

## PRECONFERENCE Newsletter Submission

Session Title: Social Media – Mastering the Maze

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Have you ever looked up a review to a restaurant before making a visit? Ever clicked on 'Reviews' before booking that hotel? Welcome to the glorious digital and social media world! Perhaps you have already maxed out on all the tweeting, posting, liking, checking in and sharing. Well let's give it one more try!! Because you cannot argue with numbers like, **284 million active twitter** users monthly or **300 million active Instagram accounts** or the **staggering 1.35 Billion Facebook users**. Any marketer that ignores an audience of this magnitude would be crazy. The question is, how do we, as apartment operators, navigate this social media maze? Most of us do not have the means for a dedicated social media guru; therefore, all of us must all be 'mini-gurus' to produce results via this immense audience of apartment renters!!

Like a maze the world of social media and on line presence can involve many wrong turns, many dead ends but ultimately with persistence and vigilance we can make it through the rough terrain. And the terrain can be rough with so many options, outlets and measurement tools it is difficult to know what resources can truly help you and which ones will zap up your time and cause you more pain than pleasure! The great news is that we are NOT at the beginning of the challenges with social media management, many pioneers and guinea pigs have gone before us and we should do what any great CEO, entrepreneur and smart cookie does... learn from others mistakes and capitalize on their successes!

The following key steps should be considered as you approach or even redefine your on line presence and social media:

1. Identifying the starting point – know what you or your property/company has tried before
2. Documenting a simple plan based on proven data
3. Understanding and communicating the expectations of that plan
  - a. How will you measure success? "expectations"
4. Do it! Someone has to actually DO the work and not just plan it!
5. Consistently executing – do something consistently!
6. Reacting and adjusting the plan based on the results

Simple, right! It will be I promise!! The key is to know the resources and tools available in order to allot minimal time for execution because on site residents still have to be our #1 priority!

Step 1 is establishing a starting point. What are you currently doing? What have you done and what has worked? Often that last question, what has worked, is the question left unanswered that throws all of your efforts haywire. Measuring success is an important part of what we do – just like we measure move ins and move outs, month to month, we need to also measure success of our social media efforts monthly. While occupancy and collections should positively benefit from any social media efforts – seeing positive comments and an apartment ratings score that is increasing is a measurement tool that your efforts are working!

The key review sites you should monitor and review to establishing a starting point for your social media footprint are:

- Apartment Ratings – and this feeds into various advertising sources – YIKES
- Yelp – offers ratings from users on multiple industries, locations and businesses
- Google Ratings
- Yahoo Ratings
- Also review any surveys you have done or are doing via in house or survey companies

That's it – these 5 social sites (along with in house surveys) feed the majority of the on line reputation sites and offer the very good snapshot of your on line reputation that are directly related to your social media presence.

Now you know where you are starting from but where do you go??

In ***Social Media – Mastering the Maze***, we'll discuss working through the remaining steps to produce a reputation and social media strategy that will take less time, be more successful and produce measurable results. We'll also have key take a ways that you can use to start or continue your social media battle. Whether you are just beginning this adventure or you are already full steam ahead – we promise some tools and 'aha moments' to spark your efforts and excitement about this new and sustaining way that our success as operators will be measured!!

Look forward to seeing you at the conference!

**Stephanie Graves**

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