

The lighter, more personal side of property management



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PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

It's 10:30 p.m. when the first text comes in from a tenant about returning from vacation. There's a vibrating noise, maybe the washer or the dryer?

At 10:45 p.m., the noise is growing louder, it's pretty disconcerting, doesn't sound like something a machine not in use should be making; a repair person needs to be dispatched as soon as possible.

At 11:00 p.m. the final text of the evening — it's not the washer or the dryer. That noise? An electric toothbrush, switched on in the luggage. I can call off the team.

The property management business is known to be a tough one — managing expectations and personalities, responding to all sorts of urgent problems from floods and leaks to fires and a hun-

dred other issues that run the gamut from inconvenient to life-altering.

We also often work with people who aren't just moving into a new apartment, but have uprooted their life to find themselves in a new city, with a new job. Talk about stressful!

Talk about a transition! But these situations, and countless others every day, give way to light moments, meaningful interactions and sometimes just a reason to smile.

Whenever I, and my team, have the opportunity to make a transition smoother, nicer, friendlier, why not jump at it.

That moment when you see someone settle into their new home? I don't want to get too corny here, but it's a lovely feeling, knowing I helped facilitate that.

There are also plenty of

moments you couldn't script any better. Where's the realty TV crew when you need them?

The clockwork quarterly requests to change the locks on the doors after a break-up; having to gently remind a tenant that there are cameras in the building's common-areas. All true stories.

Because, as a property manager, I'm invited into people's lives and into their homes. While I maintain professionalism at all times, I'm still always aware that I'm stepping into the personal lives and space of our tenants. I'm bound — honoured even — to get to see a real slice of life.

These lighter moments can be feel-good too. A tenant of ours sold her house and moved into a rental unit. We helped her find a condo where we knew the owner had no plans to sell.

At her own cost, she made the unit perfect, replacing flooring and repainting, though it was all in good shape when she took occupancy. Still, she wanted this to be her last home, as she enjoys her final years.

I drop in on her whenever



It's more than just about dropping off the keys — a property manager is often invited into people's lives and into their homes.

I'm in the neighborhood, as I think it makes a difference in her day. I hope I'm able to visit with her for many years to come.

Another elderly client of ours wants the family home to remain in the family for generations to come. He inherited the property from his mother.

Today neither he nor his grown children live in the family home. Instead we've

been hired to manage and rent the property.

We've been given the most detailed instructions to keep his mother's garden tended to just so. And we are diligent in executing these instructions down to the tee.

So along with the drawing up of contracts, the juggling of maintenance calls, the scheduling of routine and emergency fixes, showing

properties and helping settle newcomers, there are also moments that breathe fresh air into my day and just make me smile. I love this job.

— Sabine Ghali is director at Buttonwood Property Management and an entrepreneur at heart who endeavors to help investors create wealth over time. Visit her at www.buttonwood.ca.

Help your home keep its cool this summer



DARLA GRANT-BRAID

EIEIHOME.COM

If you live in the GTA then chances are you've heard reports about how hot it's supposed to be this summer. On one hand, that's great news after months of cold, Canadian weather.

However, an extra hot summer can also mean an extra high energy bill, if your home isn't energy efficient.

eieihome.com spoke with Wayne Palmer from George Kent Home Improvements to learn more about how to help homes stay cooler during the warmer months, without sending energy bills through the roof.

The most important thing that any homeowner can

do to conserve energy is to schedule a home energy audit.

"I think everyone should have an Energy Audit performed on their home," says Palmer. "Whether [you] are looking for rebates or not, [having an audit performed on your home] is like having a physical on your body."

Insulation for the summer months. Among the shortcomings revealed during an energy audit is whether or not your home has need of better (or more) insulation. Most homeowners know that having a well-insulated home is essential during the wintertime. What

they don't often consider is the fact that it is just as important when the weather heats up.

When it comes to your home's insulation, there are certain things that your home energy audit could reveal.

"There may well be areas where there is little or no insulation, [because] the material has shifted, compressed or been moved by animals living in the attic," Palmer tell us.

If this is the case, and the audit reveals a need for additional insulation, a homeowner's next step should be to contact a professional insulation company, such as George Kent.

Some important information to have on hand when speaking to an insulation professional include:

- Your home's age;
- The approximate size of your attic;
- Type of existing insulation (fiberglass or cellu-

lose);

- Evidence of any mold on your ceiling; and,
- Any history of animal pests (raccoons, squirrels, etc.)

Palmer says that there can be a 'good, better, best' approach to solving any problems revealed during your audit. "[The] good [option is to] simply seal up existing air leaks in the attic (assuming you have adequate insulation)," he says. "[The] better [solution is to] seal up leaks and top up existing insulation to R50 or 60. [However] the best [solution would be to] remove old insulation, seal leaks, Spray foam 1-2 inches off the floor and then add R50 blown in insulation."

Palmer also suggests that homeowners check for

energy grants through government or utility companies.

Of course, the most important part of the solution is to invest in an energy audit, which is something that the professionals at George Kent can help out with. To learn more, go

to www.georgekent.ca or call 1-800-668-5439.

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