

## ■ **Web Portals: A Gateway to Maximizing Today's Technology**

*Enhancing manager efficiency*

***By Charles Holland***

Managers often have to find a balance between providing a service on a small budget and providing customer satisfaction. To find that balance, industry leaders are turning to the Internet and using Web portals to reduce time and cost, while enhancing communication and customer service for residents.

At Professional Community Management of California, Inc. (PCM), iaccess—a Web portal system that provides customized homeowner association Web sites—helps our managers work more efficiently. Developed with both the consumer and manager in mind, these portals serve as a communication tool and offer a host of features that are modernizing the industry.

Taking full advantage of today's technology, Web portals offer managers the benefits of accessibility and flexibility to more easily communicate and perform their duties. They can be accessed remotely from PDAs or laptops at the manager's convenience. From anywhere, a manager can respond to a service request and contact a vendor, without paperwork or phone calls.

PCM managers who use iaccess have found that it reduces the number of phone calls they receive daily, which allows them to focus on more pressing activities. Having immediate access to a community and its news also enables managers to distribute, update or upload information in real time. They can e-blast news announcements, project updates, board meeting reminders, surveys and much more to residents. This feature not only saves time, it also helps make the community eco-friendly by reducing printing costs and paper use.

Many residents like receiving their community newsletter and reminders online, rather than via printed material that ultimately ends up in the garbage. They can enjoy the convenience of having all community information right at their fingertips. The system also gives residents the ability to request the use of community amenities, make service requests and contact their manager.

These Web portals serve as an unlimited archive tool for storing and tracking information including forms, meeting agendas and service requests. In just a few clicks, a manager can see what has been updated and audit the information on file, which helps during a transition period. With all information organized and accessible, a new manager can easily pick up where the other left off.

In addition, iaccess offers the advantage of tracking the performance, time, service and results of managing the community. Managers can run monthly reports and use them as a tool to quantify the value and cost of their service to the association board.

As homeowner association budgets become tighter and the performance expectations of managers increase, the use of technologies like Web portals will help management companies meet service and budget goals. By offering quick and efficient communication, 24-hour accessibility and versatility to perform several administrative tasks at a low startup and monthly cost to consumers, Web portals do just that.

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