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Using Data to Improve Your Condo

Software Programs Like Survey Monkey and Google Forms are Enhancing Data-Based Decision Making

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One important (and positive) trend the condo industry has experienced in the last few years is an increased effort by boards to make data based decisions. Typically this comes from short surveys sent to condo owners and residents to gauge their perspective on pertinent issues.

Technology has become a significant enabler in this regard. Countless software programs like Survey Monkey and Google Forms have made collecting data simple, easy, and very affordable. And while many boards can't boast perfect research methods, even imperfect methods that engage people and seek perspectives achieves better decision making.

At least a handful of management companies also participate in using survey technology to help improve their performance. Specific questions are asked to the board and or ownership at regular intervals. This allows the board and management company to note service trends that identify gaps in performance, opportunities for improvement, and recognition of accomplishment.

You may recognize the term 'net promoter score'. This is a term used to describe whether a person would recommend a product, service or company to a friend. In the case of a condo: "Would you recommend your condo to a friend or family member?"

In the case of the net promoter score, the scoring is a rating from 1 to 10. A score from 1-6 is considered a detractor. Someone who's not impressed with the condo or its direction. A score of 7 or 8 is considered passive. They aren't dissatisfied... but wouldn't necessarily promote the condo either. A 9 or 10 is a promoter. This person loves the condo and although they may not think it's perfect, they would clearly steer a person to live there.

This scoring principle can be applied to other questions to provide an understanding of trends of performance and can help avoid negligence while also providing a platform to recognize improvements.

Surveys sent annually with consistent questions will result in comparable metrics providing your board insights to how it's doing. The sample questions in the table illustrate a building that's improving.

So Why Is Capturing This Information Important?

Many of the decisions boards make are subjective to casual observations and independent experiences. Gathering insights from a variety of owners and residents gives added perspective and insight to what the condo community values, wants to see improved, or if it's thoroughly pleased.

Engaging people by asking them questions helps create support for your board and its decisions. Key to this is listening to what the data says and addressing the findings whether the findings are positive or negative. Hearing bad news and then not acting isn't responsible. You have to be ready for a bad report and then create a plan that helps your condo address those shortcomings.

It's important to measure progress so we know when our actions are having positive, neutral or negative results. For example, a condo hired new cleaners and spent more money on a premium service, but the condos cleanliness rating went down. Time to review that contract and address the cleaners' performance.

QUESTIONS	2018	2019	2020	2021
Would you recommend your condo to a friend or family member?"	7.1	7.4	7.6	8.2
How do you rate the service of the front desk team?	6.4	7.1	8.0	8.5
How do you rate the cleanliness of the condo?	7.5	8.0	8.2	8.8

Sounds Easy, Let's Start Tomorrow

Take care before your start. Gathering data is filled with pitfalls and potential missteps.

First, be thoughtful about your questions. Avoid leading or confusing questions. These can open your board up to criticism from the ownership and spoil your efforts to use data to make the right decisions.

If you're going to do an annual survey be sure that the same questions are asked each and every year to ensure the results are comparable. Spend time creating the questions, vet them with fellow board members and test a sample with owners to get their insights before proceeding.

Consider whether you want to get independent support to help in these endeavours. Trust is paramount in the relationship between owners, board members, and management teams. Someone independent can underscore that trust and address the concerns of any stakeholders that display scepticism.

Beyond trust, an external advisor can also create continuity of efforts that address management and board turnover to ensure annual surveys are performed annually.

Good luck with your board's efforts using data to make your condo a better place to live.