The Definitive Guide To
Tenant Communications

I ♥ Property Management

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Every property owner and manager knows that effective and regular communication is essential to running an efficient and profitable building. But that doesn't mean they know how to do it right. Having a communication plan in place goes hand-in-hand with effectively managing risk and relationships, thus attracting and retaining tenants. The guide below will help you to identify if your team has the program and tools required for exceptional property management.

COMMUNICATION DRIVERS

As technology continues to drive change in the commercial real estate industry, the business of property management continues to become more complex. Buildings, and the people in them, generate a huge volume of activity every day. Some of that activity is predictable, but much is not. Property owners and managers need to have defined processes in place in order to collect and store necessary information, make informed decisions, and share those decisions with their tenants.

Today's tenants demand transparency and accountability, which makes having a digital paper trail crucial.

Let's face it, the Internet has changed things for good. Tenants need to be able to communicate with their building teams in real-time, from whichever channel they desire (i.e. email, phone, text, social media, in person, etc.)*.*

Employing modern communication tools allows owners and managers to better monitor tenant needs, and put a more effective and professional face on their buildings.

Tenants value the visibility and control provided by these open lines of communication - which reflects well on the services the owner provides. The cost to provide these services to the tenant and to support them with modern operations management tools is exponentially less than what it would cost to replace that tenant.

Tenants who are satisfied with property management are three times more likely to renew their leases! [1]

1. Kingsley Associates' *Annual Satisfaction Assessment*

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SO YOU THINK YOU HAVE A PLAN?

Thinking you have a plan and documenting a plan are two very different things.

ASK YOURSELF

1. Who owns our Communications Program?
2. Where is it and what form is it in?
3. When was the last time it was updated?
4. How is it executed?
5. Does it have everything we need?
6. Can we measure the results?

Best Practice Tip: Modern Tenant Communications Programs should be reviewed and updated a minimum of *every 12 months.*

The key aspects of effective communication plan are *frequency, accuracy, comprehensiveness, and inclusiveness.*

You can achieve this through the following <u>five-step plan</u>:

#1 Define target audience members.

Clearly define and identify each tenant "persona" to include in your Communications Plan.

- **Executive Level:** Who signs the lease?
- **Business Contact:** Who is the point-person for meeting with members of the building team? Who meets with the property managers to discuss how things are going?
- **Administrative:** Who submits work orders or calls when something isn't working or needs attention?
- **Billing/AP:** Who do you call when you need something paid?
- **Groups:** What are the groups of people you may need to communicate with such as emergency teams, mobility impaired, or fire wardens?

2. BOMA BESt Technical Clarification Request – Resolution Summary, June 2013

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#2 Create Communication Frameworks.

Create buckets for the most common communication types that will be used with tenants.

1 Daily Communications

2 Periodic / Scheduled Messaging

3 Crisis Communications

4 Continuous Feedback Loop

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#3 Determine Items to be Communicated.

Clearly describe the activities/events that will be communicated to tenants.

- Work orders/Service Requests
- Problems/Complaints
- Building Events
- Local Events (Non-emergency)
- Leasing
- Billing
- F&LS Planning/Training
- Emergency
- Crisis Communications (PR)

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#4 Associate and Assign Responsible Team Member and Process.

Clearly identify which building team members will be in charge of which action items, and set targets for completion.

Leasing

Billing

Work Order

Emergency

> *"Communicating proactively with tenants is one of the top ways property managers can increase tenant satisfaction."*
>
> - Jim Woidat, Principal, Kingsley Associates

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#5 Plan an Account Management Strategy.

Clearly describe the timeline for implementation of all regularly scheduled meetings/visits with tenants.

- **Prioritize and schedule based on renewal dates & tenant size.**

- **Be informed going in.** Are there any issues, concerns, or unresolved problems? Make sure you know the status of open items.

- **What do you want to learn?** How is their business doing? Space needs? Feelings about the building?

- **Capture all meeting and discussion notes.**

If a tenant service-related (or any contentious) issue involves an exchange of more than 3 emails, go see that tenant in-person to discuss the situation. **Don't forget to document the conversation!**

THE NEXT STEPS

Once you've developed your Communication Plan, it's time to get your building team onboard and put it into action.

First you need to "trumpet" the plan by providing "cheat sheets" to tenants and employees. Don't forget: it's a living document that needs to be revisited and updated regularly.
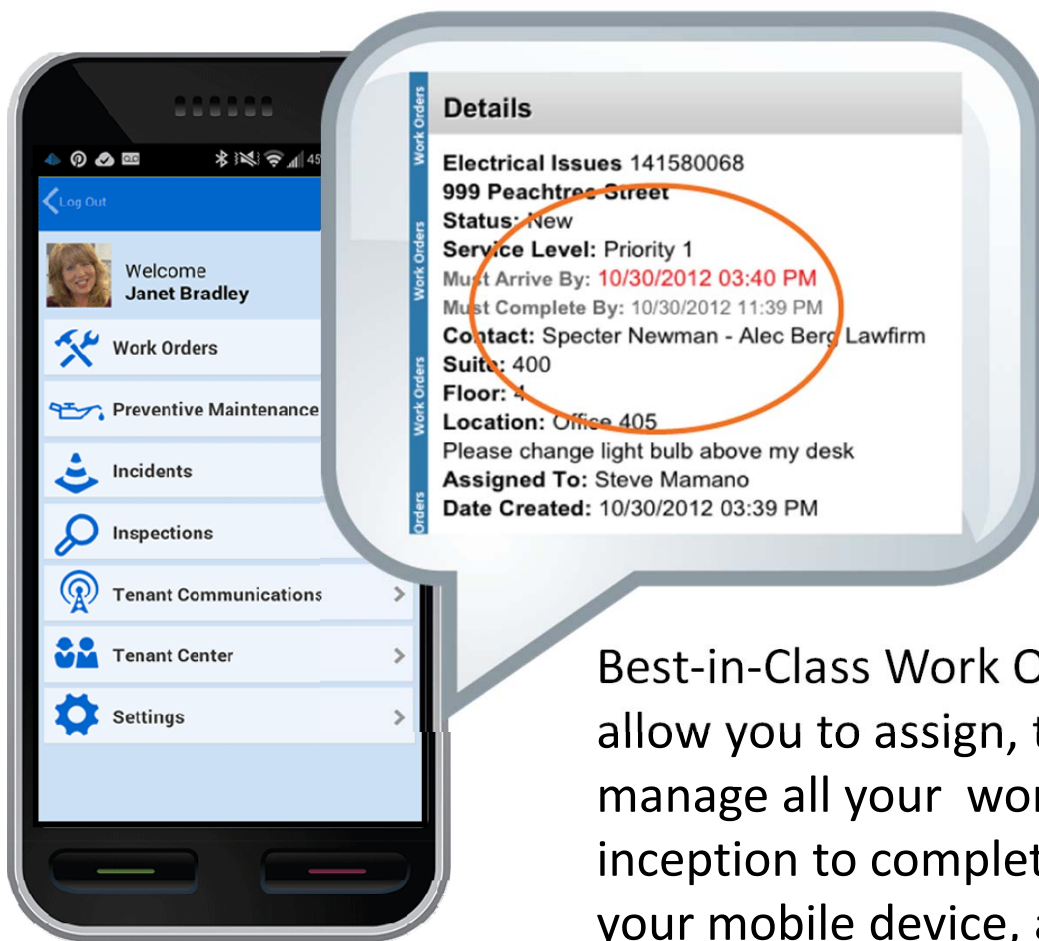

Next it's time to set expectations with your workforce - as well as tenants - and eliminate all barriers to implementation.

A barrier many property management teams often face is lack of technology. Having a mobile workforce and a fully integrated property management system is essential for any Communication Program's success.

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Work Order System

Work Order Systems are designed to provide complete visibility into every building issue - dramatically improving communication, staff productivity, and service response times, which ultimately leads to happier tenants.

Details

Electrical Issues 141580068
999 Peachtree Street
Status: New
Service Level: Priority 1
Must Arrive By: 10/30/2012 03:40 PM
Must Complete By: 10/30/2012 11:39 PM
Contact: Specter Newman - Alec Berg Lawfirm
Suite: 400
Floor: 4
Location: Office 405
Please change light bulb above my desk
Assigned To: Steve Mamano
Date Created: 10/30/2012 03:39 PM

Welcome
Janet Bradley

Work Orders
Preventive Maintenance
Incidents
Inspections
Tenant Communications
Tenant Center
Settings

Best-in-Class Work Order Systems allow you to assign, track, and manage all your work orders from inception to completion directly from your mobile device, and turn all your service data into full-featured, flexible reports that inform capital planning, billing, and tenant satisfaction levels. Tenants should be able to see when a task is scheduled to be completed – and provide feedback on the experience.

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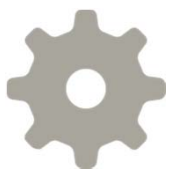
⚙ Building or Property Website

Tenants need a one-stop service center that provides on-demand access to property information and services.

It's a simple way to self-manage and extend your online tenant services and brand through a visually stunning website that connects tenant handbooks, service requests, leasing information, photo and video galleries, building services, visitor access, resource scheduling, and more.

Anatomy of a Best-in-Class Property Website

Neighborhood info

Picture and video gallery

Integrated work order solution

Building and amenities info

Branding

Leasing information

Promotions & announcements

Management contacts

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HOME   LEASING   GALLERY   LOCATION   NEIGHBORHOOD   CONTACT US

part of the illustrious La Mirage Business Park
Features: Walking Distance to the Amenities and the Pleasanton BART Station... Read More

AMENITIES   ABOUT THE BUILDING   REQUEST SERVICE   Check availability

MIRABELLE LAKES

Fit for Business
Lorem Ipsum is simply dummy text of the printing and typesett instry. Lorem Isum has the
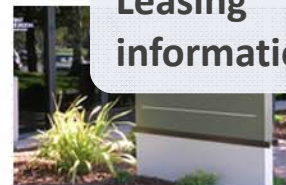
Local Management
Lorem Ipsum is waiting to say many good things about your business in the space here, and if you click the photo it can take you anywhere.

Special Events
Lorem Ipsum place holder for lo good things that happen here or ican really be any picture and any message but this was lorem ipsum

Lorem Ipsum is simply dummy text thing and it could be a photo or text message above this lorem ipsum...

Business Park Amenities
Lorem ipsum puts your message here with your photo above, and this message is ju to see wh

Stay Informed: Upcoming Events, News, and Announcements

15. August Fountain Luau Barbecue • Meet and greet neighbors...

08. March Spring Cleanup 4567 • Window washing begins ...

12. February Rainmaker Seminar • Open house for entrepreneurs...

About the Management Staff

Lorem Ipsum to give a brief pitch about the management and lead to another page with more details or corporate information or whatever. Lorem ipsem and say on about why this is a great team and building.

Tenant Newsletter
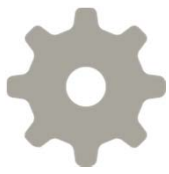
News and Promotions

Email Address

Subscribe me!

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Optimizing Property Performance

⚙ **Tenant Contact Database**

Building teams need a central place where everyone can access tenant contact information, key operational metrics, work order details, complete service histories, and important documents.

A Tenant Contact Database makes it easy to collect and share what's needed for more productive tenant meetings and building visits.
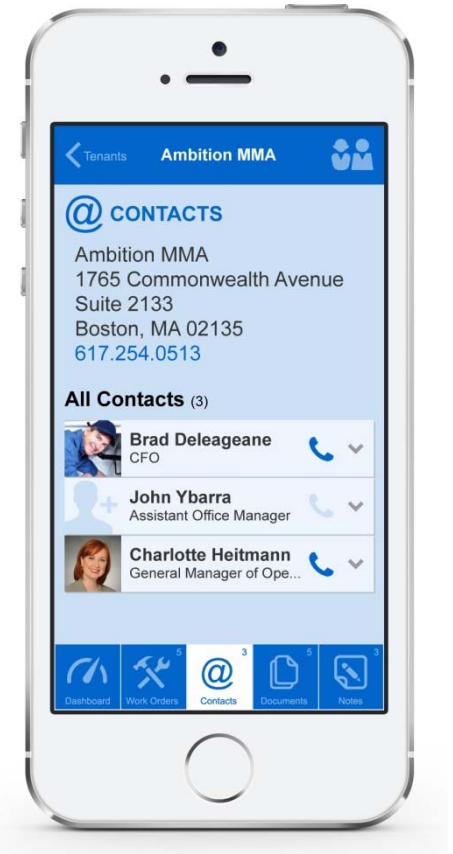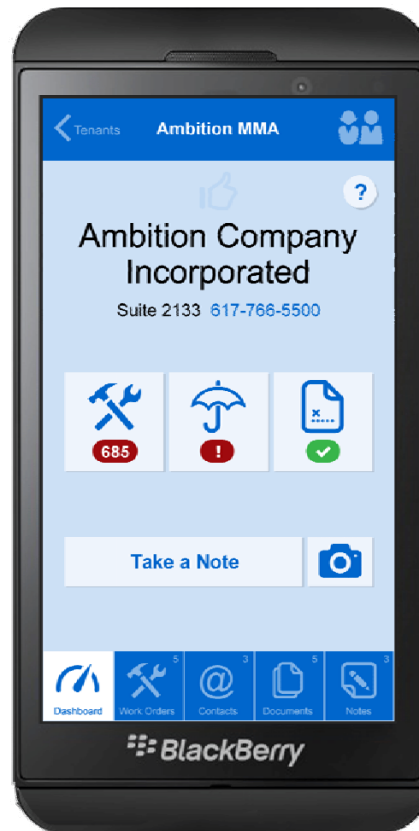
BEST PRACTICE TIP: *Make sure your Tenant Contact Database is available anywhere/anytime and on every mobile device and operating system. You'll ensure that no member of your building team will ever walk into a meeting unprepared again!*

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⚙ Broadcast Messaging Tools

Have an urgent message you need to get out to tenants ASAP? With a Broadcast Messaging Tool, you can quickly send a message to a predefined list.
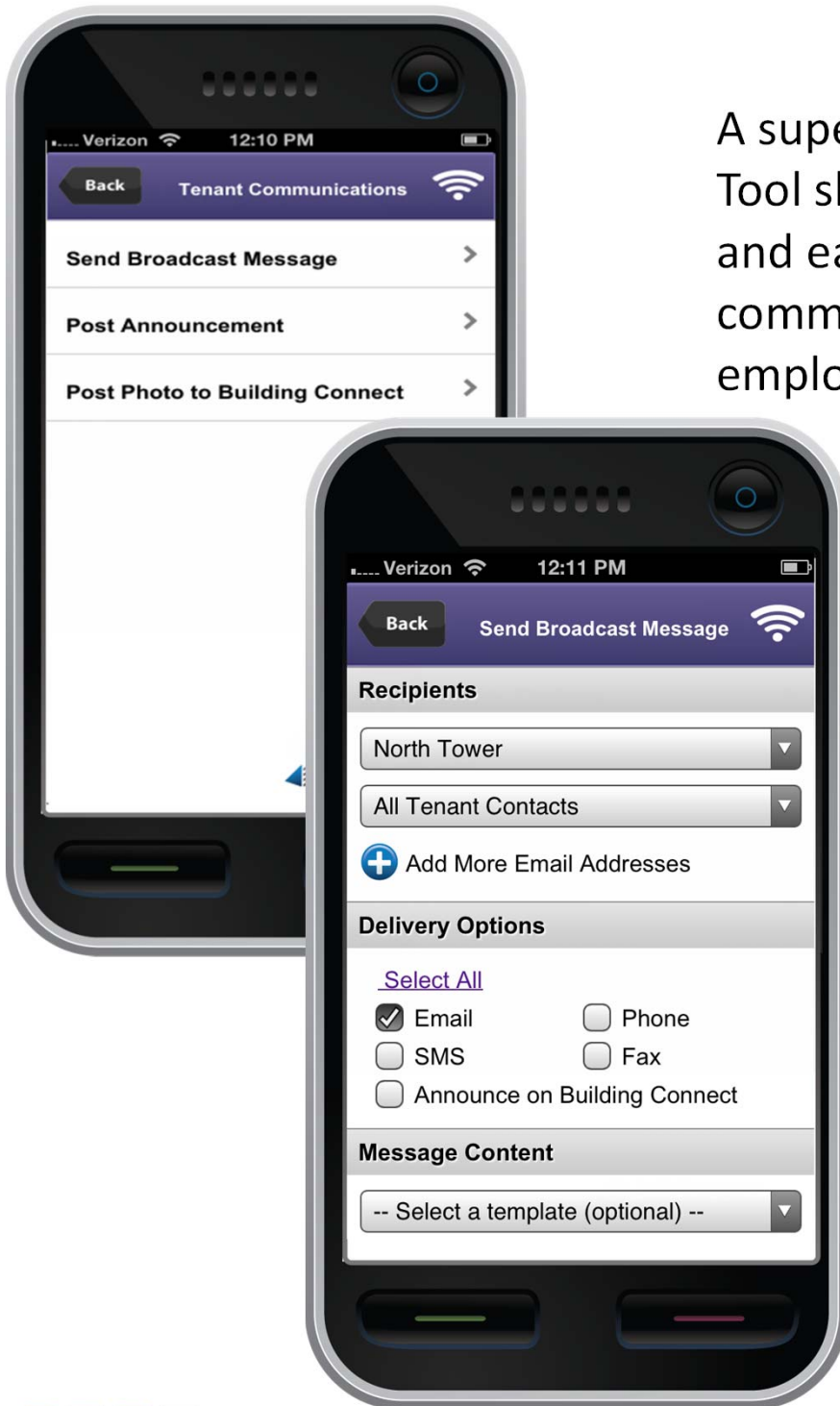
A superior Broadcast Messaging Tool should enable you to quickly and easily create, send and save communications with tenants, employees or vendors in your building or portfolio - eliminating the need to make repetitive announcements, print unnecessary signage and look up contact information.

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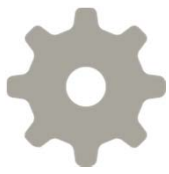
⚙ Emergency Messaging Tools

Real-time emergency broadcasting is an essential part of any Business Continuity Plan, ensuring communication with occupants, vendors and staff across a portfolio during critical situations.

For example, Building Engines offers a **two-way, on-demand emergency alert service and response system** that enables companies to communicate critical information during a time-sensitive, unexpected crisis. This real-time response capability empowers users to send messages simultaneously via email, phone, text, and text-to-voice, ensuring timely and accurate message reception.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

GET SOCIAL

Most tenants (particularly "Millenials") utilize some form of social media in their everyday lives. So should you. Set up Twitter and Facebook accounts, as well as a LinkedIn Group for you building. We all know tenants are going to talk about their building – shouldn't you be part of that conversation?

! Nearly 50 percent of the U.S. population is on Facebook. That includes your tenants, staff and prospective tenants!

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MORE BEST PRACTICE TIPS

While email is helpful, it can also be dangerous as it does not capture "tone" well. Always keep emails short, to the point and include facts, not editorial comment.

Don't forget about Direct Mail: Postcards and hand written notes are a nice reminder of your availability to tenants when they aren't glued to their smartphone.

Set a 2-minute delay on your email outbox to prevent email mistakes such as answering in haste/anger or cc'ing the wrong people.

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OVERHEARD

From BOMA Chicago...

> If you don't know what your tenants want, you can't give it to them. Set up one-on-one meetings with each tenant at least annually to gather feedback and determine their priorities. You could also distribute a survey to benchmark tenants' satisfaction and find out where they're looking for improvements.

> Publicize new tenants, green buildouts and new amenities through press releases sent to local media. Market these milestones internally, as well. These show you're constantly improving and that your building is a desirable leasing location.

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Tenant Communications Program Checklist

General Communications Plan Items

YES / NO

We have a documented communication plan that we update a minimum of every 12 months

Our communications plan is stored digitally, where all of our team has access to the most recent version

We have a comprehensive profile for each tenant (including service history, contact information, business information, the lease termination date, a history of tenancy, and the likelihood of renewal/tenant satisfaction level).

Our communication plan includes a clearly defined timeline for communicating with tenants (i.e. monthly meetings, upon renewal date, etc), and includes multiple options for communications (e-mails, office visits, newsletters, property websites and via mobile devices, etc.)

Our strategy includes a focus on staff training and performance, with communication skills at the core

There is clarity on the "ownership" of communications for different tenant-related issues

Our plan clearly defines key tenant roles and their contacts (i.e. tenant executive level, business contact, administrative, billing/AP

Information Management: Our plan includes a process for collecting analyzing, maintaining and publishing data on a regular basis

Information Management: We provide integrated access to well-managed, up-to-date information across all platforms (property website, Tenant Portal, Tenant Handbook, administrative offices, etc.)

Tenant Handbook: We have a defined process for keeping information up to date and tenants always have access to the most recent version

Tenant Handbook: Our tenant handbook outlines important building information and documents, security and emergency procedures, tenant responsibilities, as well as expectations for service delivery

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Tenant Communications Program Checklist

General Communications Plan Items (Cont.)

Our tenant communication plan lists our key services and amenities, and includes a strategy for developing, maintaining, marketing and adding amenities and revitalization projects as necessary

We have implemented/considered implementing a digital or printed tenant newsletter that communicates building news, events and community updates

Information Design: We have design standards in place for all tenant communications that ensure messages are consistent, effective and accessible to a broad audience

Access to management and services: We have a property website that acts as a central platform for content and navigation and the access point for all tenant services

We have a document communications and orientation plan for new tenants

Our communications plan accounts for tenant loss, including a process for exit interviews

Service Delivery

We have established and publicized responsibilities and response times in key areas such as work orders, maintenance, complaints, incidents, etc

We have a web and mobile property management system that automates and dispatches all service requests

Tenants can view the progress of all requests online and in real-time

We have established benchmarks performance and clearly communicate these service delivery targets to tenants with each request (i.e. Joe Smith will arrive by_____)

Tenants have the ability to log feedback at any point during the service delivery process

We regularly survey tenants (more than once a year) and have a documented process for monitoring tenant satisfaction

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Tenant Communications Program Checklist

Service Delivery (Cont.)   YES / NO

We have alerts set up to notify us when tenant satisfaction degrade below expected levels

We have escalation notifications and re-assignment rules configured to notify us when we miss a service delivery target

All personnel (internal and external) are properly informed of expectations and trained on processes and systems

Broadcast Messaging / Emergency Response

We have an automated process in place for emergency broadcasting and are able to track responses from employees, vendors and staff during and after an emergency

We have established custom contact groups that we can quickly message during an emergency via text, email and phone (including, emergency teams, mobility impaired, fire wardens, etc.)

We can post important messages and photos instantly to our property website or Tenant Portal from any mobile device or tablet

Mobile Tenant Relationship Management

Our team has quick, centralized access to tenant contact information and history from any mobile device

Our team has the ability to access key operational metrics and critical alerts on-the-go, including expired leases, expired COIs, deteriorating tenant satisfaction and active work orders

Our team has the ability to create work orders and capture notes and data quickly from any mobile device following tenant meetings

We have automated alerts set up for items requiring immediate attention, including service, lease and COI issues

Our team has multiple methods of communicating quickly with tenants, including, phone, email, and via web and mobile devices.

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When you have a comprehensive and well thought out Tenant Communication Plan in place, you are able to eliminate surprises and manage the expectations of everyone in the building – both tenants and staff – with clearly-defined tactics and deliverables.

You'll be able to strengthen your relationships with your tenants, increase their satisfaction, and stand out as an innovator among your peers.

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