



5 MISTAKES TO AVOID WHEN HIRING AN ASSOCIATION MANAGER

Association managers can make life easier for a community's board of directors — but hiring the right association manager can be challenging, even for well-established boards.

Candidates who look good on paper don't always have what it takes to deliver. Industry certifications, insurance, experience, and other baseline requirements are essential qualities every candidate should possess. However, they don't necessarily indicate if the candidate has the capacity, skillset, and leadership qualities to keep your community on track.

In fact, poor matches are often the result of not digging deep enough. To improve your chances of hiring the best association manager, here are five mistakes to avoid during the screening and interviewing process.

MISTAKE #1 | Underestimating the Importance of People Skills

One of the association manager's most important duties is to serve as the primary point of contact for community members. They must serve as problem solvers and arbitrators, juggling everything from financial questions and maintenance requests to complaints about neighbors. For that reason, it's not enough for an association manager to be detail-oriented; they must also possess exceptional communication, customer service, and conflict resolution skills.

Questions to ask include:

- What is your strategy for handling upset or angry community members?
- How many direct management representatives will be available for the community?
- What technology/software platforms do you use to communicate with community members?
- How do you track and communicate owner concerns that need to be escalated to the board for discussion?

MISTAKE #2 | Undervaluing Years of Experience

It's true that years of experience do not necessarily translate into effective leadership skills. But experience still matters. Experienced managers are better able to anticipate the needs of community and board members. They are more equipped to manage issues with a steady hand. They are more likely to have built relationships of trust with local vendors. And they can more effectively serve as a guide and tactician for board members.

Questions to ask include:

- How many years has your company been providing association management services in our area?
- What is the average tenure of your managers?
- How many years of experience do you require for your managers?
- What kind of support do you provide to your managers?
- What certifications do your managers hold?

MISTAKE #3 – Working with a Company that does not Invest in its People

Why should you question the staff development programs of prospective association management companies? Because their staff will be interacting with your community members. Comprehensive training programs ensure association managers are current on everything from laws and regulations to industry best practices. Moreover, companies that invest in staff development are also invested in staff retention — leading to less turnover and greater stability in your association management office.

Questions to ask include:

- How is your staff training program structured?
- How do you support staff in attaining certifications and advancement opportunities?
- What is your staff retention strategy?





MISTAKE #4 | Not Aligning Services with Needs

There are the fundamental services you would expect from any association manager, such as property maintenance and collections and enforcement. But what about the higher-level needs of your community? How will your association manager facilitate board meetings? How do they intend to communicate with community members? What are their accounting system capabilities? These are not always universal service offerings and need to be clearly defined as you interview candidates.

Questions to ask:

- How would you describe your ability to coach board members in their day-to-day duties?
- Can you provide samples of what we can expect to receive for monthly financials?
- How do you track routine services to make sure they are completed and on time?
- What is the manager's role in soliciting and reviewing proposals for services and repairs?

MISTAKE #5 | Failing to Adequately Vet Responsiveness Policies

How quickly will your association manager respond to emails, voicemails, and text messages? Within 24 hours? Or maybe 48 hours? Or simply when they get to it? Response times can be a source of contention, which is why board members should always vet a candidate's policies for responding to community members. This should include defining how your property manager will handle requests and concerns when they are unavailable. After all, he or she will need to take time off. Who will be there to keep operations moving in their absence?

Questions to ask:

- What is your policy for responding to emails and phone messages?
- How do you handle after-hours and weekend emergencies?
- How will you ensure community needs are addressed during time off?

How to Hire the Right Association Manager for your Community

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