

Improved Services Creates Potential \$1.4 Million

Written by [Doug Miller](#)



A client with a 5,000 unit portfolio of B and C rated communities contracted with SatisFacts to complete "Annual" Resident Satisfaction Telesurveys for the first time in 2000. After conducting the telesurveys, and subsequently implementing a variety of property specific and company-wide changes, the company wanted to see what impact the changes had on their resident satisfaction scores. To say they were pleased with the 2001 results would be an understatement! What kind of improvement did they see?

Bottom line, there was a 14% increase in the percent of residents who responded that they were "Very Likely" to renew their lease. A 14% increase in renewals for a 5,000 unit portfolio equates to 700 more renewals - and alternatively, the potential for 700 fewer move-outs! Multiplying 700 fewer move-outs times the rule-of-thumb that each move-out costs at least \$2,000 translates into a \$1.4 million dollar improved bottom line! What did the company do that had such a positive impact on their residents' satisfaction and desire to renew?

The starting point was what happened when the reports were completed last year. Senior management provided each property with copies of the satisfaction telesurvey results, and each was given several weeks to develop resident satisfaction and retention action plans that addressed the issues raised in the property report (especially "Red Flag" scores). Managers then presented their recommended action plans to Senior Management. Upon approval, each property then moved forward with implementing their plan. In addition, monthly staff meetings were held to review the progress made on the plan.

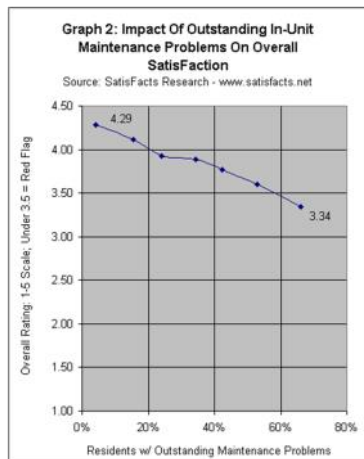
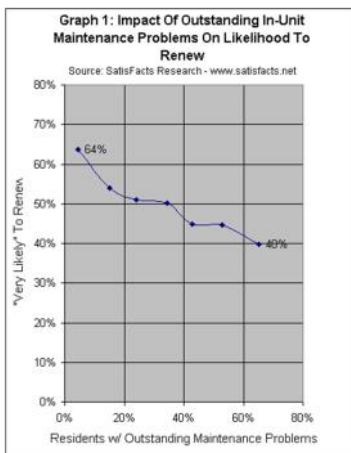
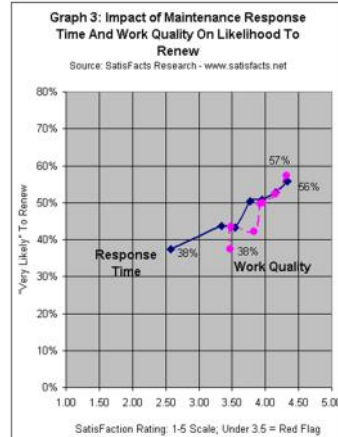
The payoff became quite clear in 2001 when the company contracted to complete telesurveys for the portfolio again. The following graphs highlights the change in scores from 2000 to 2001, and how these scores

have been able to prove statistically: there is a direct correlation between the performance of the maintenance (response time, quality of work, completing work) and not only the overall satisfaction with the community - but ultimately on the likelihood that the resident will renew their lease when it expires.

Let's start by looking at what happened with the maintenance related scores. Obviously the company focused on the findings from 2000 and directed a great deal of attention to improving the speed to which service was provided and quality of the work done. The Maintenance Response Time average satisfaction score jumped 15%, going from the "Red Flag" range in 2000 to a solid average score in 2001 of 3.73; in addition, the 2001 score moved from well below the national average to slightly better than the average. Another key improvement was on the question of whether a resident was experiencing a maintenance problem in their home. The percent of residents who reported that problems existed dropped 26% from its 2000 level! In addition, this score was now below the national average. Several related points: satisfaction with the maintenance staff's work quality improved by 5%; while the average score for how courteous and professional the maintenance staff only improved slightly, the 2001 score was in the "superior" range.

Ratings for exterior curb appeal and building interiors/amenities both grew 7% from 2000. The increase in the exterior curb appeal took the previous average into the "high average" range. More importantly, the growth of the building interior score went from a "Red Flag" in 2000 to an

(Continued on page 5)



compare against the average national database scores.

The results from this portfolio's studies confirmed what we

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President's Message: by Amy Khan

Merry May Everyone!

I hope that you will find time to attend at least one of the associations events this month and network with your peers. Members of the association continue to work on your behalf with all our communities and universities to protect your rights. As an association we are only as strong as our members participation makes us. With that in mind I am personally asking those of you that have not reached out to join a committee or attend an event please consider doing so. While you are at it, bring someone with you to the next event, our May Mix-



Office Message: By Alice Ehn and Melinda Kaus

Being a part of an association says to others that you take your profession and your career seriously. If you are reading this newsletter you are part of a network of individuals and companies that regard visibility and networking as key to their growth and management. Part of the mission of this association, along with the state and national apartment associations, is to ensure that the rental housing industry in the areas we serve, has the resources to increase everyone's professionalism and dispel the myths of "bad landlord" when rental housing is thought of.

Although there are multiple reasons to join associations there are a few that rise to the top when I think of this association.

- **Give back to the community.** The members of this association are engaged in their communities. They lobby their councils and keep the office informed of happenings in their various areas. This watchdog activity happens on the behalf and benefit of the entire community. Not just for members. Thank you members for taking on this task even though there are those that enjoy the legislative benefits and never help in the effort.
- **Networking.** This association gives you multiple opportunities to network with your peers and business partners to help improve the business practices out there. Not just at events, but it also helps form



er. Help membership.....get more involved.

The legislative committee needs more voices to battle the issues that affect all rental housing in our area. Currently we are working on the City of Ann Arbor International Property Maintenance Code adoption and many state issues. If there is an issue in your area please let us know. Rent control has been mentioned in City Council also in Ann Arbor so we will watch that as we go forward.

The program and education committees needs more members to help with all event and education to keep our membership connected.

Membership is always looking for support in reaching out to recent new members and sharing the association and the benefits of being a member to potential new members.

Make the most of your membership and participate!

Have a great month.

relationships that allow you to call and connect to others that can help day to day.

- **3 in 1 membership.** You are a member at the local, state and national level and just because you don't take advantage of what is there or have never looked, doesn't mean the benefits are not there for you. I can't tell you how many times I get asked simple questions that were in last months newsletter or are on the front page of local, state or national websites but because the member isn't looking, they are not seeing. We provide a plethora of membership benefits. Look and see what resources are available.
- **Strength in numbers.** This is what nonmembers really don't understand. Our strength not only comes from our very few members that participate but in the numbers behind the reasonable voice we have. Melinda is working very hard to increase membership this year. Why not help her out by asking your peers in your communities to be members. Or by just asking 2 of the Business Partners you work with to join. It doesn't take any time at all to help. These are small things that help a ton.

There is much more that we have as benefits. I bet you didn't know you could compare your property to others by a click on a button on the front page of our website called "COMP YOUR PROPERTY". This issue of UPDATE, page 3, gives you two new benefits to membership and we will keep adding them. For now, all we ask is that you **help a little**. Keep us in mind when purchasing on Amazon or ask your neighbor or electrician to join. Use a member when you can and tell them why you are doing it.



Produced By: Washtenaw Area Apartment Association, 2008 S. State Street, Suite C, Ann Arbor, MI 48104
734/663-1200; FAX 734/821-0497 Email: info@wa3hq.org

Deadline: 15th of the month for next month's publication to newsletter@wa3hq.org. Submit all materials to Alice Ehn, Executive Officer

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One Request.....Bids from Many. How easy does it get?

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Apartment Industry Colleagues,

I know you are as shocked as I am at the behavior of our Congress before they left for their spring break recess. Just when you thought they could do nothing more to surprise us, to stop us in our tracks, to make us question all that we know

and thought we understood about our legislative process, they do something crazy. They actually brought up, debated and voted on legislation! But wait, there's more! The House actually passed a solution to one of the toughest issues they have avoided for years – the Medicare payment standard for doctors – and it appears the Senate will follow suit in just a few weeks.

I'm reminded of the scene from "A Few Good Men" where Tom Cruise, an attorney who prefers to negotiate plea agreements rather than actually try cases, steps into where his clients will be tried and says, "So this is what a courtroom looks like!" There are members of Congress who really don't know what the legislative process is supposed to look like since it's never actually been used during their tenure. Let's hope this is the start of a new normal for our political leaders.

The apartment industry also benefitted from this great awakening in the political process. Two bills of significant importance were passed by one of the two chambers; critical steps toward ultimately becoming law. In the House, the "Tenant Income Verification Relief Act of 2015" was passed under suspension of the rules, meaning that the support was so strong that only a voice vote was necessary. This legislation would reduce the administrative burden under the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program by requiring income verification every three years instead of annually for voucher holders who are on fixed incomes. Miraculously, this bill has the support of both property owners and tenant activists and we hope that an equally quick path can be found in the Senate.

In the Senate, the "Energy Efficiency Improvement Act" (also known as "Tenant Star") passed the Senate by voice vote at the very end of a marathon debate on the federal budget and immediately before the chamber adjourned for the spring break recess. This legislation directs the EPA to create an incentive similar to its Energy Star program for use by tenants in commercial real estate. This marks the first time the issue of split incentives in energy efficiency between building owners and tenants has been addressed.

The 2015 NAA Capitol Conference also took place this past month and the apartment industry once again showed its power and broke all previous records for lobby day participation. Four hundred owners, operators, property managers, C-suite executives, suppliers and affiliate staff stormed the Hill and lobbied Congress on enhancements to the Section 8 program, reform of the nation's tax system and needed federal leadership on immigration. An estimated 250 to 300 Congressional offices were visited over the course of the day which is an impressive show of force for any industry.

It's worth noting that the Tenant Income Verification Relief Act mentioned above and passed by the House was a specific bill on which the apartment industry lobbied during the Capitol Conference. Now we have to get the companion bills moving for Section 8 income verification and tenant star in the Senate and the House, respectively and on their way to the President's desk. Both seem well positioned to advance in the process, but we'll not compute the barnyard fowl before they slip their carapace of bondage. Grassroots advocacy works!

Of course, we will wait to see if this new found collegiality leads to other legislative successes for the Congress. There are plenty of hills left to climb, some symbolic, some substantive. For example, the House and Senate Republicans will have to reconcile the differences between their two budget blueprints. The budget has no force of law but does guide the activities of the appropriations committees and so issues like how much to spend on defense versus how much to sacrifice to the national debt reduction gods will be at the forefront. On the other hand, the nation's debt limit is a real thing. We actually reached our

borrowing limit in early March, but the Treasury Department has several measures it can take to keep us afloat for several more months. Still, this cannot go on forever and Congress will have to increase that limit at some point in the very near future.

One issue with a firm deadline is the Highway Trust Fund. This is the pot of money that is used to pay for federal and state infrastructure – roads, bridges, rail, ports and a lot more – and it runs out on May 31. Congress needs to agree on how to replenish the fund – increase the gas tax, place a one-time levy on untaxed foreign earnings or as part of broader tax reform. It also needs to find a way to get a long-term deal in place to increase the certainty in the system. This will not be easy and will be the next major test of the ability of Congressional leaders to thread the needle and move critical legislation that the country desperately needs. They will almost certainly face challenges from those in the GOP who are drawing a hard line on any federal government spending.

Finally, there are several operational issues in which NAA is taking a special interest. They are rules around emotional support animals, music licensing requirements and criminal background checks for employees. All of these are or could negatively impact the day-to-day functioning of your apartment communities in significant ways. The outlook for action varies with each issue, but we are organizing now to get ahead of the game and ensure our voice is heard. You can be part of that process by sharing any experiences, positive or negative, you've had in these areas. Please share those with us to inform our decision-making going forward.

As always, thanks for reading. Talk with you next month.

Regards, **Greg**



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1.4 million can't

(Continued from page 1)
"average" score in 2001.

While all of the other questions saw only modest growth in scores, some were yet quite significant. For example, despite only a modest 4% increase in how satisfied residents were with their apartment, this was significant as it moved the average satisfaction rating from a "Red Flag" score into the "average" range. How important is it that a resident be satisfied with their actual apartment home? What impact does that have on the likelihood to renew? The answer is quite obvious! Likewise, the average scores for the office staff (courteous/professional, responsive/dependable) grew by a very insignificant amount. But the good news is that the portfolio's office staffs already received "high average" scores and the increase, while small, solidified resident's perception that the staff provides above average service.

As a result of changes made at each property, especially in the maintenance area, the portfolio's 2001 average score grew 5%, moving from a "low average" to "high average" score. As a result of their efforts the portfolio average came in slightly higher than the national database average. In addition, as a result of the improved scores, the percent of the client's properties that won a SatisFacts Superior Satisfaction Award increased 150%, with 35% of the properties winning the award in 2001! And, as covered above, the bottom line impact was significant, with a 14% increase in the percent of residents who responded that they were "Very Likely" to renew their lease! Again, the correlation between improving satisfaction in the maintenance area and the likelihood to renew proved true. While common sense tells us this, seeing hard facts that confirm the impact is quite powerful. As noted at the beginning, in the case of this client's 5,000 unit portfolio, the impact was a dramatic potential \$1.4 million positive hit to the bottom line!

What does this mean? A focus on the basics of property management pays off! In the case of this 5,000 unit portfolio, there is a potential

\$1,400,000 impact! Make sure your staff is courteous, professional and dependable (also, keep an old proverb in mind when thinking about who to hire and/or retain: "Don't open a shop if you can't smile"). Make sure residents are satisfied with their home. Sweat the details when it comes to curb appeal. And, most importantly due to the direct impact on bottom line satisfaction - promptly and adequately take care of resident and building maintenance issues.

Our research shows that many issues impacting turnover are much more controllable than many realize. The key is to track satisfaction and respond. Performing resident surveys, developing sound action plans that address overall property and individual resident issues, and making sure staffs understand the impact of their performance on the performance of the property (and also on their own success) can have a dramatic impact on the bottom line by improving satisfaction, reducing resistance to rent increases and minimizing unnecessary turnover.

Written by [Doug Miller](#)

Since the mid 1980s Doug Miller, President of The Miller Marketing Group (TMMG) and SatisFacts Research LLC, has been involved in multi-family marketing, research, advertising and training. He has worked with over 500 conventional, tax credit and subsidized apartment communities throughout the nation. Prior to starting his own business in 1996, Miller held the position of Director of Marketing for the following firms: Forest City Residential (a 30,000 unit national portfolio); Gates, Hudson & Associates, Inc. (an 8,000 unit regional portfolio); Associated Estates Realty Corporation (a 25,000 unit regional REIT). Previously Miller was a real estate ad agency Account Executive, where he handled a 35,000 unit portfolio.

SatisFacts Research, LLC is a national real estate and related business research firm and proud provider of SatisFacts Resident Satisfaction Telesurveys. Research products of SatisFacts Research includes its annual, move-in, on-notice, maintenance follow up and pre-lease renewal telephone surveys. In addition, it offers employee satisfaction surveys and other related support services (such as training).

Miller and his businesses have received national recognition and are actively involved with the industry:

- Member, National Apartment Association's prestigious National Supplier Council.
- Frequently published in *Units*, *The Journal of Property Management*, *The Apartment Manager*, *The Apartment Professional*, *GraceHill.com*, *Sales & Marketing Magic* and numerous apartment association newsletters.
- "Industry Expert", *Sales & Marketing Magic Online's Marketing Bulletin Board*.
- Facilitator, *Sales & Marketing Magic Brainstorming*.
- Panelist, *GraceHill.com "Improving Resident Satisfaction and Retention" chat room*.
- Advisory Board, Community College of Baltimore proposed Property Management program.
- Instructor, The Washington Post Apartment Marketing Institute.
- Trustee, Northeast Ohio Apartment Association.
- Member, National Apartment Association.
- Member, Maryland Multi-Housing Association.
- Speaker for numerous apartment associations nationwide, including Chicagoland, PMA, Northern Virginia, Tulsa/Oklahoma City, Northeast Ohio, Maryland Multi-Housing, IREM and others.

Miller received his B.S.B.A. degree from Washington University (St. Louis, MO) and M.B.A./Marketing from The American University (Washington, DC). A native of Washington DC, Miller now lives in Baltimore with his two sons.



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Newsletter Committee NOTE: Although this article was written a few years ago, the concept still remains that increased satisfaction directly correlates to increased retention in all markets. This article has the facts to back up this statement in the market place today.

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Don't have time to serve on a committee? Join an interest circle. Receive information targeted to the information you want to hear about.

Whether you are part of the Livingston County group or Independent Rental Owners. If they get together, you can hear about it and join. Specific information for specific interests.

Go to the Member's Only section of wa3hq.org and put in your username and password. (Don't know your username and password?? (There is a button for that too). Click on the STAY INFORMED link and select what you are interested in. You can pick more than one. You can join a committee...even if you just have 1 hour per month. Every committee has one time things that can be done to help out. If you join a committee the chair will contact you to find a task that fits your schedule. Below is a list of committees and circles. Get involved to day and help move the association forward.

- ☐ Inspection Task Force
- ☐ Interest Circle for Affordable Housing Providers
- ☐ Interest Circle for Business Partners
- ☐ Interest Circle for Legislation and Advocacy
- ☐ Interest Circle for Livingston County
- ☐ Interest Circle for Maintenance Issues
- ☐ Interest Circle of Owners of Rental Housing
- ☐ Education Committee
- ☐ Legislative Committee
- ☐ Marketing the association to the community
- ☐ Membership Committee
- ☐ Newsletter Committee
- ☐ Product and Service Council for Business Partners
- ☐ Program Committee

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WA3 Golf Outing

Friday, June 5, 2015 - Ann Arbor Country Club

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- You must have DTE Energy for your electrical service. One refrigerator per DTE account.
- Your annual household income must be no more than the maximums written on the enrollment survey.
- You must have an old refrigerator that was manufactured before December 2000 that you are willing to replace. If you are unsure of the age of your current refrigerator, check here: <http://www.appliance411.com/service/date-code.php> – OR – Contact Habitat at ref@h4h.org or 734.358.8100 with the brand, model number, and serial number.
- You must surrender your old refrigerator when the new one is delivered to you.

Program may be terminated at any time.

[How to Enroll](#)

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- **eBill Paperless Billing** - a free and secure way to view and pay your bill. And best of all, no more paper! With eBill paperless Billing, you can view your bill online in a printer-friendly format, and you'll also receive monthly email reminders when your bill is ready for viewing. To enroll or learn more about eBill Paperless Billing, go to dteenergy.com/interactiveebill.
- **Energy saving incentives program** - provides upgrades to both tenant and common areas for multifamily buildings with five or more units under one contiguous roof. For more information, call 866.796.0512.

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Michigan PACE Program for Capitol Improvements

Considering Capital Improvements to your facilities or looking for ways to decrease utility expenses? Michigan's PACE financing program for energy efficiency improvements may be the answer.

This innovative financing program covers 100% of energy efficiency upgrade costs, allows for financing terms of up to 20 years, and requires no out of pocket costs. Additionally PACE is non-recourse and off-balance sheet financing.

Project examples include:

- Windows
- Lighting
- HVAC Systems, Boilers and Chillers
- Insulation
- Water Usage Improvements
- Geothermal
- and many more.

When considering building or equipment upgrades it would be smart to consider funding with PACE.

Commercial Mortgage Provider LLC has recently partnered with [The Energy Alliance Group of Michigan](#) to share this program with WAAA members.

For additional information visit [PACE Program Overview](#).

To discuss a project, contact Michael Dudek, Cell (734-476-3851) or

Why Sponsor?

1. WA3 is a highly targeted market — get your name out there and in this newsletter to the direct market you want to purchase your product.
2. You will create brand awareness throughout the entire membership by having your logo displayed at events and here in the newsletter.
3. The newsletter provides direct links to your companies website every time you sponsor something. The sooner you commit to sponsor the more your name (and links) appear in the newsletter and on all flyers and banners.
4. Our events have tables available for you to display your products and brochures.
5. Collect contact information when you come to events and help others find out what products and services you have to offer them.
6. Develop credibility...Build trust with your targeted market and develop rapport with potential customers at all events. It gives you a chance to highlight your business so potential customers remember your name and you.
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Contact Person
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From March to May

CAMT — Hands on training for maintenance

- May 19, 20— Appliance Repair
- May 21 Interior/Exterior Maintenance.

May 7 - Mixer at Sidetrack Bar and Grill
Depot Town

Sponsored by CORT

CORT

May 13 — Meet the Buyer/ Reverse Trade Show

At All About Furniture on Jackson Rd.

Vendors sign up to get face to face time with property professional buyers. Limited spots available

June 5—Annual Golf Outing at
Ann Arbor Country Club

After Hours Summer Mixers

- May 7th [Sponsored by CORT](#)
- June 11th, [Sponsored by Solar](#)
- July 23rd [sponsored by Full House Marketing](#)
- August 13th [Sponsored by Solar](#)

CORT



September 15th, 17th, 22nd and 1/2 day
24th NALP, National Apartment Leasing Professional Designation.

September 17, 2015- General Membership Networking Pub Crawl - Downtown Ann Arbor

Real Estate Con Ed for Property Management
October 20 - qualifies for 6 CEC's for designations.

CAMT

CERTIFICATE FOR APARTMENT
MAINTENANCE TECHNICIANS



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Final two classes of Hands On CAMT training are in May. Make sure your maintenance knows about them

Appliance: May 19, 20 — \$179

Int/Ext Maintenance: May 21 — \$129

Register Today

October 8th and 9th - GLAStar Education and Awards Event Lansing

October 15, 2015 - Wine and Euchre Night
at All About Furniture

Lessons available...Super Fun Networking event

October 22 thru 28, 2015 - CAM designation Class
Become a certified Success!!!!

November 19, 2015 - Annual General Membership
Lunch voting for 2016 Directors

Cost to sponsor: \$150 per meeting. Get 5 minute presentation, name in all publications and links in newsletter, logo tent cards on all tables, and exclusive rights to dispense literature.

December 3, 2015 - Holiday Awards Evening at
Aubree's for pool and shuffleboard

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May 2015

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
				1
4	5	6	7 <i>Mixer...Sponsored by:</i> 	8 <i>Office Closed</i> <i>Apartment Maintenance Conference at Burton Manor</i>
11 <i>Marketing Task Force Meeting</i>	12 <i>Membership Committee Legislative Committee</i>	13 <i>Meet the Buyer— Reverse Trade Show \$50 per vendor All About Furniture</i>	14 <i>Education Committee</i>	15
18	19 <i>Program committee</i> CAMT APPLIANCE REPAIR	20	21 <i>BOD Meeting</i> CAMT Interior-Exterior Maintenance	22 <i>A2 IPMC meeting</i>
25 <i>Memorial Day</i>	26 <i>PMAM Lansing</i>	27	28	29

JUNE PREVIEW

- **5th Golf Outing at Ann Arbor Country Club**
- **11th After Hours Mixer at Windemere Park Sponsored by: [Solar Contract Carpet - Free to all members](#)**
- **NAA Education Conference in Las Vegas**



JUNE 24-27, 2015
Mandalay Bay Resort & Convention Center
Las Vegas

CONNECT LEARN GROW

