When I tell people that my goal is to be a commercial property manager, the next question is usually, “What made you want to get into that?” At first, my answer was a not-so-brief history of my career path. Now I just say that it’s something I fell into, and apparently, I’m not alone. Property management is not high on the list of desired career paths—but why is that?

This field is so multifaceted. In a given day, a property manager may step into roles in accounting, construction, marketing, human resources, finance, risk management or other fields. Here you may have the opportunity to interact with businesses ranging from mom-and-pop operations to the world’s largest corporations. You might get to “add your fingerprint” to the most prominent real estate sites in the country or help families find the homes they’ve been looking for.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics expects our field to experience double-digit job growth through 2026. The bulk of this growth is anticipated to be driven by the increase in the number of buildings that are required to be professionally managed. So, with property management being so dynamic and rewarding, and the number of jobs expected to grow faster than average, how can we better market our profession to make it a career of choice?

FRAMEWORK

In 2009, McKinsey & Company developed a marketing model that better captures the circular journey people take in their decision-making process. They named the loop the Consumer Decision Journey (CDJ), and it has since replaced the traditional marketing funnel model. While the CDJ was initially aimed at business-to-consumer marketing, it has been found to be applicable to other efforts and certainly can be used to build a brand around the property management career. For this, attention will be focused on two stages: (1) active evaluation and (2) post-decision (post-purchase) experience. These two stages offer the most opportunity to connect with career explorers and build influence throughout the rest of the CDJ. During active evaluation, people gather information that will be the basis for their next career decisions. The post-decision experience provides insights into our profession that career seekers use to make decisions about it.

APPROACH

The target market for our efforts can be stratified into two general categories: new and experienced career explorers. Each has unique perspectives, motives and goals that must be touched upon in order to effectively reach them.

New explorers will be looking for opportunities where they can gain experience, develop skills and build personal brands. This group will typically be younger and includes recent graduates with little experience. Here we’ll need to emphasize the benefits of a career in property management and clarify the journey from zero experience to mastery. We will want to reach these explorers while they are still in school, and partnerships with schools will be instrumental to that end.

Experienced explorers are either in transition or about to be. Their professional experience may range from just a few years to a few decades. Regardless, people in
this group will be interested in applying the skillsets they’ve gained to new challenges, something property management is never short on. Our message to this group will be tailored toward our field’s multifaceted nature and highlight the varied paths that can lead to success.

**TOOLSET**

**Skill Building**  
Supplementing academic education with professional seminars is an effective way to build relationships with schools while reaching new explorers. Offering free seminars in skills foundational to property management, such as decision making, negotiation and communication will give us an audience with our target market and help round out schools’ offerings. Participants will gain valuable skills and connect to industry insiders. The seminars will help build participants’ confidence in their success within the field, which is critical to the career selection process. Current property managers get the chance to shape future generations by teaching from their experiences. These seminars will serve as the main direct engagement with new explorers and connect those in the post-decision experience stage with those in active evaluation.

**Pathways to Success**  
The use of infographics is a relatively new way of communicating ideas that is rooted in marketing. They make data easier to digest by putting it into a visual format. This is the perfect vehicle for communicating career pathways in our field, as it can be adapted to both a specific audience and a particular distribution channel, such as social media sites, blog postings or printed media. For new career explorers, I suggest showing a single path diverging into the multiple niche areas of our field. This would emphasize the journey from no experience to mastery while allowing room for personal growth and development. For the experienced career explorers, our infographic pathway would look quite different. Here, we’d want to show how various backgrounds can diverge into our complex field. This communicates to viewers that property management is a dynamic place that will entice them with new challenges. Creating infographics is quite easy with the help of online infographic builders, and much of the core data is readily available from sources like the Bureau of Labor Statistics and IREM.

**A Day-in-the-Life Immersion**  
Video is a powerful way to communicate with a given audience. Younger audiences prefer this style of communication. As such, modern marketing efforts need to include video to reach this demographic. I recently saw this format used in a unique way which immersed the viewer in an unfamiliar environment by combining a storyline with video of the subject’s daily activities. It gave the viewer a deeper understanding of the subject by painting a context around the ideas presented. This is best leveraged through a day-in-the-life video series where the audience can explore property management in short bursts. User-generated content can provide a consistent source of fresh material while, again, giving those in the post-decision experience stage the ability to connect with and shape future professionals. Annual contests can increase participation, stimulate creativity and help organizers shape the content being generated.

**CONCLUSION**

Increasing marketing efforts will undoubtedly bring new prospects, but this should be done in such a way so as to not waste resources. By applying the CDJ framework, we can better understand how to utilize an exacting approach and build specific tools to reach our future colleagues. These targeted marketing efforts will connect today’s property managers with those of the future and demonstrate to the latter that this is an attractive career choice boasting solid wages, multifaceted work experience, good job prospects and career stability.

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