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WINDOW

on rental housing

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Helpful Apps

for
the

Rental Housing Professional


AAA PRODUCTS & SERVICES DIRECTORY INSIDE!

The definition of vendor provided by the English Dictionary is “a person who sells something”. True; but unfortunately for some seeking to establish a vendor/client relationship the word “sells” has negative connotations. A client becomes wary. A client may be so concerned about being over-sold that important information is withheld. It does not have to be this way.

Mutually beneficial relationships are established when the vendor is viewed as a supplier of specialist services. Vendors hold a wealth of knowledge relating to their products or services. A vendor also holds expertise on information within the industry. That knowledge helps the client achieve their objectives. Student housing turn time is a little trickier than most usual turn situations. Typically, there are a lot of beds or apartments that need to be made ready in an extremely short period of time. This can lead to a high stress and chaotic environment for the client and vendor.

A vendor partnership is successful when the mentality is about adding value to each other's organizations. This entails a shared vision for goals and a definition of accomplishment that is measured with the same matrix.

As a client there are many things that we can do to protect our asset and make sure that we create the best relationship possible with our vendors. Clients should educate themselves on the depth of the vendor's services, their philosophies in implementing those services, and the general personality of the prospective vendor organization. Some of this information you can gain from their advertising, social media pages and websites. Always check for testimonials, and ask prospective vendors for references from their clients. Once you have done your research, it is time to meet with our potential vendors face to face. It is important to remember during the meeting to clearly define our project expectations and be open and



TOOLS OF THE TRADE

WHAT A GOOD VENDOR DOES DURING STUDENT TURN TO GET INVITED BACK NEXT TIME

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honest. A mutual understanding of expectations is paramount and assumption of understanding is dangerous. A project with a clear scope of work is more likely to be completed on time and on budget, with a continuing healthy relationship.

Once the relationship has been established, communication is key. Be accessible at all times if possible. If a vendor is waiting on you to make a decision, time is of the essence and waiting can delay the entire process. Don't assume that the vendor personally knows your business or can read your mind. A well-established and well-maintained line of contact can help avoid misunderstandings. Proactively address issues before they become problems. It is worthwhile to establish guidelines and expectations from the outset and commit to meeting these. This may be daily progress reports, a weekly review meeting, or an evaluation process. Telephone calls can be scheduled in the same way as a meeting with your staff. Make sure that problems are not ignored. Every project has risks

and issues. We should always be open about these.

When analyzing your relationship with your vendor, first and foremost, look at how your prospective vendor does business and if they put your needs first. If adjustments need to be made, examine what these are, and put them into play immediately. As a good client always remember these things as well: give praise when it's due, give constructive feedback, pay promptly, be clear about deadlines and discuss any pertinent administrative procedures that have changed within your organization.

Maintaining positive customer relationships can productively affect a vendor's industry and market reputation. When it comes to being a good vendor, there are a few basic rules to follow that help build and maintain a strong working relationship with customers. First, talk with your customers on a regular basis. Communication can avert problems and keep the client aware of any needs or changes in expectations. Make sure that you are setting appointments

when talking to your client, and not just showing up unannounced. This shows a sense of courtesy and respect for their time. Given them 24-48 hours to respond to your email or phone call, before contacting them back again. If they have contacted you, respond if possible by end of the business day. Remember that this is a crucial and busy time in student housing turn, so every minute counts when there are a few hundred of beds that need to be completed in a short period of time. Make sure that you are listening to what your client is asking, and follow their direction. This is especially important regarding their accounting practices and turn policies. Invoices should be submitted in a timely manner, correctly and in the approved method that they ask.

Management companies rely on what they are being told, so always be upfront and honest with your client. If the turn progression is something that your company cannot handle on the standard that you are used to working with, then let them know this from the beginning. In many cases, clients ask vendors to do things beyond their capabilities or interests. When these requests are outside of your comfort zone, don't be afraid to say, "I'm just not qualified to perform this service." Having to turn down a job is better for your business than saying yes and then not performing to the customer's satisfaction. Not every vendor is a good fit for every client, and vice versa. Responsible vendors are the ones that recognize that. This can damage your company's reputation and negative word of mouth travels fast.

Always price goods and services fairly. Keep consistent pricing rather than setting arbitrary purchase amounts. Charging one customer more than another is inconsistent and unethical. Include price breaks where appropriate by evaluating the cost of producing the product or service and adding a moderate profit margin.

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the report on your device. There is an automatic timestamp feature to record inspection dates and track any modifications, such as replacing appliances or performing repairs. Upon move-out, you'll have proof of the move-in conditions should any disagreements arise.



Peak Meetings HD – How much would you pay to have better organized meetings? If it's at least \$7.00, you should check out this \$6.99 app made to streamline your meetings. Peak Meetings creates agendas for your meetings, prioritizes agenda topics, sets goals for the meeting, provides guides as references to keep attendees on task, and can email meeting minutes out as soon as the meeting is over. In addition, you can track action items, add them to your calendar, and send them to anyone who may have missed the meeting, but was assigned an action item. Meeting adjourned!



Card Munch – Wondering what to do with that rolodex full of business cards on your desk? You can throw it out now, thanks to this free app from LinkedIn. Just snap a photo of a business card with the app, and it will store the contact for you. It will even ask if you want to connect on LinkedIn. Free yourself from the stacks of business cards you've been collecting for all these years and free your desk of that rolodex.

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MORE APPS FOR APARTMENT COMMUNITY ON-SITE EMPLOYEES...

*App list courtesy of Tiffany Walters, CAM,
Senior Marketing Manager for Greystar*

Make your own community app designed in the image of the community website that offers community information, social links, mapping and news. What a great way to market to your current and future residents.



i-nigma - Great QR code reader



SplashUp - photo editor for posting to your community web site, Facebook page, or other social media



Walk Score - mapping combined with what's around you



AroundMe - local search app

Tools of the Trade

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A key element as a reputable vendor is to deliver on time. Shortages of products, parts or materials can pose a threat to necessary deadlines. Planning ahead can reduce the number of shortages and in some cases, circumvent you from delaying the project. Service vendors can complete on time by closely monitoring delivery schedules and project milestones, then identifying possible obstacles to a delivery date and develop alternatives to overcome delays. Student turn requires a mass amount of ordering and parts, so preparation is a necessity.

If there is going to be a delay, you must convey this immediately! Have solutions ready for clients when there are problems. Do not expect them to tell you what to do. Provide innovative thinking and problem solving

by offering them solutions and ask for their thoughts. This shows the client that you have thought about the problem and have it under control. Do not pass the buck or blame the issue on another vendor department. If the issue is within your own organization, work things out in private and present a unified front to the customer. If the blame falls on another vendor, present a resolution and work on rectifying the situation immediately.

Remember to always behave professionally. Student turn is frenzied and stressful, so a positive attitude is always refreshing. Respond to clients with proper business acumen and avoid arguments, verbal outbursts and accusations. Train all employees and management in effective communication to insure everyone is operating with the same set of essential skills. Good vendors know to look at the broader picture,

thereby working with the varied personalities of the customer base despite individual challenges, while still providing their best work. Make sure that all employees are reliable, arrive on time and are always prepared to start the day. All individuals should be dressed so that they are easily identifiable as a vendor presenting what company they work for.

Last but definitely not least: food! Turn time is such a crazy environment for management teams, and most of them do not have time to stop and worry about food. The hard thing is that food and beverages are what provides the fuel to keep everyone going. As a vendor representative, stop by the office and ask if their team needs anything. Water and Gatorade are always a nice refreshment during this time. It is not necessary to bring food on a daily basis, but when someone is hungry or thirsty and you have given them

something to satisfy that need, your company's name will always come to mind.

One thing that we know as a fact is that Universities and colleges will always enroll students that need a place to live. This means that come every August, apartments near campuses will be gearing up and heavily involved in student turn. This creates a huge need on both the client and vendor side. The moment you join forces, you begin building a solid foundation for a long-term, mutually beneficial partnership that will contribute to the growth of your businesses. If you're lucky, you might even find someone who's fun to work with as well!

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