



Client Testimonial | Palomar Properties, Cassi Harbuck

Largo, Fla.-based Palomar Properties has a lot going for it.

The company successfully owns and operates eight apartment communities totaling about 1,600 units in Florida (the company is set to add two additional properties to its portfolio in the coming months).



As a smaller owner/operator, Palomar executives take pride in the company’s capacity to modernize the look and the amenities of the communities it purchases. But about a year and a half ago, the owner/operator realized its outdated resident communication infrastructure didn’t match the modernization of its communities.

Palomar communities did not offer online portals through which renters could pay rent or make service requests. Hard copies of community newsletters were left at the doors of apartment homes, as were paper reminders of upcoming pest control services.

And if Palomar’s communities had to reach their residents with news of an emergency, well...

“If there was a major emergency we didn’t have the ability to tell residents, ‘Hey, the water’s being shut off because of a main break,’” says Cassi Harbuck, regional community manager for Palomar. “We just had to pray the phone didn’t ring and hope that we didn’t have hundreds of people coming in to the office.”

Palomar executives knew they needed to transform how they communicate and interact with residents. But how?

ABOUT PALOMAR:

- Headquartered in Largo, FL
- Nine properties utilize Mobile Doorman technology

“A Whole New Way to Interact”

The search for the most efficient, effective and modern way to reach its residents led the company to Mobile Doorman. The decision to go with the supplier was fueled in large part by the habits of today’s renters. According to data from Hackernoon.com, the average American spends five hours a day on his or her phone, and they’re using an app for 92 percent of that time.

“We wanted to meet residents where they are and not necessarily force them to a computer to do some of the things an app allows them to do,” Harbuck says. “The apps are so simple for both staff and residents to use, and the pricing was a big factor in our decision, too.”

Palomar began launching the supplier’s customizable, branded mobile phone apps at its properties about a year and a half ago. Today, all of Palomar’s communities have a unique, property-specific mobile app powered by Mobile Doorman.

Each app allows onsite staff to quickly and easily interact with residents on their mobile devices. Among other things, staffers can instantly communicate with residents through in-app messaging, notify them of package deliveries, deliver PDFs of community newsletters and send announcements about onsite events.

As for the residents, the apps allow them to pay their rent online, place work orders, securely communicate with each other on virtual bulletin boards and RSVP for community events.



“A Major Help in Wake of a Disaster”

Powerful examples of the apps’ ability to immediately reach residents through its enhanced push-notifications are found when the communities are in the midst of a hurricane or other natural disasters.

Last year, community staffs made great use of the technology to provide important updates to residents affected by the various hurricanes that swept ashore in Florida.

“We utilized every single one of our apps and blasted out information to keep our residents as informed and calm as we could,” Harbuck says. “We let them know if they were in an evacuation zone, and we could tell them about all the closings in the area and share the precautions they needed to take. It was so beneficial to have that ability finally.”

Harbuck recently got a glimpse of how much residents appreciate the app after a Palomar community sent out a notice to residents about a false fire alarm. In response, one resident said simply, “This app is so cool.”

Another amazing example of the apps’ ability to instantly communicate occurred recently when the 11-year-old granddaughter who lived with a Palomar community resident was reported missing.

Harbuck, who was onsite that day filling in for the vacationing community manager, sent residents a message about the missing girl through the Mobile Doorman app.

Within minutes, residents were pouring out of their homes to join Harbuck, staff and the authorities to walk through the community and surrounding neighborhood to assist in the search. After several hours, to everyone’s vast relief, the girl was back home.

“Afterwards, our staff went to get something to eat, and we literally sat at the table with tears in our eyes, thinking about how moving it was that people would come together to try and help out in that situation,” Harbuck says. “That image will never leave my mind. What the tool allowed us to do that day as management and as a community is priceless.”

According to Harbuck, Palomar couldn’t be happier with the impact Mobile Doorman apps have had on their communities. “It’s been a huge success, from the hurricane all the way to searching for the little girl,” she says. “It’s been so beneficial to be able to tell people everything the right way and right away.”

AUTHOR

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Regional Community Manager



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