

# Turn It Around, Just Like Chipotle!

Multifamily providers have an opportunity to turn a bad property owner and end-user experience into something positive by enhancing services and communicating with staff and residents.

By Bryan J. Rader / *UpStream Network*

**I**t happens to all service providers at one point or another: They provide service that doesn't represent their best work and lose the trust of their clients.

The sources of the problems vary by situation. I've heard providers share horror stories about construction timelines gone awry, bandwidth not being available, billing issues, and poor product delivery. Sometimes, a situation is so bad, the client is ready to go to the mat to make a provider change.

Anyone who has been in the broadband business for any length of time, and is being honest, has experienced one of these scenarios: a Super Bowl weekend TV outage. A broadband service interruption during a Netflix binge weekend. An unprofessional exchange between a call center rep and a property manager. All industry veterans have dealt with every one of these situations at one time or another.

Remind me to tell you about the TV outage UpStream Network had in one community the night of the very first American Idol finals. (Some residents still don't know who Carrie Underwood is!) Ugh.

## CHIPOTLE MOMENTS

I call these "Chipotle moments." In other words, they are periods of time that are similar to what Chipotle, the fast-casual Mexican restaurant chain, faced in 2015.

You may recall the dark period when Chipotle had to shut down dozens of stores on the West Coast after public officials linked an outbreak of E. coli in California to Chipotle locations. A separate but similar health scare occurred with salmonella in Minnesota. A few months later, 120 college students were sickened by Chipotle burritos.

The media ran with these stories, and Chipotle customer confidence tanked. It was not looking good for the chain at the time, especially in an overcrowded restaurant market.

Broadband service providers can't have service outages during a Super Bowl; Chipotle can't provide unsafe chicken to patrons. Pretty straightforward stuff.

What I like about this story is how far Chipotle has come in its pursuit of regaining customer trust. Over the past six years, its sales have doubled, and it hasn't had any food safety

problems. Digital sales have soared, and customer lines run out the door at lunchtime.

How did it recover? New policies and safety procedures. A lot of "apology" coupons. And a slow climb into customers' good graces.

Multifamily service providers have all had these Chipotle moments in at least one community: property manager frustration. Unhappy end users. Customers who do not trust that a technician will make an appointment time or keep service on over a weekend.

UpStream recently had a Chipotle moment, too. Years ago, before my time, UpStream began providing services to a high-rise condominium in Florida. But products were wrong, the network wasn't great, and service was lacking. When I met with the condo board president, she gave me an earful about UpStream's performance. It wasn't pretty. But we refocused our efforts, met with dozens of residents, elevated the network, and stabilized services. We also restarted conversations with on-site staff.

Fast forward to 2020. After successfully restoring the confidence of the condo board and residents, the board invited us to participate in a bid process for a new agreement. The upgrade plan we presented to the board was extensive and comprehensive. We now had its trust, and we worked together very closely to develop the ideal product mix for residents. At the end of a long process, we won!

It had to feel like the kind of success Chipotle experienced after its recovery from the 2015 health crisis. Customers came back, they told their friends, and burritos and quesadillas began flying off shelves.

UpStream had the same experience at the Florida building. We solved our equivalent of a food safety scare and brought the client back into the trust circle. It was a good feeling.

I'd love to hear about one of your Chipotle moments. Maybe we can share a burrito and share stories! ❖

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