



# The ROI of Resident Experience

How frictionless living, responsiveness, and rewards drive retention and reputation.



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# Introduction

Maintaining the status quo is no longer enough. Today's residents expect more—and they're not judging your property solely against others down the street. They're comparing it to the best experiences they've had anywhere. This shift, often referred to as the "Amazon effect," has raised expectations around convenience, speed, and ease. Residents want every interaction to feel as seamless as buying something online. For many properties, delivering that level of experience is challenging, especially without technology designed to support and optimize the digital resident journey.

That perception of experience often begins at the very start of the search, with the application process playing a critical role in building trust. Clunky portals, disjointed workflows, and lengthy vetting introduce friction before a resident ever moves in. When the experience feels difficult at the moment a property is trying to win someone over, it sets the tone for what residents can expect long term. In many cases, a poor application experience is an early indicator of a poor resident experience overall.

Technology plays a critical role in addressing these challenges, but simply having the right tools isn't enough. Those tools must be intentionally operationalized as part of a broader experience strategy. Too often, properties adopt multiple apps and workflows that are difficult for both residents and associates to manage. This "app fatigue" leads to low adoption and inconsistent experiences. To truly streamline the resident journey, properties should consider an all-in-one approach with a single platform that supports every stage of the resident lifecycle.

Historically, delivering a high-quality resident experience has been difficult due to site team limitations and the manual nature of many operational tasks. Today, AI-powered automation is changing that reality. Properties can deliver faster responses, more personalized interactions, and consistent service—without increasing associate workload.

While price remains influential in the decision-making process, experience is a close second—and it can work for or against you. Poor experiences rarely stay quiet. Residents share them widely through online reviews, social media, and word of mouth. Positive experiences, on the other hand, drive referrals, strengthen reputation, and increase retention.

There are also hidden costs to neglecting resident experience. Short-term savings quickly disappear as renewal rates decline and marketing and turnover costs rise. In many cases, those long-term costs far outweigh any initial savings.

As experience becomes a key differentiator, properties should treat it as a core component of both marketing and operations. In this ebook, we focus on five foundational pillars of resident experience: **frictionless living, responsiveness and trust, personalized engagement, community and belonging, and resident rewards**. The following sections explore why these pillars matter to residents, how properties can deliver on each one, and how technology can help scale a consistent, high-quality experience across an entire portfolio.

PILLAR I:

# Frictionless Living

Advances in technology have created a more impatient resident. Like Veruca Salt of Willy Wonka fame, they don't care how. "They want it now." Any obstacle residents face, no matter how small, can push them toward the competition. Whether it's signing a lease, submitting a maintenance request, paying rent, renewing, or getting answers from site teams, these interactions should feel as easy and frictionless as possible.

## Effortless leasing & move-in

When it comes to leasing and move-in, residents want control. Properties should offer a self-service path that allows prospects to move at their own pace while ensuring seamless transitions between each step of the process. Whether a prospect wants to complete everything in one sitting or return a day or two later, the experience should pick up exactly where they left off.

This includes options like taking online tours or scheduling in-person tours, accessing real-time unit availability, and locking in pricing.

A self-service prospect portal can further improve the leasing experience by allowing residents to complete applications, verify income and identity, sign leases, purchase renters insurance, and enroll in rent credit reporting all in one place.

Once the lease is approved, the move-in experience becomes just as critical. More than three-quarters of residents who are satisfied at move-in remain satisfied at renewal, which makes getting this phase right especially important. Residents don't want to chase down answers or repeat themselves at every step. They want a smooth, coordinated process that feels effortless from start to finish.



**Using a property management solution with a unified data layer ensures both AI and human agents have the necessary context to efficiently engage with prospects and residents.**

## Seamless day-to-day living

After move-in, the focus shifts to earning the renewal. To maximize retention, engaging with the property should feel effortless, and an all-in-one resident app provides a strong foundation. Through a single app, residents can make payments, set up autopay, submit maintenance requests, and ask questions. Built-in maintenance workflows support fast, transparent communication from request through resolution.

Additional conveniences like smart unit access, package lockers, and guest access management further enhance the experience and reflect the level of ease residents increasingly expect.

## Proactive communication

Residents have busy lives, and timely reminders can make a meaningful difference. Automated communication can notify residents when rent is due, when preventative maintenance is scheduled, or when a package arrives. With the right property management software, this information is delivered at the right moment without adding work for site teams.

Proactive communication is equally important during the maintenance process. Residents want visibility into what's happening at each step, especially if timelines change. Clear updates help set expectations and reduce frustration. On the other side of the conversation, properties should establish clear response-time standards so residents know when they can expect a reply.

Effective communication builds trust, improves satisfaction, and ultimately increases the likelihood that residents will renew.

## Differentiation with frictionless living

At first glance, it may seem natural to lead with amenities like a resort-style pool or a 24-hour fitness center. While those features still matter, they are no longer the primary differentiators. Today, what truly stands out is the living experience itself.

When positioning around frictionless living, the focus should shift to responsiveness and ease. This includes how simple it is to apply, sign, and move in; how quickly staff responds; and how seamlessly residents can manage day-to-day needs through a single app. Experience-based messaging is far more difficult for competitors to replicate than adding another amenity.

This approach also allows technology to be positioned as a lifestyle amenity. The key is to market the outcome, not the feature.

For example:

- Instead of "Smart locks," say "Never get locked out again."
- Instead of "Resident portal," say "Everything you need, all in one place."
- Instead of "Automated leasing," say "Answers to your questions anytime, day or night."

## Time, the ultimate amenity

A frictionless leasing and living experience gives residents something they value deeply: time. Fewer errands, fewer emails, and fewer follow-ups mean less stress when moving in, managing maintenance, or deciding whether to renew. Regardless of demographic, time savings resonate.

Too often, properties rely on vague descriptors like convenient or easy, which any community can claim. Stronger messaging uses specifics, such as response-time commitments, application completion times, or resident testimonials that highlight real time savings.



**Specificity helps build trust, credibility, and accountability**

## If it isn't broken

Frictionless living does more than attract residents. It helps keep them. Properties that consistently deliver on this promise don't need to reinvent their messaging at renewal because the experience already speaks for itself.

The most effective experiences are the ones residents barely notice because everything simply works. When residents don't have to think about how to get things done, they can focus on living their lives. For properties, that translates into higher conversion rates, stronger differentiation, and more renewals and referrals. In highly competitive markets, the easiest place to live often becomes the hardest place to leave.



### PILLAR II:

## Responsiveness

How responsive a property is, whether fast or slow, quickly shapes a resident's perception of reliability in both emergencies and everyday situations. A commitment to fast response times signals respect for residents. In turn, residents feel acknowledged and stay informed about what matters to them.

Responsiveness matters because silence can feel like neglect. Even short delays can increase frustration, lead to negative reviews, and make residents question whether they want to renew. When teams respond promptly, they demonstrate competence and reinforce accountability.

Responsiveness should begin at the very start of the resident relationship. Acknowledge messages quickly, confirm they've been received, and clearly outline next steps with a realistic timeline. Residents don't expect instant solutions, but they do expect honest communication, transparency, and visible progress.

Provide regular status updates without requiring residents to follow up, and remain consistent until the question is answered or the issue is resolved. AI-driven automation can support this process by helping teams manage updates efficiently while still maintaining the personalization residents expect. Consistent follow-through builds confidence that when something is promised, it will be delivered.

Being responsive isn't about quick fixes. It's about keeping residents informed. Transparency around response-time policies and procedures helps set expectations and builds trust. As noted earlier, clearly defined response standards reduce surprises and prevent unfulfilled promises. When done well, responsiveness positions the property as dependable and true to its word.

## Differentiating with responsiveness

One of the most effective ways properties can differentiate themselves is by emphasizing **speed of service**, rather than simply claiming “great service.” For example, questions answered in minutes instead of days, or issues resolved without repeated follow-ups. Speed is measurable, and residents trust what can be quantified.

Consistency over time builds trust. It reduces resident anxiety and creates goodwill when something inevitably goes wrong. Resident experience is shaped not only during smooth moments, but also during stressful ones. How a property responds when things don’t go as planned is where trust and long-term relationships are formed. Ultimately, how “nice” a unit looks matters less than how reliable the team behind it proves to be. Properties that demonstrate reliability continue to earn loyalty and renewals.

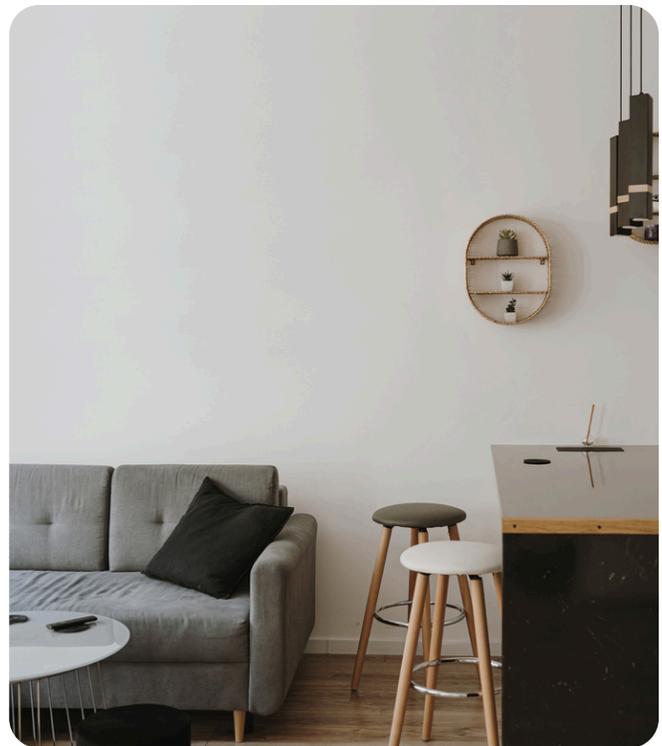
## Don’t lose out on prospects

In competitive markets, responsiveness also shortens decision cycles. Prospects are more likely to lease with the community that responds first, communicates clearly, and follows up consistently. Speed becomes a competitive advantage, not because it pressures decisions, but because it removes uncertainty.

## Make responsiveness your calling card

Over time, responsiveness shapes reputation. It influences online reviews, renewal conversations, and referrals. Residents remember how quickly someone responded far longer than they remember an amenity list. Communities known for responsiveness are perceived as organized, reliable, and resident-focused, even when challenges arise.

Ultimately, responsiveness positions a property as attentive, accountable, and easy to rely on. It turns everyday interactions into proof points and operational discipline into brand value. In a market where many communities look alike, responsiveness is how a property stands out, not by saying it cares, but by showing it every time a resident reaches out.



PILLAR III:

# Personalization

Personalization is about recognizing who a resident is, where they are in their journey, and what matters to them, then adjusting communication and service accordingly. To residents, personalization feels like relevance, recognition, and respect. At its core, effective personalization comes down to two things: relevance and timing.



## Formula for personalized engagement

**Relevance + Timing =  
Personalization**

Messages should align with a resident's current stage, whether they are applying, moving in, submitting a maintenance request, or approaching renewal. Avoid sending communications that do not apply to the recipient, and ensure messages feel timely rather than random or repetitive. Cold, generic email blasts undermine trust and quickly disengage residents.

## Make use of data

Documenting resident preferences, such as communication channels and prior engagement, helps guide future interactions. Keep track of previous maintenance issues or service requests, and reference those interactions when following up instead of starting from scratch.

When personalization is done well, it does not feel forced or invasive. Context drives relevance, messages feel genuinely helpful, and interactions come across as human even when they are automated.

## Residents expect personalization

Personalization is already part of everyday life. Music platforms curate playlists based on listening habits, retailers send offers based on purchase history, and delivery apps remember past orders and suggest favorites. Residents bring those same expectations with them when interacting with their property.

When a property fails to meet these expectations, it stands out, but not in a positive way. Personalization increases engagement with both prospects and residents, strengthens emotional connection to the community, and builds loyalty beyond rent price or amenities.

## Differentiating with personalization

Personalization becomes a differentiator when properties move from mass messaging to contextual messaging. Too often, the same message is sent to every prospect or resident, regardless of relevance. Instead, communication should be driven by stage, behavior, and prior interactions tied directly to resident actions.

Relevant messaging cuts through the noise. Personalized engagement is no longer a "nice to have." It is a requirement. Many communities promise personalized experiences but fail to deliver. Those that do will stand out.

Residents appreciate personalization because it results in fewer, higher-quality messages. Communication becomes more targeted, less repetitive, and aligned with resident needs rather than property convenience. Quality consistently outweighs quantity.

## Personalization powered by automation

Personalization does not need to be complex. While scaling individualized engagement can be challenging, especially across larger portfolios, the right tools make it achievable. Technologies such as generative AI and automated triggers help teams maintain a personal feel without adding operational burden.

**Don't** use language that feels forced

**Do** use language that feels human

**Don't** try to be "too smart"

**Do** focus on being helpful

**Don't** try to impress residents

**Do** simplify and humanize communication

**Don't** deliver standardized service

**Do** tailor the experience to the individual

**Don't** treat residents like numbers

**Do** make an intentional effort to build lasting relationships

### PILLAR IV:

# Community & Belonging

A strong sense of community plays a meaningful role in whether residents choose to move in or renew their lease. Residents want to feel connected, welcomed, and valued by both their neighbors and property management. They are looking for a place that feels like home, not just somewhere to sleep at night.

## It's never too early to start

Creating community and fostering a sense of belonging begins during the search process. Prospects quickly notice whether their relationship with a property feels transactional or whether they are being welcomed as a valued addition to the community.

This makes intentional onboarding critical. Properties should have clear processes in place to welcome new residents, educate them on what the community offers, and show them how to engage and participate in shared experiences from the start.

## Don't force it

Not every resident will want to participate in community activities, and that is okay. The goal is to offer opportunities to connect without pressure. In many cases, simply knowing the opportunity exists is enough.

This can include shared spaces, optional events, and community touchpoints that feel inclusive and authentic to both the property brand and resident demographic. Engagement should feel natural, not manufactured. Small, thoughtful gestures, such as casual coffee or snack events, often resonate more than elaborate programming.

Aligning events and engagement opportunities with the property's brand and resident lifestyle helps ensure they feel genuine. This approach also helps differentiate one community from another. Additional ways to foster belonging include training staff to remember names and faces, actively listening to resident feedback, and making inclusion a visible priority.

## Make residents feel wanted

Renewal messaging should reinforce the idea of belonging. Residents should feel like an integral part of what makes the community what it is. When people feel connected, they think twice before leaving.

In competitive markets, residents do not stay simply because it is convenient. They stay because the community feels like theirs.



**When residents feel rooted  
in their community,  
renewals improve by 7-17%  
(COBU)**



PILLAR V:

# Loyalty & Rewards

What residents notice and remember most is how living in a community makes them feel. That's where resident rewards are emerging as a powerful, and often underutilized, differentiator. For years, rewards in multifamily were treated as nice-to-have extras, such as occasional gift cards, move-in incentives, or renewal-time gestures. While well intentioned, these one-off perks rarely create meaningful or lasting impact.

Modern resident rewards take a different approach. When designed intentionally, they function as an experience platform that reinforces positive behaviors, strengthens emotional connection, and creates ongoing moments of value throughout the resident lifecycle. Instead of asking, "What can we give residents?" the better question becomes, "How can we reward the behaviors and engagement that make living here better for everyone?" That shift is what turns rewards from a cost into a true differentiator.

## Differentiation starts earlier than you think

The impact of resident rewards begins before a lease is ever signed. In markets where pricing and availability can feel interchangeable, rewards help communities stand out by signaling appreciation, flexibility, and a resident-first mindset.

Early engagement rewards, whether tied to move-in milestones, portal adoption, or initial interactions, help reinforce that a resident made the right choice. They turn the first 30 days from a transactional onboarding process into a positive, confidence-building experience.

## A better everyday experience

One of the biggest missed opportunities in multifamily is what happens after move-in. Too often, the experience plateaus and residents only hear from management when rent is due or an issue arises. Rewards change that dynamic.

By incentivizing everyday behaviors such as on-time payments, digital self-service, maintenance feedback, or community participation, rewards create small but meaningful touchpoints throughout the lease term. These moments of recognition make the experience feel active and responsive rather than passive.

The result is not gimmicky gamification. It is an intentional, engaging living experience that adds value without introducing friction for residents or staff. Over time, these moments compound.



## A different approach to renewals

Resident rewards also reshape the renewal conversation. Instead of framing renewal as a negotiation, rewards reinforce the ongoing value of the relationship. Residents who have been consistently recognized do not evaluate rent alone. They also evaluate how appreciated they feel.

That emotional connection matters. People are more likely to stay where they feel seen, not just accommodated. Rewards help shift the question from “What will you give me now?” to “I like living here.”

## Proving the value

One of the most compelling aspects of resident rewards is that their impact can be measured. Participation rates, engagement frequency, renewal lift, and satisfaction indicators help quantify results.

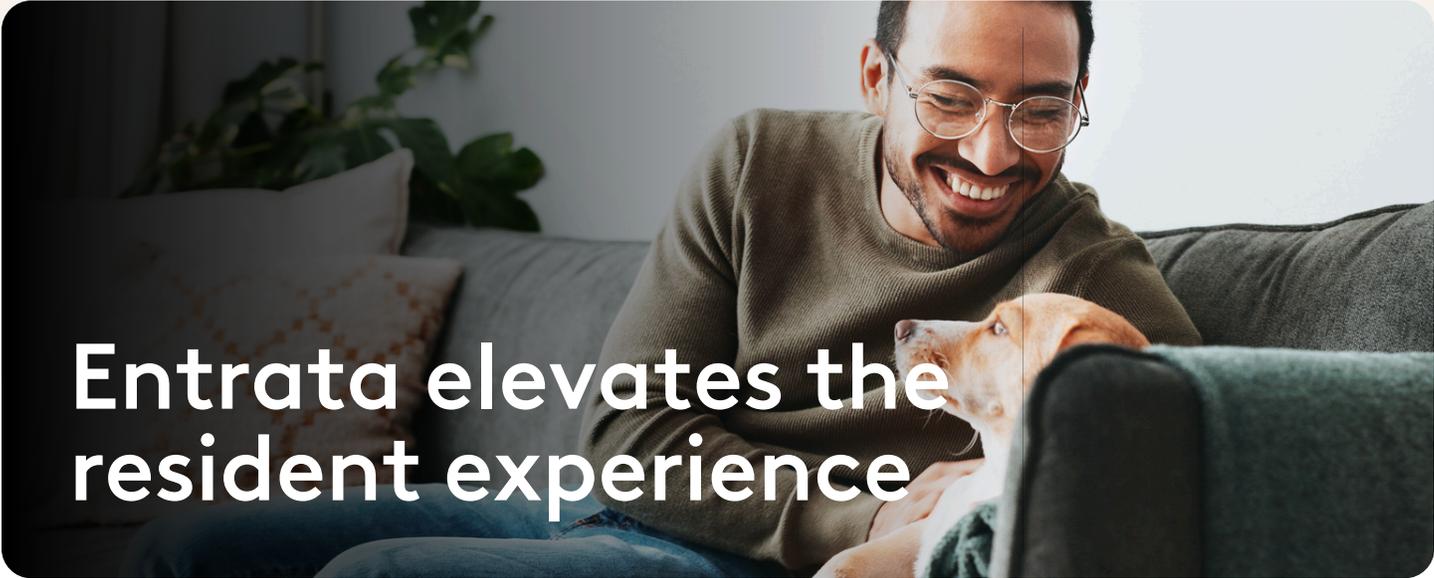
This matters in an environment where every investment is closely scrutinized. Rewards are not soft benefits. When implemented strategically, they drive outcomes operators care about, including retention, efficiency, and long-term loyalty.

## Standing out in a crowded market

Resident rewards provide a scalable and flexible way to differentiate without relying on concessions or costly physical upgrades. They meet residents where they are, reinforce positive behaviors, and create a sense of appreciation that lasts well beyond move-in.

In a crowded market, communities do not win by being cheaper. They win by being the best place to live. Increasingly, the communities that stand out are the ones that consistently reward the people who call them home.





# Entrata elevates the resident experience

Entrata elevates the resident experience. Property teams working to meet rising resident expectations can quickly become overwhelmed. Entrata changes that equation by unifying the resident journey on a single, intelligent platform. The result is a living experience that feels seamless to residents and manageable for teams, built on frictionless living, meaningful engagement, and long-term loyalty.

## Frictionless living starts with a single digital front door

A strong resident experience begins with simplicity. Entrata's Resident Portal and Homebody mobile app serve as a centralized hub where residents can manage nearly every aspect of their living experience, including paying rent, submitting maintenance requests, communicating with staff, accessing documents, and engaging with their community.

By eliminating the need to juggle emails, paper forms, or office visits, Entrata removes friction from everyday interactions. Features such as flexible online payments, autopay, self-service options, and digital maintenance requests allow residents to engage on their own time and in the way that is most convenient for them.

## Elevate the resident experience

Residents do not care how internal workflows operate. They care about how quickly their questions are answered and how easy it is to engage with the property. Entrata's Resident Experience Platform helps communities deliver faster, more consistent responses through tools designed to streamline communication.

The result is a resident experience that feels proactive, transparent, and reliable, rather than dependent on who happens to be in the office that day.

## Personalization powered by data, not guesswork

Delivering meaningful personalization requires access to complete, accurate resident data. Entrata's Unified Data Layer gives site teams a holistic view of each resident and prospect, enabling more relevant and timely interactions throughout the lease and renewal lifecycle.

From targeted announcements to behavior-based engagement, teams can tailor communication based on how residents actually interact with the community. Payment preferences, communication history, service interactions, and engagement data all live in one place. This level of insight turns everyday interactions from generic to intentional.

## Resident rewards that reinforce loyalty and engagement

Resident Rewards bring together frictionless living, responsiveness, personalization, and community building into one cohesive experience. With Entrata Resident Rewards, communities can recognize and incentivize behaviors that matter, such as on-time rent payments, portal adoption, feedback, and renewals. Rather than relying on last-minute incentives or concessions, rewards reinforce appreciation throughout the lease. That ongoing recognition builds emotional loyalty, shifts renewal conversations away from price, and strengthens positive associations with the community.

## A better experience for residents and site teams

Entrata's approach proves that improving the resident experience does not require sacrificing operational efficiency. By encouraging self-service, streamlining communication, and aligning incentives with desired behaviors, Entrata reduces friction for onsite teams while delivering a better experience for residents. The result is fewer manual tasks, stronger data visibility, and happier residents.

## Experience that scales

In a market where amenities can be copied and pricing advantages fade quickly, experience becomes the most durable differentiator. Entrata enables communities to deliver that experience consistently across properties, portfolios, and the entire resident lifecycle.

Through frictionless technology, responsive communication, personalized engagement, authentic community building, and meaningful rewards, Entrata helps operators create places where residents truly feel they belong.

**To learn more about how Entrata can improve the resident experience at your property, [request a demo today.](#)**

