



entrata[®]

The 2026 Playbook for Multifamily Growth

How control, clarity, and consistency will define the renter experience.

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Introduction

In 2026, the most competitive multifamily operators will win on three things renters feel immediately: control, clarity, and consistency. Control means renters can move at their own pace, self-serve when they want, talk to a person when it matters, and never repeat themselves. Clarity means pricing that reflects the true monthly cost, with no surprises and clear value. Consistency means every touchpoint—web, text, phone, and in-person—shares the same context so prospects never have to start over.

This ebook distills what we are seeing across Entrata communities and the broader market: **personalized journeys with options, transparent all-in pricing, AI woven across leasing, maintenance, renewals, and payments, and rewards that reinforce the right behaviors.**

You will find practical guidance you can implement now, including how to structure self-service with clean handoffs, how to publish all-in pricing that builds trust, how to deploy AI with Fair Housing guardrails, and how to make rewards meaningful enough to move the needle on renewals and delinquency.

Treat this as a playbook, not a think piece. Each section closes with concrete actions and KPIs so your teams know what good looks like and how to measure it.



SECTION I

The Personalized Renter's Journey (With Options, Not Obstacles)

Many younger renters, including Gen Z and Millennials, want the option to navigate the renter journey with minimal human interaction. For multifamily operators, this means providing self-service opportunities that can be personalized to each individual's experience at every step of the lead-to-lease journey, with the option to engage with onsite teams as needed.

Seamless handoffs between online AI agents and onsite human agents are essential. Few things are more frustrating for prospects than engaging with a site team member who lacks context from earlier interactions. Each restart creates friction, prolongs the leasing process, and can ultimately push prospects to a competitor.

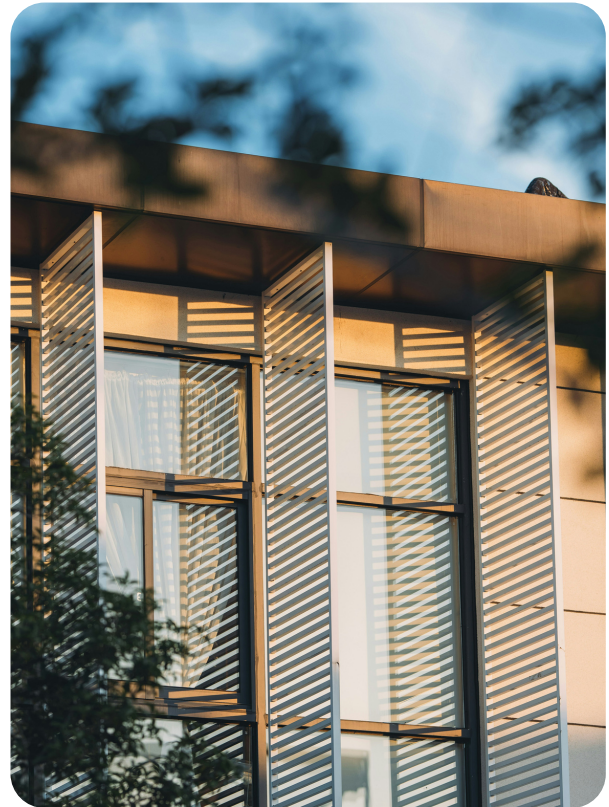
STATS

58%

of Gen Z renters completed the application process almost entirely online¹

35%

of Gen Z renters would prefer a fully self-service leasing process¹



The best way for properties to solve this challenge is to first consolidate marketing, leasing, and resident communications into a single platform with a unified data layer. This ensures team members have access to all the information and context they need to deliver the best experience. Second, use AI to automate repetitive daily tasks. This allows renters to enjoy a personalized experience and move at their own pace—whether fully online, a mix of digital and in-person, or completely offline. By meeting renters where they are, you give them control of the process while maintaining a consistent and connected experience.

¹ <https://www.entrata.com/resource/entrata-2025-resident-report>

SECTION II

The Automated Leasing Journey



An example of this in action might look like this: a prospect searches online for an apartment and clicks on a property listing. An AI assistant greets them on the website, answers questions about pricing, availability, and amenities, and recommends floor plans based on their preferences.

They take a virtual tour, select a unit, and schedule a visit through the assistant, which automatically confirms and sends reminders.

After the tour, the prospect completes an online application. The system verifies their information, runs instant screenings, generates a digital lease, and collects signatures and payments—all without human involvement.

In this scenario, prospects get the best of both worlds. They enjoy a seamless, efficient online experience combined with high-touch support when needed. Properties gain full visibility into the leasing journey, allowing teams to see in real time where prospects are in the funnel. This insight helps with forecasting, prioritizing which leads need direct follow-up, identifying which leads need a nudge to move forward, and determining which leads require ongoing nurturing.



When prospects can move from search to signed lease without friction, operators gain data clarity, efficiency, and stronger conversion.

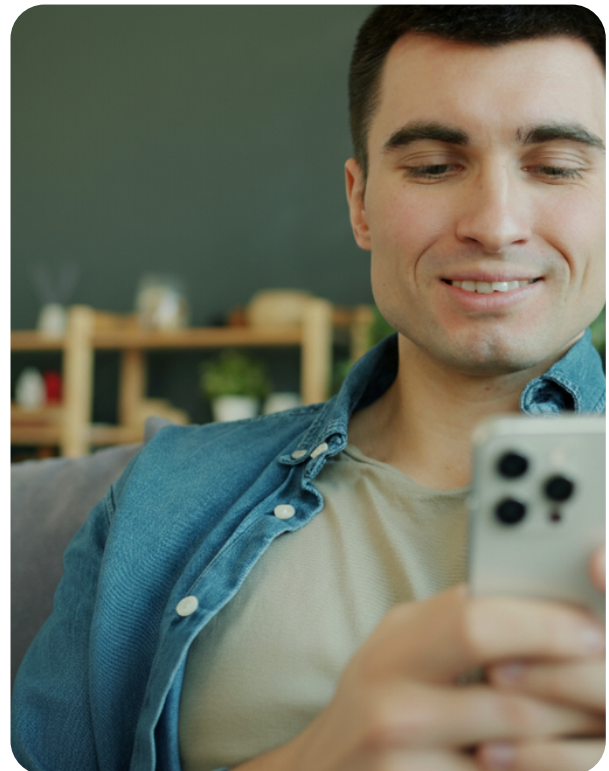
SECTION III

Transparent, All-In Pricing (and Smarter Concessions)

Renters are becoming increasingly budget conscious, and cost of rent remains the primary factor for most renters when choosing a new home, according to Entrata's 2025 Resident Report². When publishing rental rates, include the all-in price with any required monthly fees. Clear, upfront pricing helps renters know what to expect and avoid sticker shock when the first month's rent comes due. It also builds trust and loyalty while reinforcing the value they receive for their rental dollars.

STAT**82%**

of renters want more fee transparency³



Transparent pricing also creates opportunities to offer promotions that feel more personal and valuable. Time-sensitive promotions or concessions tailored to individual prospects are far more effective than blanket incentives. This approach drives urgency and encourages faster lease decisions.

For example, properties can create custom amenity bundles that prospects can opt into or offer complimentary on-time payment reporting to credit bureaus for a limited time. These targeted incentives build goodwill and help properties stand out in a crowded market.

² <https://www.entrata.com/resource/entrata-2025-resident-report>

³ [82% of Renters Want More Fee Transparency](#)

SECTION IV

The Personalized Offer

For example, after viewing a property online, the prospect receives a follow-up message tailored to their interests. The system highlights a floor plan similar to the one they toured and offers a limited-time incentive, such as a discounted first month's rent or waived application fees, if they apply within 48 hours.

The offer is delivered automatically through email or text, personalized with the prospect's preferred move-in date and unit type, creating a sense of urgency and a seamless next step in the leasing journey.

Consider this: a prospect clicks on a **"See real-time availability"** button, views **multiple lease terms** side by side that can be customized to the prospect's preferences (for example, somewhere between 6 and 24 months), and toggles through deposit alternatives. A built-in scheduler offers three tour types (self-guided, virtual, or on-site) with **same-day** self-guided access via one-time PIN. Confirmation, reminders, and rescheduling all run through text, with a site team member able to step in when needed to assist prospects. After the tour, they receive a text that pre-fills their application and shows exactly what they would pay that month and every month after, including optional add-ons like parking, storage, or pet fees.

Offering multiple choices reduces abandonment, while self-service broadens the funnel to evenings and weekends, meaning you are able to meet renters where they are and let them engage on their terms. Text keeps the conversation active until the decision point. The "menu" of terms, deposits, and add-ons, such as upgraded amenities or different floor plans, helps renters customize their experience without feeling upsold. Operators benefit from fewer missed calls, more showings per available hour, and cleaner pipeline data.

Renters often find themselves asking, "Am I getting the best value for my money?" This is especially true for younger renters who are less price sensitive if they feel they are getting value from living at the property. Research by Entrata shows that Gen Z renters are more focused on satisfaction and convenience than cost when deciding whether to renew a lease⁴. As a result, you need to make the benefits you provide tangible. For example, if you offer rent reporting, find ways to highlight improvements in their overall credit score by including a link to view their score on the monthly rental invoice.



⁴ [Entrata Gen Z Report](#)

SECTION V

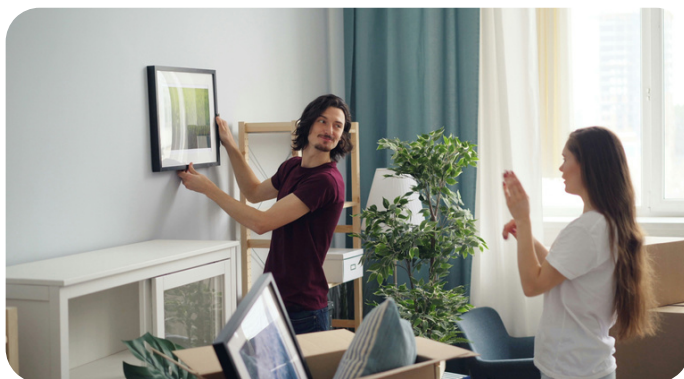
AI Everywhere: From Leasing, to Maintenance, to Rent Collection

In 2026, conversational AI at your properties needs to be more than a website widget that delivers canned answers to frequently asked questions. It should provide thoughtful, personalized responses to any question a prospective resident might have—such as unit availability, fees, or pet policies—at any time of day, across multiple channels including chat, text, email, and voice.

Properties that deploy AI across every channel are capturing after-hours demand, reducing response times to seconds, and freeing onsite teams to focus on high-value work that enhances the resident experience. When evaluating whether to implement an AI leasing process, consider that 63% of Gen Z renters prioritize a technology-first experience, including digital leasing and app-based communication, when deciding where to live⁵.

When choosing an AI leasing solution, select one designed specifically for the multifamily industry. Generalized AI tools may overlook important nuances such as Fair Housing compliance. The last thing you want is to risk violations in an effort to save time or money. With the right solution, you can achieve both efficiency and compliance, improving the experience for prospects and teams alike.

AI-powered leasing is only the beginning of property automation. On the backend, AI can streamline maintenance requests by diagnosing issues, prioritizing work orders, checking inventory for replacement parts, and assigning maintenance team members—all while keeping residents informed every step of the way. This reduces human error, miscommunication between teams and residents, and the back-and-forth that often delays problem resolution.



AI can also improve rent collection. AI payment agents can identify units trending toward delinquency, remind residents about due dates, offer flexible payment options, and encourage automatic enrollment. This eliminates a major burden for onsite teams, reduces awkward payment conversations, and allows staff to focus on building stronger relationships. It also helps maintain a healthy bottom line and minimizes bad debt.

Residents increasingly want to personalize every part of the rental experience, including how they pay. While most prefer the option to pay online, many also want flexibility—such as dividing payments throughout the month instead of one lump sum at the start, or paying by check in person.

Finally, AI can enhance the renewal process. Machine learning and predictive analytics help properties focus renewal efforts on residents most likely to stay, based on historical data. Once identified, those residents can be placed into personalized nurture campaigns about 90 days before their lease ends, reaching them at the right time with updated terms, current rental rates, and tailored promotions that encourage early renewal.

Automating renewals not only saves time and money, but also prevents the costly ripple effects of turnover. The National Apartment Association estimates that turning a unit and replacing a resident can cost as much as \$3,500⁶. Every renewal secured adds value to your community's stability and strengthens your overall operating performance.

⁵ [Entrata Gen Z Report](#)

⁶ [The Resident Search Journey](#)

Conclusion

Taking your multifamily operations to the next level requires more than a single feature. It takes resident choice, message clarity, and automation all working together. When prospects can self-serve or get help instantly, when pricing reflects reality, and when AI removes delays from routine tasks, you shorten the path to “yes,” reduce avoidable churn, and give onsite teams valuable time back for the moments residents actually remember.

If you do nothing else after reading this, focus on these four moves in the next 90 days:

1. **Publish all-in pricing** across your website and listings, with a simple cost estimator.
2. **Enable 24/7 coverage** through AI for web, text, and voice, with clean human handoffs.
3. **Offer flexible choices**—tour types, lease terms, deposit options, and payment cadence—and track adoption.
4. **Launch or refine** a resident rewards program tied to on-time payments, renewals, referrals, reviews, and compliance.

Measure progress like a P&L of experience: time to first reply, self-guided tour share, application abandonment, percentage of listings with all-in pricing, rent-reporting and rewards enrollment, delinquency rate, renewal rate, and hours returned to onsite teams. Operators who measure and iterate consistently will create stronger demand and loyalty in the years ahead.

Entrata makes this simple by managing properties through one system and one data layer. Everyone responsible for resident interactions—whether AI or human—has the same context and insight to turn trends into results. **To learn more about how Entrata can help your business in 2026 and beyond, [request a demo today.](#)**

