

Condo Communication: Saving Thousands, One Incident at a Time

By: Sue Langlois, Digi-Notice

These days it seems like there is never any shortage of news articles talking about the serious risks that come with underfunded reserve funds and the financial stress that comes with mandated top-ups and special assessments.

Condo corporations are always seeking ways to save money on project costs or earn extra income from various sources but one area that often gets overlooked in the financial balancing act is communication.

Lack of good communication is often the #1 complaint at a condo corporation's AGM but did you know that a well-executed communication strategy combined with the visual power of a digital notice board could save your condo thousands of dollars every year? In fact, preventing just one incident each month can result in massive cost savings.

A good communication strategy incorporates highly visual notices with carefully crafted copy designed to achieve specific goals. (And it's worth noting that posting a letter document with size 10-12 type font does not count.)

Condo board directors often assume that property managers handle communication effortlessly but the truth is, managers are usually pressed for time, not always skilled in creating notices with compelling graphics and copy, and can easily fall into the "Reactive Condo Trap", where communication becomes a flurry of emails sent *after* an expensive incident occurs.

For a solution to the problem, let's take a look at how a *proactive* communication strategy over the course of a year can help avoid costly mistakes, reduce maintenance issues, and save valuable time for managers and board directors.

Preventing Water Waste—Savings: up to \$24,000 per year

Water is one of the most expensive utilities in any condo building. Leaks and overuse can lead to staggering bills but a communication campaign designed to raise awareness and foster a culture of conservation. For example, sharing clear, consistent messages about how to report leaks or reminding residents to use water efficiently can make small changes add up to big savings!

Avoiding Legal Fees—Savings: \$9600+ per year

Legal disputes often arise from misunderstandings—whether it's unclear rules or residents not being informed about them. A single legal letter to a condo resident can be \$800. Saving just

one of these disputes each month by clearly communicating rules and responsibilities and getting everyone on the same page can save not only the cost of letters but avoid even more expensive legal disputes as well.

Reducing False Fire Alarms—Savings: \$1,500 (Fire Safety—Priceless!)

A false fire alarm is not just disruptive—it's expensive. Each false alarm costs a building approximately \$1,500, and they happen more often than they should! Educating residents about why they shouldn't open their unit door to air out the smoke from their burnt toast can save money, and educating them about their fire safety plan can save lives.

Preventing Garbage Chute Jams—Savings: \$7200 per year

Garbage chute jams are not only unpleasant—they're costly. Each time a chute gets blocked, it costs around \$600 to have it cleared. Chutes often jam because residents don't know—or forget—what items should or shouldn't be tossed down the chute.

A waste disposal "campaign" can significantly reduce these incidents. If you prevent just one chute jam per month, that's \$7,200 saved annually, and if damage to a chute sprinkler system is avoided, it can be worth ten times more.

Cutting Utility Costs with Clear Communication—Savings: \$12,000 per year

Utility costs rise every year, and residents often aren't aware how their actions affect the building's overall energy consumption. Emphasizing that small but impactful actions can make a big difference in the building's bottom line can save even a 100-unit property a thousand dollars a month.

Reducing Workloads—Time Saved: Priceless

Property managers and board directors are busy people, and their time is valuable. A properly executed communication strategy reduces the number of repetitive questions and complaints, and by consistently keeping residents informed about rules, maintenance schedules, and project updates, teams can spend less time answering the same questions and more time focusing on proactive community building.

Though it's hard to put a dollar amount on the time saved, reducing the workload of property managers and board directors ultimately improves their efficiency, reduces stress, and ensures smoother operations.

The Unseen Value of Effective Communication in Condo Management

Some benefits of a well-executed condo communication strategy are hard to put a price on, but they're undeniably important. Take unauthorized short-term rentals, for example—consistent communication of building policies significantly reduces these, cutting down on security risks. Encouraging a “security culture” in the building dissuades tailgaters and empowers residents to not feel “rude” when they don't hold the door open for strangers. While there's no direct price tag on preventing these incidents, the long-term savings in security and peace of mind are invaluable.

Beyond security, clear communication fosters a stronger sense of community. Engaged residents lead to fewer conflicts, a more harmonious living environment and higher property values.

When projects arise, a clear communication strategy can avoid delays, and save thousands in unplanned costs. Timely updates and transparent timelines ensure residents feel like they “know what's going on” and avoid those aforementioned AGM complaints.

The condo noticeboard remains the most obviously visible and essential communication tool. By consistently sharing timely, relevant information—whether digital or traditional—management can prevent disputes and incidents that could otherwise cost thousands. The cumulative effect? A building that runs smoothly, with fewer surprises and greater savings.

For any condo, investing in a strong communication system isn't just a luxury—it's a necessity. It's the key to reducing costs, minimizing risk, and ensuring a well-run, harmonious community. And when it's all done for you by a professional service, you ensure that the job is done right, every time.