

# Best Practices In **ONLINE** REPUTATION Management

FEATURING



Interview with Holly Hilton  
Property Manager, Pohlig Box Factory



POHLIG  
BOX  
FACTORY

Pohlig Box Factory was ranked number three in nation in the 2017 Elite 1% ORA™ Power Ranking of properties for online reputation.

## **Q What do you do differently to excel in online reputation management?**

**A. |** I have been cultivating my online reputation on the ApartmentRatings.com website since 2006. For over 12 years, I have made it my goal to ensure that every person who lives at my property has the kind of experience that would make them want to leave us a positive review.

## **Q What's the key to winning over residents and prospects on a daily basis? How do you handle conflicts with residents?**

**A. |** I think the key to winning over residents and prospects is pretty straightforward. Follow the Golden Rule and be consistent. Treat people with respect and make them feel that they are important. They aren't just a tenant. They are a valued guest.

Resident conflicts are rare, but when they do occur, I listen to each person's "side" and work to come up with a resolution where both sides feel like they "won".

## **Q How and which social media platforms do you use to engage with residents and prospects?**

**A. |** Not many. It's kind of overwhelming, the amount of social media out there. We are very small (65 units) and have a small online presence on Facebook.

## **Q How do you engage with residents and prospects to encourage them to share reviews online? Do you use any community rewards programs?**

**A. |** Part of my “Move Out Procedure” (an e-mail to all residents) asks residents to share their experience of living at my property on ApartmentRatings.com. I do not use community rewards programs. I have never wanted anyone to feel my reviews were manipulated by management or unauthentic. I don't reward people to leave positive reviews. I work very hard to get good reviews and I think residents realize that and take the time to write thoughtful reviews.

Years ago, I never responded to reviews as the manager online. I would reply privately to my residents (an e-mail thanking them for the review) because I didn't want it to seem like I was seeking positive reviews. Upon learning more about online reputation through J. Turner Research, I learned that residents LIKE to be acknowledged and starting in 2017, I began to respond to each review.

## **Q How do you respond to online reviews? And, who responds to reviews – is it an internal or external team? How do you respond to negative online reviews?**

**A. |** I reply as the manager on ApartmentRatings.com. I am the only person that works for my company so I am the one in charge of online reputation.

I've only had one negative review 12 years ago and all it said was “Too Noisy”. I responded by identifying myself and asked the reviewer to clarify their complaint.

## **Q How involved is your onsite team – leasing, grounds, and maintenance team in your online reputation management goals?**

**A. |** My “team” consists of just me and my maintenance supervisor. I always make sure that customer service and maintaining our online reputation and ranking is the most important part of our job.

## **Q If there was one piece of advice you would give to a fellow property manager struggling with online reputation, what would it be?**

**A. | READ YOUR REVIEWS.** That's how you can get a true grasp of what your residents think and use that information to make changes. If your residents complain about maintenance, make it your priority to address those issues quickly and efficiently. If there is a complaint about office staff, meet with all members of the team and discuss what was said in the reviews and figure out how to fix it. It's not hard. You just have to care about your work and your reputation. I think some companies have a mindset of “well you can't please everyone” and it doesn't matter. But it DOES matter.

I think the lack of negative reviews for my property shows something about my management style and philosophy. Even when people may have left my property on less than happy terms, they have not written a bad review because they know in the long run they were treated fairly, with respect and a negative review was not warranted.