

# The Action's Still On-Site

MDU providers can proactively mitigate potential churn and gain significant insight into how well their service performs by conducting in-person customer visits.

By Bryan J. Rader / *Single Digits*

**C**ustomer satisfaction is a topic of conversation all the time in the broadband industry. With today's tools, notifications and dashboards, it seems as though knowing how well the industry is tracking toward its goal of 100 percent satisfaction keeps getting easier.

I recently asked someone in the industry how he manages customers' experience with his company. "There are lots of ways," he said. "We look at trouble tickets, general noise coming from the property manager, outage reports and bandwidth utilization."

"And from there, you do what?" I asked.

"Put each property in a red, yellow or green category," he said, "and we focus on those in the red category."

I've always said that color-coding properties is a great way to monitor customer satisfaction, especially the yellow properties. Most good companies are aware of the reds. But the yellows are the properties that tend to surprise management.

## A TEMPORARY FIX

I asked another operator about its approach. "We have staff monitoring any negative reviews or ratings online. When we see the terrible reviews, we generally respond very quickly."

OK. A bit reactive, but not bad. "Does anybody visit the property managers and see how things are going in person?" I asked.

"We used to," said another private cable operator leader. "But with COVID-19, it's become much easier to do a Zoom call with the manager. We can do five in an hour."

"And that works?" I asked. "For now, it may be the best we can do," the operator said.

That's the best you can do? Check some charts, try to get the staff on the phone, read a few reviews? How many of your green properties are actually yellow, and how many yellows might be red?

This kind of effort may work for a little while but eventually will lead to higher dissatisfaction and contract cancellations. Ultimately, I think this evolves into laziness and opens the door for other, more-aggressive competitors to take market share.

## ON-SITE TOUCH

In all my experiences in multiple-dwelling-unit (MDU) properties, I've found some broadband providers don't pay

close attention to what happens on-site, but rather only watch their dashboards. Some providers focus their attention on the corporate office (i.e., is the property owner satisfied?). Others focus on end users. I feel the secret formula is to be sure on-site staff is pleased. If they are, the rest takes care of itself.

When I go on-site to meet a property manager, I talk to everyone and look for clues that things are going well (or not going well). Leasing consultants are a treasure trove of information about their customer experiences with broadband services – at move in, over a weekend, etc.

Maintenance staffs are also very aware of how well broadband equipment is being maintained. Are the independent distribution frame boxes secure? Is the main distribution frame in good condition? What about hallway wiring? Maintenance staff may not know how to engineer broadband networks, but they can tell whether a service provider cares about network performance.

When providers show up on-site, they're bound to meet a handful of residents, too. "What do you think of our services?" I always ask.

A site visit might uncover an occasional billing issue or call center hold time complaints, among other issues. Visiting provides excellent intel and an opportunity to drive satisfaction scores higher.

When I tour multifamily communities that Single Digits doesn't currently serve, and they're not happy with their current providers, they always report the same theme: The operator does not care, doesn't respond, doesn't show up, and we only hear from it if we are late paying a bill.

Show up on-site again. It's time to get out from behind the computer screen and get back in front of customers. They want to share their experiences, and they appreciate being listened to in person. That's one easy way to ensure properties are "green!" ♦

*Bryan J. Rader is the executive vice president of Single Digits. He can be reached at [brader@singledigits.com](mailto:brader@singledigits.com).*

