

# Tech on Your Phone, Tech in your Home

By Jennifer Carter

Whether we choose to believe it or not, residents are comparing their apartment home experience to outside our industry. Take the package business for example, residents, without even realizing it, will compare their package experience to Amazon. Amazon has exceptional customer service, meets the needs and even exceeds their customers' expectations from returns, to delivery to refunds. When you have a concern on an item you received you can speak to someone pretty quickly and get a resolution right away. They have also exceeded their delivery expectation delivering within 2 days and allows tracking every step of the way prior to your package being delivered to your doorstep. Shifting the concept to multifamily industry is no different, no matter if we are speaking about leasing or maintenance.

Though we live in a seemingly anonymous culture — where “self-service” is so prevalent — customers increasingly want a personalized experience when it matters most. Over the years we have continuously focused on the leasing experience, allowing prospects and residents to connect with the community via phone calls, SMS texting, and emails and now more than ever focusing on personalizing these experiences. All of these avenues have allowed us to meet the consumer where they are at and at their preference, ultimately providing outstanding customer service.

As we must continue the above direction, the area of the industry that is not talked about when it comes to resident preferences is maintenance. Since COVID, a resident's experience and expectations for servicing their home have since evolved and the bar has been raised. A study from the MIT Sloan Review found that customer service expectations had two levels: desired (what the customer hopes to obtain) and sufficient (what the customer would find acceptable). Of course, there's a third level: unsatisfactory, where companies miss the mark entirely. When we take the first two levels and drop the concept into maintenance service requests, **desired**, residents hope to obtain immediate resolution, ability to fix their service request themselves and on their own time with exception service, while **sufficient**, residents are okay with waiting 24 plus hours which used to be considered desired for their service request to be addressed as well as not a poor customer experience. In the end Maintenance in our industry must focus on customer service expectations.

It is not surprising that even outside our industry, “one study shows that on Twitter, 53% of customers expect a brand to respond in under an hour. That number jumps to 72% when they have complaints.” When we think about maintenance service requests, 9 out of 10 requests are complaints, which shows residents expect immediate response.

## **Resident service request is a desire for a quick resolution**

We all know our industry is struggling hiring and keeping maintenance technicians and if residents want an immediate response it shouldn't come to us as a surprise that residents want to solve their own service requests. At the root of every resident service request is a desire for a quick resolution. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand that customers don't want to jump through hoops to get

their problems fixed and questions answered. Empowering a front-line team of maintenance experts so they have the ability to assist residents to resolve their requests. With each phone call, email and each time a maintenance technician visits a resident's home residents lose patience resulting in the ability to want to continue living in their community.

### **Your customers prefer saving time over many other options**

Contrary to what many believe, most people value their time and it is considered their number one priority. We must look to solutions, customer centric solutions where we can save the resident time (even the maintenance tech) by offering the option for them to solve their own service requests with the assistance of experienced industry maintenance technicians remotely.

### **Excellent customer service means 'timely resolutions'**

It doesn't matter if you're in a store, on the phone, or online – no one likes to wait. According to the research, more than 50% of consumers consider 'resolution time' as one of the most critical factors to decide whether a customer support experience qualifies as good. If we understand that resolution time is a critical factor we must again embrace the new options our industry has to offer to meet our residents' expectations ultimately creating a better living experience and residents will opt to renew year after year.

As we progress through the remainder of 2023, we must shift our minds from a Tech in Your Home to offering the option for a Tech on the Phone. Meeting the residents' expectations in a way that they want to be met and optimizes onsite staff is a win/win for everyone. Residents are busy working (zoom calls all day), trying to handle so much they are open and even seeking a maintenance expert to assist them in being able to service their own service request for simple and easy tasks. Embrace change when it comes to maintenance for residents and a positive experience will only be seen and felt through each resident.

Jennifer Carter is Customer Advocacy Manager for HappyCo. [HappyCo](#) is a multifamily PropTech company that develops software and service solutions to enable real-time property operations for owners, property management companies, and onsite teams. Its solutions suite includes market-leading workflow tools with in-unit data on over 3.5 million rental homes and a remote maintenance workforce solution. Founded in 2011 in Adelaide, Australia, the company is privately held with a remote workforce throughout the U.S., Canada, and Australia.

*Jennifer's Bio: Over the past 15 years she has gained valuable knowledge not only from the owner/operator side of the business, but has also sat on the vendor side in three different opportunities. She first started in the industry and worked on site as a Traveling Property Manager assisting in increasing occupancy. She then gained an opportunity to gain knowledge during her 5 year tenure at Apartment Guide. Jennifer quickly found herself back on the owner/operator side where she led the Marketing department for two different management companies. Most recently she spent just shy of 4 years as a Director of Client Performance with SatisFacts focusing on client best practices to drive resident retention. Jennifer then spent a short time as the Director of Marketing for SmartRent, where her biggest contribution was taking part in taking the company public; developing public relations campaigns to inform and bring awareness to the marketplace while evolving the company's brand elements for a clean, polished look. Jennifer then moved to join Fetch Package where she handled a variety of tasks, but most recently oversaw the Communications and Marketing Relations, changing the company's trajectory through brand and customer experience.*