

RELATIONSHIP ADVICE Good ethics can help you avoid the pitfalls of manager/vendor relations



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WHEN YOU DEVELOP A GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH A VENDOR, IT IS A WIN-WIN FOR EVERYONE INVOLVED, PARTICULARLY FOR YOUR CLIENT. However, should a conflict occur, you will be presented with a true test. As a property manager, you have been hired by your client to take care of whatever issues arise on the project, including vendor performance. Like any relationship, the manager/vendor relationship is ripe with potential pitfalls.

Pitfall 1: The Comfort Zone

We all have our go-to vendors; the companies or individual contractors we can count on for anything. In some cases, we may even think of them as friends. We must remain objective, however, to not slip into a “comfort zone,” and simply choose our favorites for every job. If the job requires someone with more experience or a larger crew, you must do what is best for that project. Your ethical duty is to use the vendor best suited for the project.

Pitfall 2: Blinded by the Bling

Accepting a gift of any kind from a vendor is unacceptable. If you do accept a small “perk,” it must be disclosed. You need to be cautious and make certain the perk is not a cover up for the job not getting done properly or at an inappropriate cost. We have all dealt with a vendor who is all talk and no action. As a manager you must recognize this and quickly remedy the situation, perhaps by telling the vendor that a job well done is the only reward you need.

Pitfall 3: The Underperformer

There are times when we must work with vendors who seem to have little respect for what we do, who think “their way” is the only way, or who never set foot on a property. It may appear the best way to handle any of these dilemmas is to move to a new vendor as quickly as possible. However, if the vendor is truly the best option for the job, or the client insists you use that particular vendor, then it is the responsibility of the manager to find a way to rise above unproductive behavior. After all attempts have been made without success, then you may have justifiable cause to make a change.

Pitfall 4: The Litigator

The requirement to review contracts can be very daunting but it is certainly necessary in the management world. A failure to follow up on a contractor discount, a cancellation clause or a change order can put you on a fast track to a conflict with the vendor, and may cause a loss for your client. Ensuring that all your t’s are crossed and i’s are dotted in any agreement will go a long way to keeping your vendors in line. This attention to detail will also keep you actively engaged with your client today and in the future.

While managing any relationship can have pitfalls, it is important to remember that the relationships you cultivate with your vendors can and will grow with each project. ■



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