

# Community Next: 2020 and Beyond Community Management Panel Report

## The Future Management Professional

*Specific education, diverse skills and improved public recognition are needed now.*

Although community management is a relatively new occupation, in barely five decades it has become a vital and sophisticated profession that has evolved into an international career path that embraces tradition, business acumen, credentialing and a grasp of increasingly complex state, federal and international laws.

## Background

Most managers and management company owners who came to the profession when it was being formed in the early 1970s—and for many years after—did so from a wide range of other occupations. Professionals in real estate, law, construction, accounting, finance, insurance, hospitality, facilities management and even military service have become the leaders whose combined talents and abilities helped build a rich foundation for this new vocation.

Nearly 70 million Americans now live in common-interest communities—homeowners associations, condominiums and cooperatives—which account for nearly a quarter of the U.S. housing stock. According to the Foundation for Community Association Research, there are nearly 325,000 community associations and more than 55,000 community managers; more than 100,000 people work in as many as 8,000 management companies. These figures do not include the growing number of management companies, managers and support staff in other parts of the world, which is also increasing.

We expect the momentum of developing communities to continue. And as common-interest community living becomes more widespread—and the number of retiring industry leaders also grows—the need for qualified, well-trained managers will also increase.

## What is Needed Now?

Through several conversations over about six months, the Community Management Panel's discussions revealed four key elements that will be required to maintain the profession in the near future and preserve its continued advancement over the long term. These elements are, of course, interrelated at their core.

### PUBLIC AWARENESS

A recurring theme in our conversations has been the critical need to educate the general public, as

well as our customers, about the essential role that managers play in developing and maintaining well-run community associations. This can't be overstated.

It is our belief that once managers are recognized outside of our industry as skilled professionals—much like lawyers, accountants, teachers and other professionals—a number of features will change. Management positions will become more respected, and thus, salaries more competitive.

Customers—i.e., association boards—as well as individual residents and service providers, will have a better understanding of a manager's role, which will generate better cooperation.

And as customers become more knowledgeable and sophisticated and cultivate their own expectations, managers will be more conscientious about their own training, competencies and behavior. Simply put, consumers' knowledge of what the profession entails will set the bar higher, and managers will rise to the challenge.

## **EDUCATION**

Education and training for managers now is very specific and presented in graduated levels to accommodate everyone from the novice to the most erudite, expert professional. Currently, however, formal training and testing for competency is offered only through CAI's Professional Management Development Program (PMDP), CAMICB and some state-sponsored courses.

Going forward, however, at a minimum, industry professionals will need to have earned a bachelor's degree. The group also agreed that managers will need more refined specializations—like finance and technology—in the future.

Additionally, the industry will expect and encourage colleges and universities to play a more active and conspicuous role in preparing future managers. We will persuade these institutions to develop and offer specific courses and—potentially—professional certificates and/or undergraduate or graduate degrees in community management.

## **PROFESSIONAL CRITERIA**

As the public becomes aware of the profession and more educational opportunities are available, we expect the community management profession will become more of an "intentional" one, i.e., people will seek it as a specific career path rather than coming to it by chance. This progression also will support better compensation and advanced education, as well as specialization.

## **URGENCY**

Urgency is another component our conversations revealed. Well-trained managers are needed now to fill openings in the growing number of new communities in the U.S. and abroad, as well as numerous vacancies that soon will be created by the many managers who created the profession but who are now anticipating retirement. It's particularly imperative to recruit and educate novice managers today so they can prepare to fill leadership roles in the not-too-distant future.

## **What Should We Expect in the Future?**

"We're still shaping the industry as we go along," commented one panelist during an early conversation. Homeowners, baby boomers in particular, will be less likely to participate in their communities, according to another panelist, and will expect more involvement from their communities' managers. This higher expectation will generate more responsibility for managers. Another panelist envisions that, while most managers currently are generalists, subspecialties will develop within the profession to address specific aspects of management.

An advanced designation—something beyond the Professional Community Association Manager (PCAM) credential—may be needed to recognize managers who meet the ever-increasing criteria for "more refined skills and education."

Technology and culture will also change the profession, as our panelists know well. According to Jacob Morgan, a futurist consultant and author of *The Future of Work: Attract New Talent, Build Better Leaders, and Create a Competitive Organization*, five aspects of work are sure to change:

- Hierarchy – The strict company pyramid structure will flatten.
- Work schedules – Flexible work hours already are becoming the norm.
- Offices – The cubicle is giving way to “employee experience facilities.”
- Who controls information – Instead of executives controlling information, there will be a “distributed/collective intelligence.”
- Reviews – Annual employee reviews will be replaced with real-time assessments and periodic check-ins.

The growing senior demographic will also impact the community management profession, requiring a wider range of services within communities.

## What Will Remain Unchanged?

As leaders in the profession, we also expect some aspects of community management to remain the same. Ethics, technology, office spaces and small companies vs. large corporations will always be issues affecting our jobs, just as wisdom, patience, tolerance and dedication will be essential requirements.

There always will be opportunities for small, boutique-sized firms to thrive alongside large, multi-office corporate management companies.

“Community managers have interactive, albeit ambiguous, jobs,” says Edward Thomas, CMCA, AMS, PCAM. “They must rely on their experience, knowledge and judgment to make relatively complex decisions that affect clients, homeowners, tenants, other employees, suppliers, vendors and multiple service providers.”

These qualities always will be the fundamental aspects of a manager’s job, just as on-the-job training and mentoring will continue to be essential elements of training professional managers.

## Community Management Panel

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