

CAI Northern Ohio Chapter

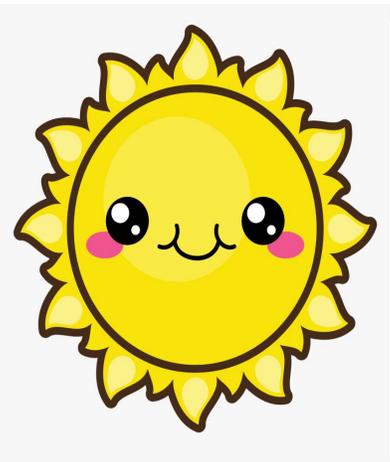
Quarterly Newsletter

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to Summer! I hope everyone has some fun in the sun planned this year.

The Bright Side article serves as a reminder of how great community managers and board members are at handling stressful situations, such as a pandemic. The challenges were new but important lessons were learned.

Leading Five Generations in the Workplace provides excellent information on how to bridge the generational gap our society is facing. It is believed that this is the first time in history that 5 generations of people are working together in a professional atmosphere. This is sure to cause some growing pains for both the management business as well as how boards deal with their owners.

Lisa Frisch, President
Northern Ohio Chapter
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The Bright Side

Two years later, community associations have met the adversity of the COVID-19 pandemic and found resilience together. The lessons are everlasting.

By Edward Hoffman Jr., Esq.

Reprinted from *Common Ground*, March/April 2022

IT'S BEEN TWO YEARS, and we've had enough of it. We want a return to normal. I get it. Nobody wants to hear, read, speak, or even think about the COVID-19 pandemic, but it's hard not to. It's pervasive, and it continues to color our everyday decisions.

As a community association attorney and litigator, I've certainly dealt with my share of issues related to COVID-19. Virtually anything and everything that could have happened in the communities that my firm represents did happen since March 2020.

There's no denying the toll the pandemic has taken—the lives lost and interrupted, the economic ramifications, the mental burden, and more. But what if I were to tell you that community associations actually learned some good things as a direct result of the pandemic? It's not as crazy as it sounds. Let's count.

NUMBER 1: COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS CAN SURVIVE A PANDEMIC.

In fact, community associations have survived the pandemic thanks to the resilience and determination of community association board members, community managers, business partners, and residents. We are in a much different place now than where we were at this time last year. Several factors have made that possible, but the unwavering efforts of community association leaders must be acknowledged.

Difficult decisions had to be made in every community from the outset of the pandemic—whether it was how to handle the economic impact of resident unemployment and the potential nonpayment of association assessments, the closure of community pools and gyms, how to have meetings, whether to allow guests, whether to require face masks, or looking out for the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of residents who were home probably more than they ever have been. Community associations around the country deserve a round of applause.



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NUMBER 2: FOR THE MOST PART, COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION RESIDENTS DO THE RIGHT THING WHEN ASKED.

After the pandemic started, community association leaders were put in a position to act quickly and ask residents to do things they never had to do before, including wearing masks around the community, maintaining a social distance from one another, not using facilities and amenities, and participating in meetings virtually.

Based on the communities that my firm represents, I believe that the vast majority of community association residents were not only cooperative (with rare exceptions, of course), but many of the residents went above and beyond in many different ways.

NUMBER 3: EVEN WHEN FACED WITH AN EMERGENCY LIKE A PANDEMIC, MOST COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION RESIDENTS STILL PAY THEIR ASSESSMENTS ON TIME OR MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO PAY.

We learned that despite the impact of the pandemic, the overall delinquency rate in most community associations did not increase substantially. Of course, community association leaders had no way to predict if this, or the opposite, would end up being the outcome.

What we did know is that, not too long after the pandemic started, some community association residents were laid off, and unemployment compensation payments were not immediately sent to these residents. The worst-case scenario would have been that a majority of residents could not pay their assessments, leading to community association budget cuts, decreased services, and failed payments to staff members and business partners. Fortunately, this did not happen.

Instead, we saw residents reaching out to the board to make arrangements to pay their assessments, and boards worked with residents as needed—often allowing them to enter into payment plans and waiving late fees or interest on any delinquency that started after March 2020.

It appears that while the pandemic has had a massive financial impact on the global economy, the overall financial impact on community associations was not as drastic, at least to date. Let's hope it stays that way, especially as we move into the next phase of the global crisis.



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NUMBER 4: COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION LEADERS WERE DILIGENT IN THEIR EFFORTS TO PROTECT RESIDENTS.

During the pandemic, community association leaders increased their due diligence efforts to a level commensurate with the problem at hand. Rather than ignoring issues or letting the chips fall where they may, board members and community managers engaged in unparalleled levels of communication with all their trusted service providers and advisers.

The daily virtual meetings, conference calls, and chains of emails resulted in proper due diligence by community leaders on issues related to the pandemic and served to protect the health and safety of residents. We learned that community association leaders decided to tackle, rather than retreat from, the pandemic.

NUMBER 5: COMMON INTEREST COMMUNITY STATUTES NEED TO BE UPDATED TO ALLOW FOR ELECTRONIC VOTING, THE USE OF ELECTRONIC PROXIES, AND TO PERMIT ONLINE BOARD AND OWNERS' MEETINGS.

While some state legislatures have already updated their statutes to allow for the use of modern technology for community association voting, proxies, and meetings, there was no plan to update the statutes in many others.

However, as a direct result of the pandemic, we learned that many community association leaders and residents want the option of using modern technology for these essential issues and functions. When there was suddenly no other choice available due to the inability to have in-person meetings, community associations turned to technology to continue to operate, albeit on an emergency basis.

Most community documents are silent on the issues. Absent the enactment of statutory amendments to allow for the permanent use of modern technology that would generally apply to all community associations, the only choice most have would be to seek to amend their governing documents by way of owner vote. The pandemic taught us that technology is good for community associations, and statutory updates around the country are the preferred path.

CAI's federal legislative action committee and various state legislative action committees are diligently working on these issues for the benefit of community associations nationwide. Visit www.caionline.org/advocacy to learn more.



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NUMBER 6: COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION RESIDENTS LEARNED WHAT REALLY MATTERS.

The pandemic served to “reset” our expectations in virtually every aspect of our lives. Lest we forget, not too long ago, there were toilet paper and paper towel shortages, hand sanitizer was selling for \$15 a bottle if it was available, Lysol wipes were harder to find than a unicorn covered in diamonds, and grocery stores were rationing items like chicken breast to one pack per customer. All of this led to a decrease in demands, complaints, and communications from owners about things like the grass being one-quarter inch too high in the back of their unit or that the guy across the street owns a car that has a registration that expired a month ago. In other words, when residents focused on what was actually important, they stopped focusing on things that, while they might have merit, didn't matter in the grand scheme of things.

NUMBER 7: COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT.

During the pandemic, those of us who focus on community association education, including CAI, worked tirelessly to ensure that community association boards and community managers would continue to have access to quality educational content. The end result was shifting in-person seminars to virtual events. Community association leaders apparently agreed that quality educational content was needed during the pandemic, as the overall attendance for the virtual seminars vastly exceeded the turnout of prior, similar in-person events.

Community association leaders were hungry for information and cogent guidance on important issues, and the pandemic was not a reason to stop educating. Rather, it was time for us to amp up our efforts.

NUMBER 8: COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION RESIDENTS LIKE ATTENDING ONLINE MEETINGS MORE THAN THEY LIKE ATTENDING IN-PERSON MEETINGS.

The pandemic literally forced us to meet with one another virtually instead of in person. What community association leaders quickly learned was that these virtual meetings sometimes led to a better turnout, whether it was for board meetings or owners' meetings. The virtual meetings were generally more efficient to run and took less time to complete.

Community associations want to continue to have online meetings, which makes complete sense. As discussed above, the solution for community associations in many jurisdictions lies in updating statutory language to allow for the use of modern technology. If you live in a community association in a state that currently does not allow for virtual meetings, you should contact your state legislators' offices and make them aware of the issue.

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NUMBER 9: COMMUNITY MATTERS.

The pandemic, by its nature, forcibly changed our notion of what “community” really is, and in thinking about all of this in retrospect, it appears that we took neighborliness and our shared experience for granted prior to the pandemic. Community association leaders learned that the idea and notion of community matters just as much (if not more) than the physical and financial elements, so we must focus on building (or rebuilding) community moving forward.

The good news is that we have a jump-start on this because residents turned their attention to assisting neighbors with things they could not do on their own due to the pandemic.

NUMBER 10: COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS LEARNED HOW TO GOVERN WITH EMPATHY.

During the pandemic, we experienced and witnessed an abundance of personal pain, loss, and struggle in our homes, families, and communities. On a personal level, some of my clients unexpectedly and suddenly lost dedicated board members to COVID-19, leading to substantial impacts in these communities. Add the emotional, physical, and mental stress of the pandemic to all of this and the end result is that community association residents (our fellow humans) deserve some empathy.

Community associations should govern with empathy and use emotional intelligence in addition to good faith and due diligence when making decisions. “Don't leave empathy at the door when making important decisions” is something I said a lot over the past two years. Many community association leaders also began to think this way, and I hope it continues well after the COVID-19 pandemic is nothing but a distant memory.



Leading Five Generations in the Workplace

By Kelly Zibell, AMS, PCAM

Reprinted from *Community Manager*, November/December 2021

Demographic changes are taking place both in the workplace and in community associations. Seventy-five percent of the workforce will consist of millennials by 2025, but more than 97% of homeowner leaders are traditionalists, baby boomers, and Generations Xers, according to an analysis from my company. This means that strategies for leading employees and working with residents and homeowner leaders should take generational differences into consideration.

Each generation in the workplace or in a community – from traditionalists to Generation Z – have distinct work or volunteer motivations, aspire to diverse career goals, and require specific types of communication, engagement, and management styles. The table on the next page shows a summary of attributes that distinguish the five generations.

Management company executives and association boards must learn how to address the changing needs of a multigenerational workforce or membership to ensure they remain competitive and desirable places to work and live in. Here are five key areas to adapt.

Have a purpose. The future of work is about fostering a collaborative environment, leading with authenticity, and creating and sustaining partnerships. This means management companies and community associations need to determine what their purpose is and their strategic vision for getting there.

Create multiple communication channels. Gone are the days of communicating everything in the community or company newsletter. Now there is text messaging, automated voice calls, and app notifications. Important messages must be sent through several channels to ensure they are being received by members of each generation. If you haven't explored new options to improve communication in the past five years, now is the time to do so.

Focus on empathetic leadership. As workplaces and community associations welcome more millennial and Gen Z employees or residents, empathy will become a critical behavior to adopt. In the best organizations, authority is earned and not assumed, and leaders should inspire by example. In addition, look for opportunities to create team-based work groups and provide opportunities for engagement between leadership and employees or homeowners.

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Equalize your hierarchy. For communities, this means empowering volunteers in committees to execute some of the work for the board, which will keep them engaged and grant them the ability to remain nimble in quickly changing circumstances. Within management companies, explore the idea of stretch assignments and shifting from a command-and-control environment to one that is performance based. Allowing your team to have a voice in the decision-making process is empowering and can drastically increase employee retention.

Prioritize work-life balance. A 9-to-5, five-day work schedule is no longer a reality for employees post-pandemic. Consider flexibility in schedules (i.e., compressed workweeks), the number of hours worked (i.e., part-time roles or job shares), or where staff can work from, such as their home office or a satellite office closer to where they live. This can dramatically increase staff retention, especially for working parents, and decrease feelings of burnout.

Management companies and communities that have the right mix of motivational and situational elements to better engage multiple generations will have a competitive advantage within the industry and their association.

Generational Characteristics

Generation	Born	Attributes	Career Goals	Mentoring	Retention Strategy	Preferred Workplace
Traditionalists	1925–1945	Loyal, obedient, dedicated, value sacrifice	Build a legacy and remain with one company	Not required	Loyalty	Office only
Baby Boomers	1946–1964	Optimistic, strong work ethic, team-oriented	Build a single career	Prefer no negative feedback	Salary	Office only
Generation X	1965–1981	Positive attitude, goal-oriented, multi-taskers, global thinkers	Transferable career	Not required	Salary and job security	Split between office and home
Millennials	1982–1994	Confident, sociable, value morality and diversity, technology savvy	Multiple careers in multiple industries	Prefer constant feedback	Personalized professional relationship	Split between office and home
Generation Z	1995–2012	Value diversity and social responsibility, have global connectivity and technological sophistication	Desire to grow and learn	Want prompt and frequent feedback, preferably face to face	Job security	Split between office and home