



ENHANCING TENANT COMMUNICATIONS

James Shand, Managing Director, TriPartum

There is increasing pressure on housing associations to deliver value for money in their regular communications with tenants and leaseholders.

Communications, such as rent and service charge statements, are often complex and costly documents to produce.

Many still rely on laborious manual processes, as well as staff goodwill, in their regular communications processes. So how can they make the transition to digital, personalise their communications and deliver them efficiently via tenants' channels of choice?

Here are five ways to enhance your regular tenant and leaseholder communications.

Review statements and other correspondence

By carefully analysing what is being sent out today, a housing provider can improve its tenant communications tomorrow. In meetings with housing providers, we often find a 'that's the way we have always done it' approach to tenant communications. But with the focus today on enhancing the tenant experience, housing providers need to find new ways of looking at their existing statements and correspondence, and deliver these communications more efficiently and cost-effectively. Often, it's just a case of 'not seeing the wood for the trees', which is why it pays to have an external, unbiased view.

Ensure clarity of message across all communications

With day-to-day tenant documents, housing providers have a great opportunity to extend their brand

attributes, and their commitment to customer service and experience. Clear presentation of information and brand to tenants across all communications is essential.

An 'information design' approach is recommended, essentially taking information apart and re-presenting it in a clear, coherent and easily accessible way. It's important to help recipients understand the information, with clear navigation techniques which really help to 'tell a story'. In addition, the tone of voice needs to be consistent across all documents, providing reassurance to tenants.

Understand and leverage data

Many housing providers have multiple data sources, including line-of-business systems, CRM, spreadsheets and legacy applications. Bringing all that data together to enable personalised tenant communications can be a major challenge.

Successful tenant communications rely on being able to not only extract but also analyse and leverage data, from the creation of the document itself, all the way through to production and delivery. This requires a significant investment in software, hardware and people with data integration and development skills. Most housing providers don't have those resources in-house, but external help can take the hassle out of the whole process.

Personalise to improve experience and response

A recipient of any communication wants to feel it's aimed solely at them. Personalisation is the 'gold standard' that housing providers should be aiming for.



When putting documents together, it's important to anticipate the different audiences and personas and provide information that is relevant to each recipient.

Clear information, presented well and personalised will contribute to a good response and help minimise queries. Linking relative content to information being provided (such as explaining variances in service charges), adding colour and images or other design features to identify key elements can help the recipient find information easily.

Communicate via tenants' channels of choice

With digital transition being a key driver for housing providers, the 'fly in the ointment' is that not all tenants are willing to go digital. That means organisations must have the full range of communication channels available to them, from traditional print and mail to electronic delivery.

But providing customers with regular communications via their channel of choice is far from straightforward. Housing providers need to be able to leverage data and then format and deliver it in the way the tenant wants to receive it.

Not all housing providers have the technology skills and infrastructure in-house to deliver a multi-channel tenant communications strategy. Which is why many outsource to experts who can manage the whole process.

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KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How many tenant queries do we receive and can they be reduced with clearer communications?
- What are the true end-to-end costs of current processes to create and deliver mailings – and where can savings be made?
- Are our personalised tenant documents written in-line with brand guidelines and our 'tone-of-voice'?
- Is the information well-presented and structured, with a clear 'call to action'?
- How hard does the tenant need to work to understand the information we send them?
- Is the data readily available in a format that enables fast and effective communications?
- Is there an avalanche of queries because communications are not precisely targeted?
- What is the cost to our brand and reputation if communications are not tailored accurately to individual recipients?
- Are we able to send communications to the channels demanded by our tenants?