7 Key Ways to Increase Resident Survey Response Rates

More and more apartment management companies are using a resident survey to find out what their customers are thinking, what they want, and what their customer experience is like. Resident surveys can provide accurate, measurable data that is essential when planning for the future, but due to the popularity of surveys, respondents often must be enticed. Typical response rates range from 10%-30% (*PeoplePulse*), but they depend on a variety of factors. It is hard to predict the level of participation you will receive, but understanding factors that influence response rates, you may be able to estimate and even increase your response rate.

Consider the following:

- **Personalization** - Personalize your email invitations. Emails with a personal salutation result in increased resident response rates of at least five percent, and sometimes much higher.
- **Recency** - To improve response rates on transactional surveys, send the invitation as soon as possible after the event being researched. The longer the lag between the event and the survey, the lower the response rate.
- **Engagement -** Craft effective email subject lines and start emails with an engaging question. Avoid the word "free" as many unsolicited emails use the word "free" in their subject line. To keep SPAM filters at bay, use original language but choose words carefully.
- **Timing** - Send emails when people are most likely to receive it and have the time to respond to it. Studies have shown the best time to send an email is Tuesday or Wednesday between 2-3 pm. Avoid busy times such as major holidays or major events will adversely affect your resident survey response rates.
- **Incentive** - Offering an incentive can lift response rates by 10-15% depending on the quality and attractiveness of the incentive to your target audience. Small payoffs for all participants outranked the 'chance at' a large payoff by almost 2:1 (*eRewards Market Research*).
- **Exclusivity** - Mention in your invitation the exclusivity (i.e. "You are one of a small, select group of customers that we have invited to provide us feedback."), and you will see improved response rates. Of course, don't say it if it isn't true.
- **Reminder** - The first reminder creates the largest uptick in response. A follow-up within 3-5 days after the initial survey is sent is optimal. Too many reminders prompt invitees to unsubscribe from your email list and be unavailable to you for future research.
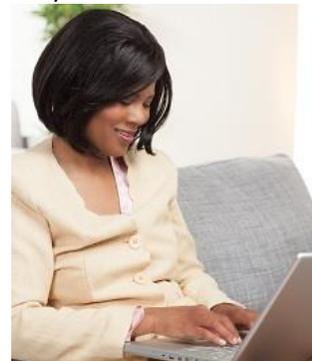
How long should it take to get resident survey results?

· *Over half of online survey responses are likely to arrive in the first day*
· *Seven out of eight responses arrive within the first week*
· *Two weeks is a good "run time" for your survey*

Gaining real-time access to resident survey data immediately upon return is essential to the process. Once you have the information, you can act on it to increase resident satisfaction and lease renewal rates, as well as improve the overall customer experience. The obvious goal is to improve turnover, and you accomplish that with effective retention practices.

See our resident survey guide and learn about different approaches to improving resident retention.