 drivers for perception of value (in order of importance)

2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Sense of community	Sense of community	Sense of community	Sense of community	Sense of community	Sense of community	Sense of community	Sense of community	Sense of community
Quality of maintenance	Apartment appearance & condition	Apartment appearance & condition	Apartment appearance & condition	Social media	Social media	Apartment appearance & condition	Would recommend	Apartment appearance & condition
Apartment appearance & condition	Community appearance & condition	Community appearance & condition	Community appearance & condition	Apartment appearance & condition	Apartment appearance & condition	Neighbors	Apartment appearance & condition	Social media
Office staff responsiveness dependability	Safety & security	Neighbors <small>(1st time in analysis)</small>	Neighbors	Community events	Community events	Would recommend <small>(#7 in 2018)</small>	Social media	Community events
Community appearance & condition	Office staff responsiveness dependability	Safety & security	Community events	Neighbors	Neighbors	Social media	Neighbors	Neighbors

What this means for the resident experience

Over the years, value perception has changed for residents. For example, Social media has bounced from very important in 2017 & 2018 to less important in subsequent years. Community events dropped off resident's top 5 completely in 2020 due to the pandemic but has returned to the top 5 in 2021.

One thing has held steady though, sense of community remains the number one value driver for residents from 2013 to 2021. [SatisFacts explains this value driver in their report](#), "Residents in 2021 now determine value based on how living at the community makes them feel and makes them look to the outside world...Residents want and need to feel connected to what's going on where they live. Having multiple avenues for residents to connect with you, having ready answers and speedy resolutions go a long way."

By focusing on providing a stand-out resident experience and helping residents feel connected to their community you provide value to your residents that in turn compels them to want to live in your community longer.





Key takeaway #4

Providing a modern living experience is the top area associated with Resident Experience Management

Resident Experience Management has many components. We wanted to understand which aspect multifamily operators think is the most important.



Survey Question: Thinking about what Resident Experience Management means to you, which of the following would you consider to be a part of Resident Experience Management?



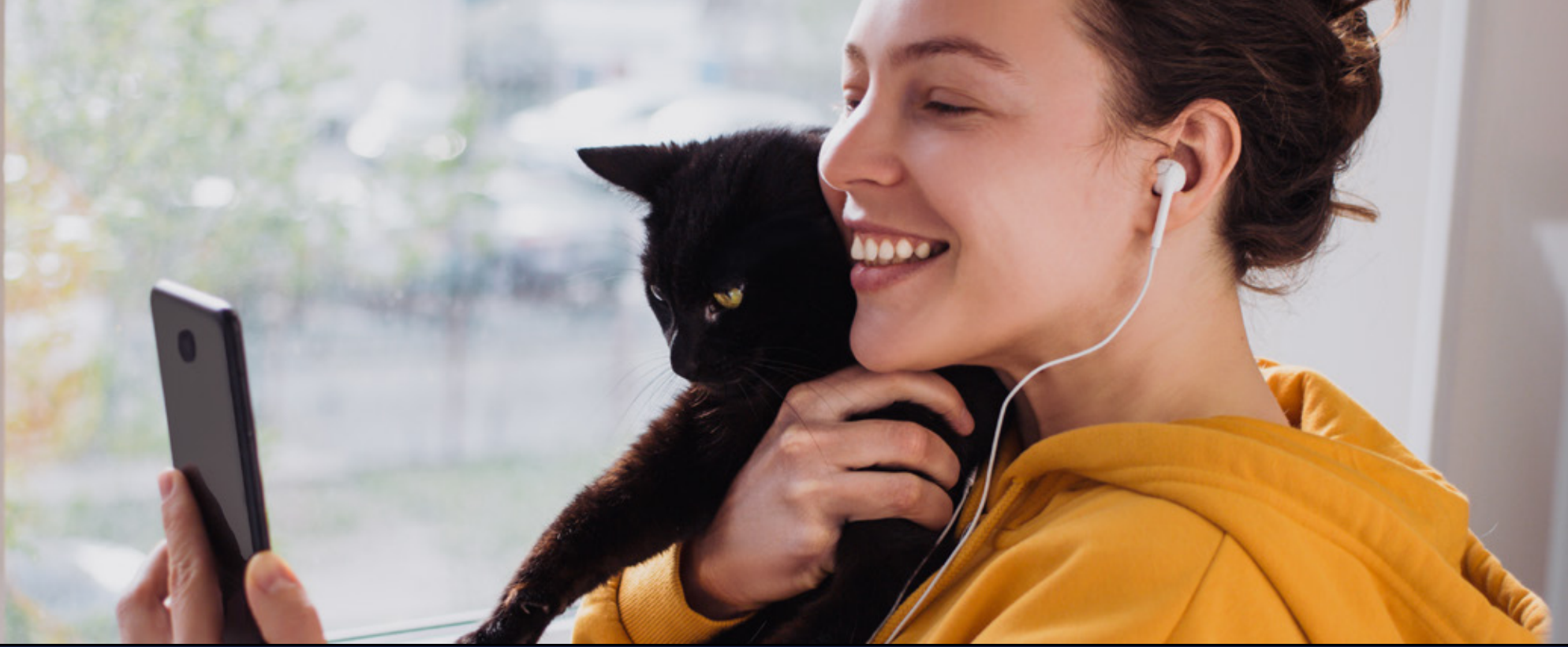
What this means for the resident experience

Property managers think that providing a modern living experience is the most central part of Resident Experience Management. But what exactly comprises a modern living experience? It doesn't necessarily mean newly-built communities. Rather, it means modernizing the way management companies interact with residents throughout the entire resident lifecycle.

Technology that eliminates friction points or enhances apartment living adds value to the community and facilitates a seamless resident experience. From future residents to lease renewals, using digital, automated methods to facilitate those interactions is becoming increasingly critical.

While modern living experience ranks at the top, all of the other areas follow closely behind. Any company that masters most or all of these areas is going to win in the Resident Experience Management category which ultimately impacts retention.



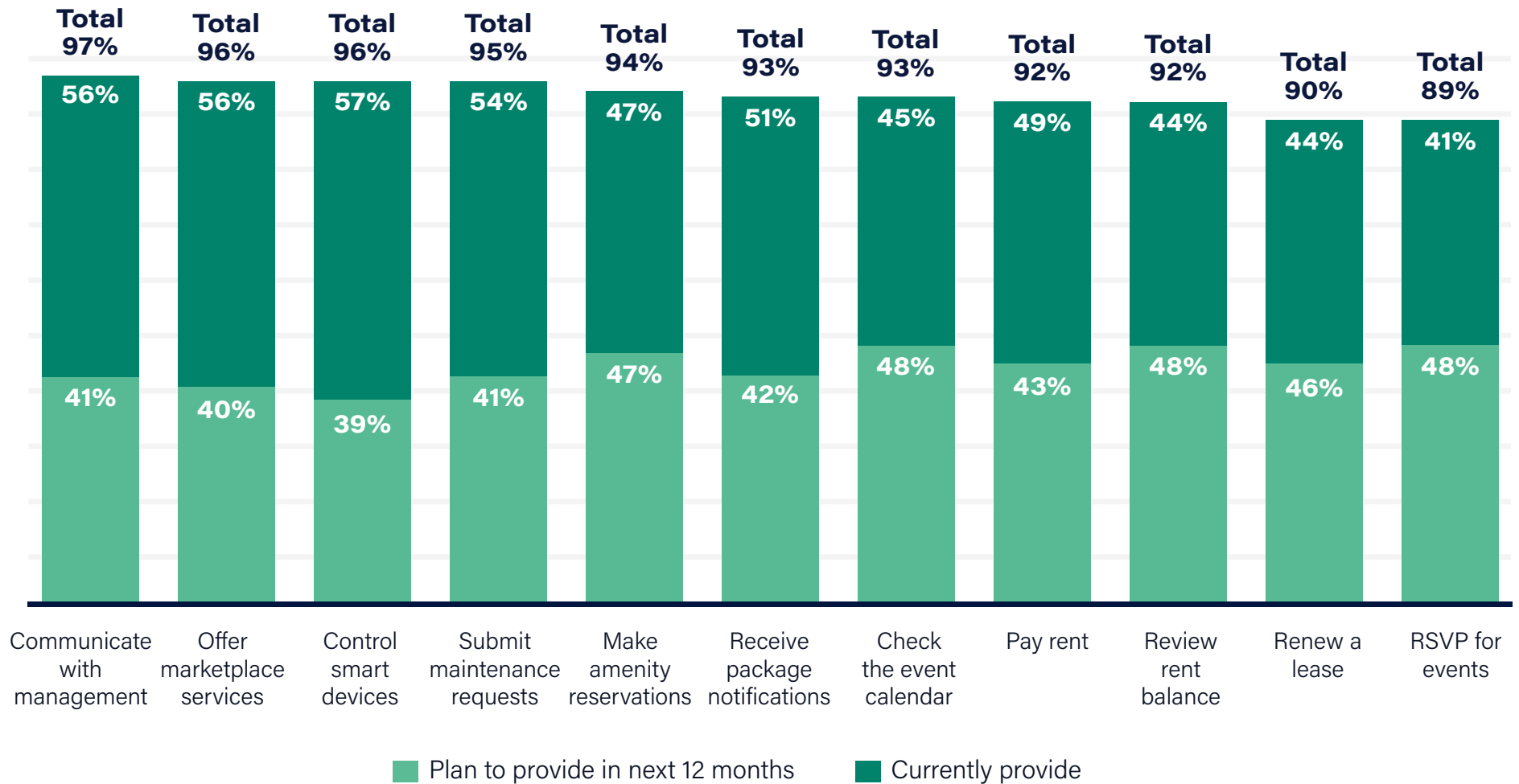


Key takeaway #5

Managers are planning to provide more digital options across the resident lifecycle over the next 12 months



Survey Question: Which of the following options (using an online portal via a web browser, or a mobile app) do you currently provide to your residents, and which do you plan to start providing in the next 12 months?



What this means for the resident experience

Management companies are prioritizing digital experiences for residents and plan to migrate most resident touchpoints to a digital platform within the next 12 months. The most popular functions that will be added are resident self-service options like RSVP'ing for events, reviewing rent balances, viewing event calendars, and reserving amenities. Companies are clearly finding that self-service options are convenient for residents and streamlines duties for their on-site teams.





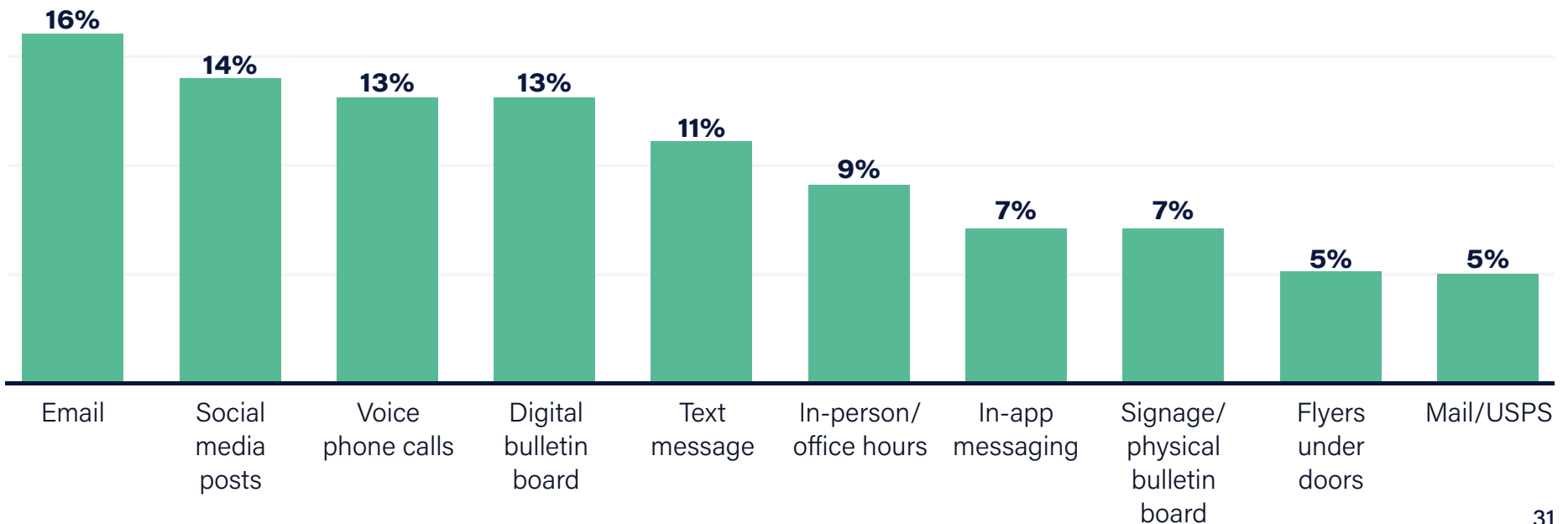
Key takeaway #6

Managers communicate via multiple different channels but residents prefer digital methods

Because communication can have a big impact on resident satisfaction, it's wise to have a variety of channels in place to reach them. According to our survey, here are the primary ways apartment operators communicate with residents.



Survey Question: Thinking about the ways you communicate with residents, which of the following do you use most often to communicate with residents?



Residents prefer digital communications according to NMHC/Kinglsey 2020 Apartment Resident Preferences Report



Note: Digital communication channels include email, text messages, social media, online portal/property app and newsletter. Non-digital communication methods include posted notice/flyer, home phone, and written letter/memo.

What this means for the resident experience

Residents have different preferences across communication channels, and they don't necessarily match managers' primary communication methods. Ninety-two percent of residents chose at least one digital option as their preferred communication method vs only 12 percent of respondents chose a non-digital option as their preference. However, 13 percent of property managers prefer to pick up the phone and call residents when they need to reach them.

That's why it's critical to understand how residents prefer to receive information and cater to those preferences so messages aren't missed. There is currently a disconnect between residents' communication preferences and managers'. This presents an opportunity to management companies. By modernizing your communication methods and shifting to digital options for residents that prefer them you can improve resident satisfaction. Not only that, it offers residents personalization with their community experience that they might not get at a competing property.

Recommendations for providing a standout resident experience



Turnover to some degree is inevitable in multifamily communities. But based on accounts from renters, many instances are preventable. Most residents don't leave because of extenuating circumstances. Communities frequently lose residents because of outdated management practices that don't align with the expectations of today's renter.

Knowing the factors that are likely to trigger negative responses from your residents can help you better focus your retention efforts. We've compiled a comprehensive list of touchpoints across the resident lifecycle that can impact resident satisfaction. Read on for the finite details about how these processes can be refined to ultimately improve the resident experience.

How to build a top-notch resident experience program

Recommendation	Implementation tactics and strategy
Provide a seamless move-in experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Offer orientations for residents who are moving in▪ Automate the move-in checklist▪ Ask for feedback
Keep your community up-to-date and attractive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Never neglect general maintenance▪ Make visually striking areas that renters want to show off▪ Prioritize connected environments
Build a vibrant community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Host community events▪ Facilitate resident-driven interactions and social engagements▪ Differentiate through events & services▪ Connect residents to local service and experience providers
Enhance management communication and responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Communicate with residents on their terms▪ Ensure your staff can quickly and easily send critical messages via multiple channels▪ Allow residents to self-serve▪ Send birthday messages▪ Improve convenience and choice across key resident touchpoints▪ Send thank you messages for taking specific actions

Recommendation	Implementation tactics and strategy
<p>Improve maintenance services and response times</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proactively contact residents about their maintenance needs and concerns ▪ Make it easy for residents to submit a work order ▪ Keep residents updated on the status of their work order ▪ Collect Rsat score on maintenance visits ▪ Schedule a maintenance walkthrough before sending a renewal offer ▪ Ensure all maintenance issues have been resolved before sending a renewal offer
<p>Survey your residents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Send resident satisfaction surveys each quarter ▪ Measure resident net promoter score (rNPS) ▪ Conduct an exit interview survey at move-out
<p>Actively manage the renewals process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Send out renewal notices well in advance of lease expiration & provide incentives to renew early ▪ Allow residents to lock in rates with a longer lease term ▪ Provide a service, improvement, or upgrade at time of renewal ▪ Create a 12-month resident retention marketing plan



Recommendation #1

Provide a seamless move-in experience

- Offer orientations for residents who are moving in
- Ensure your residents know how to stay up-to-date on community news & communications
- Automate the move-in checklist
- Ask for feedback
- Offer residents a small welcome gift

Some communities lose a chance at renewals before a resident has even settled into their unit. That's because moving day sets the foundation for your relationship with residents. If there are too many inconveniences during move-in, their initial level of confidence with the community will be low. This is not a good starting point. Because for the rest of the lease term, it will be a struggle to regain that trust. Proactively eliminating points of friction during the moving process gives residents a positive opinion of the community.

Offer orientations for residents who are moving in: Renters look to their property managers to ensure that moving into the community is as painless as possible. In fact, according to [NHMC's Renter Preferences Survey](#), the majority think it's "very important" to have an on-site team member conduct a walkthrough or community orientation at move-in. Even if they don't take you up on a walkthrough, it's still a valuable gesture to let them know your team is there to help.

Ensure your resident knows how to stay up to date on community news and communications: You want residents to feel like they are a part of the community right off the bat. Getting them in the loop with the latest news and happenings makes the community feel like home before they've even unpacked. Just make sure they are signed up or have their app downloaded before move-in so they have a convenient avenue to communicate with their on-site teams should they need assistance during the move-in process.

“ *We have to make sure that we are doing all the things to make sure our residents' moving day goes smoothly. It really sets the tone for the resident. And it's the first impression for the rest of the time that they're with us. And you never have a second time or chance to make a first impression.*”

— Melinda Howard, PLK Communities

Automate the move-in checklist: Checklists are always a good idea so renters can access all of their need-to-know items in one place. Ideally, the checklist and any tasks assigned to the renter (register pets, pay deposits) are digitized so they aren't burdened with filling out and turning in several physical forms.

Ask for feedback: If a resident was unhappy with the move-in process, it's valuable to have that feedback right away. That will allow on-site teams the opportunity to smooth over any grievances the resident has so the relationship can get off to a better start. Plus, feedback from past move-in experiences helps you improve things for future residents.

Offer residents a small welcome gift: A bottle of wine or a gift card to a favorite community restaurant can be a great start to making them feel welcome in their new home.



Recommendation #2

Keep your community up-to-date and attractive

- Never neglect general maintenance
- Make visually striking areas that renters want to show off
- Prioritize connected environments



Residents want to feel pride in their home and know it's well cared for. If your communities have outdated features and/or are unkempt, it will be a turn off for residents and prospects. An apartment with modern features not only yields a pleasant home environment, but it lets renters know that their home is routinely updated.

You might think this only applies to its outward look and appearance. But it extends to the building's technology too. Features that make day-to-day living easier for apartment dwellers are highly valued by residents.

Never neglect general maintenance: Keeping your community well-tended-to and attractive is a critical part of the resident experience. Whether you realize it or not, your surroundings can have a great impact on your mood. And for many individuals, an unkempt environment can cause irritability or anxiety. If your residents encounter a series of eyesores everytime they walk through the community, they'll likely develop negative feelings about their environment.

Make visually striking areas that renters want to show off: At a minimum, residents want a community that's well tended to. Some residents have even higher standards about the appearance of their community. Not only do they want it in tip-top shape, they want a community that is visually striking. One that they can show off to friends, family, and social media followers.

Some communities have gone so far as to make "selfie ready" areas within the property that entice residents to snap a photo of themselves. Whether it's with murals, lounges with a killer view, or a unique event that would make for a cool photo, communities can create memorable environments that wow residents and their guests. Ideally, these photos get shared on social media, generating buzz about the community.

Prioritize connected environments: It's not just cosmetic features that renters want modernized. Renters want technology and amenities that match the times. Fast wifi and smart home technology are quickly becoming table stakes for in-unit amenities. Modernizing other touchpoints within the community, like access control, package deliveries, and common work areas also make life easier on residents while streamlining work for your on-site teams.



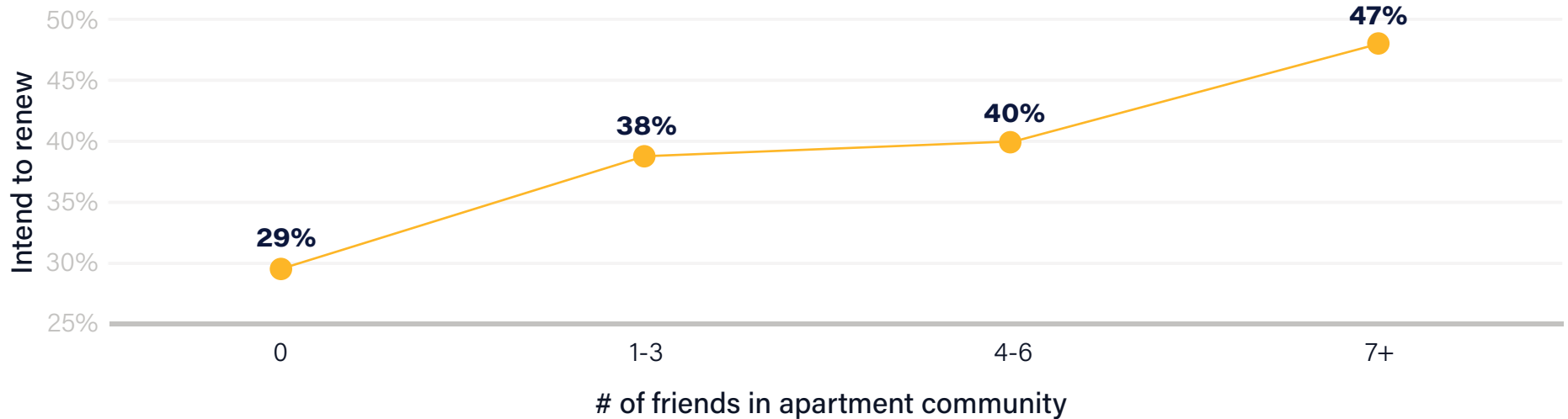


Recommendation #3

Build a vibrant community

- Host community events
- Facilitate resident-driven interactions and social engagements
- Differentiate through events and services
- Connect residents to local service and experience providers

Friendship factor increases renewal



You probably already know that residents are happier with their community if they have friends living there too. [A survey from Apartment Life](#) even shows that having a few friends in the community makes it 38% more likely that a resident will renew their lease. That's why it's up to your associates to bring residents together and foster a sense of community. When there's no emotional connection to the community, there's no pull for residents to stay. A lack of personalized connections (with neighbors, community staff, or amenities that make their apartment feel like home), ultimately lead residents to be lured away to other communities.

Host community events: Hosting regular events will not only help build friendships among residents, it will add value to living in your community. According to [a survey conducted by ApartmentRatings and SatisFacts](#), a sense of community is the top driver of value for residents over the past nine years!

Facilitate resident-driven interactions and social engagements: Sometimes introverted residents might be shy about attending community-hosted events. But you can still find ways for them to interact in a less intimidating way. You can bridge this gap with community apps that facilitate resident interactions. For instance, residents can post their own event announcements with neighbors – perhaps they want to start a book club or are having a summer BBQ – or if they have items to sell, like furniture. This helps them interact with their neighbors. And, it’s also a win because they can do so without relying on the community to organize a function.

Differentiate through events and services: Hosting unique events along with offering services elevates the value of your community. These definitely don’t need to be big shindigs. Things like gift wrapping at Christmas time, offering CPA services at tax time, or having local food trucks come by are a few events that can add value to their living experience. But the key is to provide things that are geared towards their lifestyle – whether you’re assisting them,

“In 2020, Zego Mobile Doorman made an impact by giving us a sense of community, bringing us all together, and being able to communicate without being 1:1, and still feel in touch with them.”

— Shayna Hallis, Property Manager, VIA123 (A Rhapsody Living Community)

“ I remember in one focus group we conducted out of South Carolina, we said, “How important is a sense of community for you to stick around?” And one of the residents said, “Well, our rent went up by 18% last year, and we’re still here, so that’s got to tell you something.”

— Pete Kelly, CEO, Apartment Life

teaching them, entertaining them, or just showing appreciation. If you’re unsure what may interest them, it might be worthwhile to survey them about what they’d attend. There are also many companies that specialize in organizing tailored events at multifamily communities.

Connect residents to local service and experience providers: When a resident moves into your community, they may be unfamiliar with the surrounding area. Connecting them with organizations or details that can bring convenience to their lives is a perfect way of delivering anticipatory customer service. Many communities team up with local businesses to offer special discounts to their residents on anything from laundry and dry cleaning services, pet sitters, to local restaurants. Even if they are already familiar with these businesses, receiving a special discount because they are a member of your community can make them feel special.



Recommendation #4

Enhance management communication and responsiveness

- Communicate with residents on their terms
- Ensure your staff can quickly & easily send critical messages via multiple channels
- Improve convenience and choice across key resident touchpoints
- Allow residents to self-serve
- Send thank you messages for taking specific actions
- Send birthday messages

Technology has conditioned us to expect fast communication. And renters hold their property managers to an even higher standard. Since apartment operators are ultimately responsible for people's homes, the stakes (and expectations) are high. Needless to say, when residents need to reach out to on-site teams they want it to be easy to get in contact with someone.

Not only do they want it to be easy to reach a community manager, they want a quick response. Promptly responding to resident concerns helps build trust in their on-site teams. Plus, it makes residents feel valued when they know their on-site teams are working to resolve their problem. Even if your teams can't rectify the situation right away, residents still want to hear that and know it's being worked on. When emails and requests go unanswered, your residents start to feel like they are not a priority

Proactively communicating with residents about community updates goes a long way too. Whether it's a friendly reminder about upcoming maintenance, or an alert about an important development in the neighborhood – giving residents a heads up shows consideration about moments that may impact their day-to-day routines.

Communicate with residents on their terms: Oftentimes, resident communication happens based on the management company's preference. Let residents choose how they prefer to receive communication from your team. Not only does this give them an avenue of choice, but it makes for better communication. Ideally, you should have them designate their preferred communication method the very first time they interact with your community (usually for a tour registration). If each interaction with residents is tailored to their preferences, they'll be less likely to get disgruntled over communication.

Ensure your staff can quickly and easily send critical messages via multiple channels:

This goes hand-in-hand with communicating with residents on their terms. When there's news you need to get out to your community, it needs to be communicated through every avenue. Residents all have different communication preferences, so if you limit how messages are sent, someone's bound to miss it.

Improve convenience and choice across key resident touchpoints: Giving residents flexibility about how they can interact with your community is essential in our on-demand world. For instance, self-guided tours let prospects tour on their own schedule. And once they are a resident, they want the same flexibility. This even rings true with the administrative parts of apartment life. Allow residents to customize several facets to suit their needs and preferences. For instance, residents can designate their communication preferences (email, text, calls) for interacting with their property manager. They can also get information that is pertinent to their interests and location.

“Zego™ Mobile Doorman has made it convenient for our residents to communicate with the site staff and management team while creating a seamless experience between resident and property team members.”

— Erik Rodriguez, Community Manager, House39

“ *The more we're communicating with our residents, the more connected they're going to feel. If they feel connected, the more likely that they're going to renew when the time comes.”*

— *John Reardon, Vice president of marketing, at Beacon Communities*

Allow residents to self-serve: Self-service allows residents to resolve all of the common tasks related to apartment living when it's convenient for them – all without having to burden your staff. Plus, it can eliminate any friction that may arise from in-person interactions. These on-demand services deliver better efficiency for both residents and community managers while simultaneously providing a more personalized experience. Some of the most useful applications of self-service in multifamily communities include:

- Package lockers and notifications
- Vehicle registrations
- Booking clubhouse facilities
- Registering guests
- Issuing temporary access codes to service workers
- Pet registrations
- Self-guided leasing tours

Send thank you messages for taking specific actions: Showing your appreciation with a “thank you” goes a long way. Thanking residents after they’ve done something that benefits your company - referred a friend, submitted a review, renewed their lease, etc. - is an important relationship builder. Automating these messages is an excellent way to say thank you because it ensures that residents always get appreciation for their interactions.

Send birthday messages: Recognize your residents on their special day! Getting an unexpected birthday wish always stands out, so be sure to collect their date of birth, and send them a birthday message (through their preferred channel of communication, of course).



Edison47 improves the resident experience with mobile communication

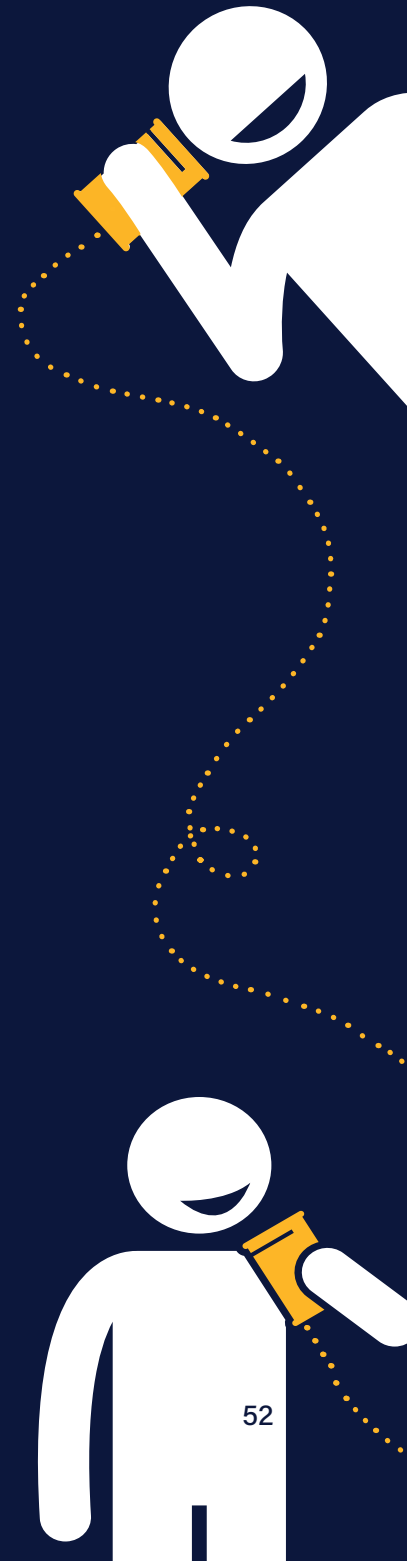
Edison47, a multifamily property management group located in the North and South Puget Sound has focused their communication efforts to ensure they are reaching residents the way they want to be reached. They used to rely on 1:1 communication methods like email, phone calls or in-person methods.

But this was a drain on their site staff's efficiency. Site teams were answering the same questions over and over like, "What time is the gym open?" "How do I submit a work order?" The constant repetition was burning teams out and preventing them from focusing on higher-value tasks.

By adding Zego Mobile Doorman to their tech stack, they were able to ease the communication burden on staff. Residents select their preferred method of communication directly in the app and all messages are routed to them based on that setting.

"It has allowed us to keep folks updated without being another thing that residents have to deal with. It's not a task. If you get a notification in your Zego Mobile Doorman app as a resident you know it has something to do with something that matters to you. It's very direct and succinct."

— [Jered Lerum, Director of Business Development for Edison47](#)





Recommendation #5

Improve maintenance services & response time

- Proactively contact residents about their maintenance needs and concerns
- Make it easy for residents to submit a work order
- Keep residents updated on the status of their work order
- Collect Rsat score on maintenance visits
- Schedule a maintenance walkthrough before sending a renewal offer
- Ensure all maintenance issues have been resolved before sending a renewal offer



No matter if you live in a single family home, or in a Class A multifamily community, things are going to need repair from time to time. Most renters understand that this is unavoidable. But how your teams resolve these instances can profoundly impact resident happiness.

Ultimately, you want residents to feel confident enough in the maintenance process that they'll report anything that's not working properly. If they are turned off by any aspect of the process, they may fail to report things that aren't critical but that should be addressed. For instance, they might have a leaky faucet or a dishwasher that makes an irritating sound. These "small" things that are inconvenient to report wear on their nerves and prompt them to look for a nicer place.

Proactively contact residents about their maintenance needs and concerns: Stopping issues before they reach a breaking point is especially important. Not only for your building, but for resident satisfaction. Checking in with residents to make sure things are functioning properly sends a message that you value their comfort and want them to be satisfied with their home. Plus, you may be able to resolve minor issues before they turn into something bigger (or more expensive to fix).

Make it easy for residents to submit a work order: If there's not an easy way for them to submit a maintenance request, that can cause frustration. Plus, it can prevent your maintenance team from getting accurate details about the issue and arriving unprepared for the visit. [NMHC's data](#) shows that 64% of renters think the most convenient way to report an issue is by using a community app. This usually lets residents post pictures and comments about what is happening so your teams are fully prepared.

Keep residents updated on the status of their work order: Residents don't want to be in the dark about the status of their repair. It's important they have an avenue to check the status. Think of Uber Eats. Customers see real-time updates about their order and have an estimated time of arrival. Residents appreciate the same transparency when it comes to work happening in their unit.

Collect Rsat score on maintenance visits: After a work order is completed, send out a quick one question automated survey to determine their Resident Satisfaction Score (Rsat). This can

be done by having each resident rate their experience on a scale of 1-5. Over time, you will be able to track if the average score goes up or down so you can identify any trends about what's making them happy or unsatisfied with the process.

Schedule a maintenance walkthrough before sending a renewal offer: Chances are, if your residents have things in their unit that could use some attention, they won't be too keen to renew. Prior to initiating a conversation about their renewal, it's a good idea to inspect their unit and identify items that aren't working properly and arrange for them to be taken care of.

Ensure all maintenance issues have been resolved before sending a renewal offer: If you conduct a walkthrough before renewal time, it's extremely important to follow through on the promises you made at that time. Residents will be hesitant to renew if there are unkept promises about improvements to their home.

“ *Beacon Communities saw an increase in work orders, along with positive feedback from residents after rolling out Zego Mobile Doorman. “We saw a pretty dramatic uptick in online work orders immediately when we rolled out. That first month, we saw positive data come through and it continued to trend up.”*

— *John Reardon, Vice President of Marketing, Beacon Communities*



Recommendation #6

Survey your residents

- Send residents satisfaction surveys each quarter
- Measure resident net promoter score (rNPS)
- Conduct an exit interview survey at move-out



Never underestimate the value of surveying your residents. Any opinions they can offer you — whether it's positive or negative — gives you the insight that will help craft a good resident experience. Plus, it allows you to resolve any issues that may be affecting how they feel about the community. Oftentimes residents won't speak up when they have concerns, they'll just move out. Proactively surveying residents allows you to uncover issues and concerns that wouldn't have been brought to your attention otherwise.

Send resident satisfaction surveys each quarter: Asking residents for feedback lets them know that you value their experience and opinions. Quarterly surveys are frequent enough where residents will remember any issues or positive experiences. But yet, it's not so frequent that it feels annoying. Once you get survey responses, it's important to act on their feedback to show residents that you value their opinions and suggestions. If you can't implement their suggestions let them know you appreciate their feedback and offer an alternative solution.

5 Tips for conducting successful surveys

1. Keep surveys short and simple. Limit them to 5-10 multiple choice questions, max. Don't ask open ended questions except for: "Do you have any additional comments or concerns?"
2. Keep surveys focused on one topic to make it easy and effortless for residents to complete (ie: Maintenance, community events, communication with staff, etc.)
3. Send them out on a regular basis ie: quarterly, twice a year.
4. Add an incentive to complete the survey and a deadline, ie: "surveys completed by the deadline will be entered to win \$100 off next months rent"
5. Use your community mobile app or online survey tools to conduct surveys.

Sample survey topics:

- Residents' preferred type of communication (mobile app, text, email, telephone)
- Maintenance performance and process
- Why did they choose to live in your community
- Community partnerships/marketplace deals they'd like to take advantage of (dog walker, restaurants, dry cleaners etc.)
- Community event ideas to help inform your onsite event calendar

Sample message for survey request



To

Cc Bcc

Dear *(Resident)*,

At *(Management Company)*, we value our residents' feedback. We believe we are only as successful as our residents feel we are so it's critical that we hear from you.

You've recently had maintenance work done on your apartment home.

We want to hear about your satisfaction with the maintenance process and results. We ask you follow this link to complete a very short survey: *(hyperlink to survey)*

Sincerely

(Name)

(Position)

(Community or Management Company)

Sample maintenance survey questions:

- What maintenance service did you receive?
- How satisfied were you with the maintenance request process?
- How satisfied were you with the length of time it took to complete your request?
- How satisfied were you with the maintenance team?
- How satisfied were you with the cleanliness of the work done in your home?
- Any additional comments or suggestions about the maintenance repair process?





Measure resident net promoter score (rNPS): Net Promoter Score is a metric used in customer experience programs to measure the loyalty of customers to a company. They are measured with a single question survey and reported with a number from -100 to +100. NPS is often considered the gold standard customer experience metric and when applied to multifamily, it allows you to track the satisfaction of your residents over time.

To determine your resident net promoter score (rNPS), send out a survey that asks a single question or include this single question in one of your surveys: How likely is it that you would recommend living at (Community Name) to a friend or acquaintance? Respondents will answer with a rating from 0-10, 0 being not at all likely and 10 being extremely likely.

Depending on their response customers fall into 1 of 3 categories to establish an rNPS:



Promoters: respond with 9 or 10 and are loyal, happy residents. These are the people most likely to leave glowing reviews online.



Passives: respond with a 7 or 8 and satisfied but not happy enough to be considered a promoter.



Detractors: respond with a 0 to 6. These are unhappy customers who are unlikely to renew their lease or recommend your community. They may even discourage others from living in the community via online reviews or word of mouth.

How to calculate your rNPS: Subtract the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters. For example, if 10% of respondents are detractors, 20% are passives, and 70% are promoters, your NPS score would be $70 - 10 = 60$. Perform this survey on a regular basis (quarterly, bi-annually) so you can track the happiness of your residents over time. If your rNPS starts to dip, you can take proactive steps to improve resident satisfaction before it's too late.

Conduct an exit interview survey at move-out

It's important to know why you are losing residents so you can make informed decisions to improve the resident experience. It's easier to retain residents if you understand what they value in an apartment community. In a workplace, it's common for businesses to conduct exit interviews to understand why the employee chose to leave and what they can do to improve and retain existing employees. Apply this concept to your residents. Send existing

residents a quick survey after they give notice to vacate to understand why they decided to leave.

Sample move-out survey

Dear Resident, We hope you enjoyed living in our community. We are happy to have had you as a resident. In order to better serve our future residents we'd appreciate it if you'd take the time to fill out this quick survey.

1. How satisfied have you been with your interaction with our staff? Did they meet your needs and treat you with respect? (ie: property manager, maintenance teams, leasing agent, etc.)
2. How satisfied have you been with the safety and security of the community?
3. How satisfied have you been with the maintenance process and quality?
4. How satisfied have you been with the amenities? Are there any amenities that are lacking that influenced your decision to leave?
5. How satisfied have you been with the appearance and upkeep of the property?
6. What were the primary factors that influenced your decision to leave the community?
7. Is there anything we could have done differently to prevent you from moving out?
8. Would you recommend this apartment community to a friend?



Recommendation #7

Actively manage the renewals process

- Send renewal notices well in advance of lease expiration & provide incentives to renew early
- Allow residents to lock in rates with a longer lease term
- Provide a service, improvement, or upgrade at the time of renewal
- Create a 12-month resident retention marketing plan




You can potentially have better luck with renewal rates if you strategize the process. Don't just send them a renewal letter before the lease expires and hope for the best. Here are some tactics to help boost retention.

Send renewal notices well in advance of lease expiration and provide incentives to renew early: If you send a renewal notice without any incentive to renew, residents may start looking elsewhere and not notify you of their plans to vacate until they pay their final month's rent. By encouraging residents to renew early, you can avoid the scramble of trying to fill a vacancy with only 30 days notice. This will also give you a better idea of who plans to

vacate with more lead time so you have more time to fill the vacancy. For example, if a lease is set to expire on July 31st, send a renewal notice 120 days earlier, on April 1st and offer multiple renewal options based on when they renew by.

Assuming rent of \$1,000 per month and current market market rent of \$1,200, the early renewal incentives could look like this:

Renew by	Now rent will be
May 1	\$1,050/month (5% increase, 12.5% below market rent)
June 1	\$1,070/month (7% increase, 10.8% below market rent)
July 1	\$1,100/month (10% increase, 8% below market rent)



Continue to send notices with the remaining options every 30 days. You could also include a month-to-month option if that fits within your policies. This will encourage residents to renew their leases earlier or give you notice of their plans to vacate sooner so you can plan accordingly and minimize vacancy.

Allow residents to lock in rates with a longer lease term: By offering a range of leases beyond 12 months (18 months, 24 months, 36 months) residents won't have to fear unexpected rent increases. And, it ensures that you'll retain that resident beyond the typical 12-month leasing cycle. If you are concerned about losing out on rent increases, you can build in a rent increase based on the market rate (ie: increase rent 5% each year). Residents like this

because it allows them to plan for the rent increase without any surprises, and you don't end up undercharging because of the longer lease term. You'll have one less lease renewal to worry about in the short term and residents feel like you are doing them a favor by giving them options and predictability. It's a win-win!

Provide a service, improvement, or upgrade at time of renewal: Incentivize residents to renew by offering an upgrade or improvement to their apartment. It also makes residents feel valued and appreciated for their loyalty to the community. Position it as a renewal bonus or anniversary gift to make them feel extra special. Possible enhancements could include:

- Adding smart tech (smart locks, thermostats and/or switches)
- Deep cleaning (carpets, grout, etc.)
- New fixtures (ceiling fan, light fixtures, kitchen/bathroom hardware)
- Fresh paint
- Flooring upgrades
- Updated plumbing
- New kitchen appliance(s)

Create a 12-month resident retention marketing plan: Checking in on existing residents throughout the year allows you to build a relationship with them and address any concerns that they may not otherwise raise. Create a plan that spans the lifecycle of the resident from

move-in through lease renewal and provides multiple touch points throughout. By creating a plan, you operationalize resident retention making it repeatable and scalable. Be sure to review your plan with your team and optimize it on a regular basis to continually improve.

Sample 12-month resident retention marketing plan

Time frame	Retention strategy	Suggested action
Prior to move-in	New resident onboarding	Review the lease, resident policies, answer ?'s, provide access to resident mobile app
Move-in day	Welcome resident	Greet residents at their new home. Ensure they know how to work appliances and access amenities. Encourage resident to complete move-in checklist.
2 weeks after move-in	New resident onboarding feedback	Send a survey to gather feedback about their move-in experience, if they need anything or if there is room for improvement. Be sure to complete any outstanding items on the move-in checklist prior to sending the survey.
1 month after move-in	Check-in	Send a message to make sure residents are settling into the community and getting acquainted with amenities. This is a good time to make sure they have downloaded your community app and see if they need any help setting up digital rent payments.

Time frame	Retention strategy	Suggested action
1 month after move-in	Maintenance introduction	Maintenance manager check-ins with new residents via message to ensure appliances are functioning properly and review maintenance request process
Throughout the lease	Ongoing contact	Send community newsletters and invites for events
Quarterly	Send surveys to gather feedback	Send quick surveys to residents on a quarterly basis to keep tabs on resident satisfaction. Pro Tip: Automate surveys to be sent out after specific interactions like after a work order is completed or after they attend a community event.
Monthly, quarterly, or bi-annually	Resident appreciation	Host regular resident appreciation events or give seasonal gifts to show you value residents.
120 days prior to lease renewal	Early renewal notice	Send early renewal letter with incentives for renewing
90 days prior to lease renewal	Early renewal reminder	Send updated early renewal letter with incentives for renewing
60 days prior to lease renewal	Early renewal final notice	Send final early renewal notice
45 days prior to lease renewal	Official renewal letter	Send renewal letter

Time frame	Retention strategy	Suggested action
30 days prior to lease renewal	Renewal preparations	Send appointment request to sign lease renewal
14 days prior to lease renewal	Final contact	Call or visit the residents if they have not responded to confirm whether or not they plan to renew.



**Invest in the resident
experience**



Today's residents demand that convenience, connection, and lifestyle-enhancing amenities be ever-present in their communities. By redefining the standard resident experience and catering to these principles, communities can differentiate themselves in today's saturated market. Multifamily operators have found technology to be a useful ally for accomplishing these goals; all while improving efficiency for their on-site staff. Ultimately, investing in the resident experience is bringing success to multifamily organizations.

Resident experience health check

Curious to see how your resident experience program stacks up? Assess your community's current resident experience initiatives using our comprehensive health check. Give yourself 1 point for every "yes" answer and compare your total to our grading scale:

20-25: Champion – Your resident experience program rocks!

10-14: At risk - Room for improvement

15-19: Healthy – You've got a solid program. Keep it up!

0-9: Danger - Your resident experience program needs attention

Recommendation	Best practice	Points
Track resident retention targets	Do you have goals around resident retention and/or turnover reduction?	
	Are you achieving your resident retention goals?	
Enhance management communication & responsiveness	Do you communicate with residents based on their preferences?	
	Can you staff quickly & easily send critical messages via multiple channels?	
	Are your residents able to self-serve when they have common questions or tasks? (ie: package retrieval, guest registration)	
Provide a seamless move-in experience	Do you provide clear move-in requirements and instructions?	
	Do you provide a move-in checklist digitally?	
	Do new residents know how to stay up-to-date on community news & communication?	
	Do you solicit feedback about the move-in experience from new residents?	
Improve maintenance services & response times	Do you provide an online option to create and submit work orders?	
	Can the residents easily track the status of their request?	
	Are residents able to rate their satisfaction? +1 point if you collect Rsat score on maintenance visits.	
	Do you schedule maintenance walk-throughs & resolve issues before sending a renewal offer?	
Keep your community up-to-date & attractive	Is your community well tended to and attractive?	
	Do you have visually striking areas that renters are excited to show-off? Would they share it on their social media?	
	Does your technology and amenities keep up with the times (ie: Property-wide wifi, smart home tech, etc.)	
Build a vibrant community	Do you regularly host a variety of community events that provide avenues for neighbors to meet each other?	
	Do you provide an online forum for residents to share and connect (e.g. an online bulletin board to buy/sell items)	
	Do you provide an avenue for residents to connect with the broader community (ie: dog walking services, local restaurant deals, etc)?	
Survey your residents	Do you send resident satisfaction surveys on a regular basis (quarterly, bi-annually, etc.)	
	Do you track your resident net promoter score (rNPS)?	
	Do you conduct an interview survey at move-out?	
Actively manage the renewals process	Do you send out renewal notices in advance of lease expiration? +1 if you allow residents to lock-in rates with a longer lease term	
	Do you offer lease renewal incentives (ie: tiered discounts for early renewal)	
	Do you provide improvements or upgrades when a resident renews?	
Total		

If you're looking for ways to improve Resident Experience Management at your property we're here to help. Contact us today and we'll review your health check and help you find ways to elevate the resident experience at your property or portfolio.

[Schedule a call](#)





Zego (Powered by PayLease) is a property technology company that modernizes Resident Experience Management to boost retention, productivity, and NOI. Zego's mobile-first engagement platform for the residential real estate industry unifies the most critical resident touch-points into one app. Everything seamlessly integrates into your back-end system, from payments and utilities to communications and smart devices.

Since its inception in 2003, Zego has grown from a payments provider to a comprehensive Resident Experience Management platform. With more than 350 employees, Zego serves 6,000 residential real estate companies and over 12 million units nationwide. Learn more about how Zego powers a better resident experience at gozego.com.

gozego.com | 1.866.729.5327 | [@go_zego](https://twitter.com/go_zego)



Written by:

Jennifer Stahlman
Senior Manager, Writing & Editorial
Zego™ (Powered by PayLease)

Designed by:

Courteney Sigmon
Graphic Designer
Zego™ (Powered by PayLease)