

## Money Saving Benefits Of Using New Technology To Manage Buildings

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When tenants complain about rent increases and engage in vilifying their landlords, taking to the streets in protest, what they are not taking into consideration are the escalating costs in water, sewage, property and other such taxes which have become quite the burden on landlords.

There certainly is a way to save money and not sacrifice the wellbeing and maintenance of a building and that is through Technology. Though some more traditional landlords may bristle at the word technology, we will examine a few common areas in property management that are essential to a properly maintained and successfully run building:

### Surveillance

There have been stories in the news of tenants complaining about the supposedly Orwellian nature of surveillance cameras in the buildings in which they live. Usually when a management company, in conjunction with the landlord's approval, agrees to install cameras it is for that extra sense of security. In terms of safety, a building's security is amplified when there are cameras installed. They can be vital in terms of catching crimes that may have occurred in a building. Several years ago, in one of the buildings R.E.M. Residential manages, a case of domestic violence had tragically taken a murderous end and the culprit was caught within days with the use of security cameras strategically installed throughout the building. On a not so nefarious note is the practical use of cameras in surveying what goes on in the building. When tenants have claimed false slip and falls or other such allegations, our insurance premiums were wont to go up. However, through cameras, we have caught spurious claims and stopped them before we were dragged through lawsuits and our insurance skyrocketing.

We like to think of a superintendent as the eyes and ears of a building, yet even the most diligent superintendent cannot be everywhere at once. Cameras can help save money for landlords through surveying illegal sublets as well.

### Compliance And Violations

With the influx of companies that now provide instant notifications to landlords and property management companies regarding violations and other complaints from tenants, the time usually needed to correct a violation or dispute one can be drastically reduced. More importantly, the fines attached to these violations can be reduced as well. What often happens is mail addressed to property management companies may get delayed in delivering because of the entity names associated with each respective owner. This causes confusion and a backlog for some mail deliverers and for any landlord, time is money. Rather than waiting for mail that may or may not be delivered to your office in a timely manner, you can get a notification through one of these compliance companies instantly via e-mail. These companies have also been fruitful in finding refunds through city agencies that were never issued to landlords for overpaid violations and other fines.

### Key Fobs

Electronic key fobs are a highly effective means of maintaining and securing a building. Though one may initially be hesitant to depart from using the traditional lock and key system and installing a hightech, remotely-controlled key system, the results of using key fobs will certainly change that. They are instrumental in ways akin to the use of security cameras in your buildings. When we have tenants sign a lease, only those whose names appear on the lease are issued a key fob. Each fob has a unique identification number, which is documented. Only legitimate tenants are provided with keys. This helps in exposing those that illicitly rent out rooms and subsequently, illegal tenants.

With a standard lock and key system, anyone can go to the locksmith and duplicate a key. When all keys go through management's office, it drastically eliminates the loopholes for illicit behavior on the part of tenants.

### Heat/Boiler Controls

Like the electronic key fob system, some property owners may be hesitant to embrace computerized heat and boiler controls. The initial costs of set up and installation can be daunting. However, the longterm returns are well worth it. Despite last year's winter being a particularly brutal one, our buildings with computerized controls actually maintained savings of up to 40% on fuel compared to the previous year. Through online boiler monitoring, landlords and property managers reduce unnecessary fuel consumption, which often happens when the "superintendent effect" kicks in. Often times, when a building superintendent leaves the building for a few hours or goes away for the weekend, for example, they turn up the settings of the boiler or even put it on bypass, unbeknownst to the landlord. This eliminates tenant complaints and headaches for the superintendent but for an owner, this also eliminates profit and revenue.

When the temperature is controlled remotely via computers by the management company, rather than manually by the superintendent, an owner knows precisely how much fuel is being consumed at any given time, what the temperature is in the building throughout the day and gives them an overall sense of ease.

Yet another benefit of installing heat/boiler controls is the prevention of water loss, which any landlord knows can add up to high costs. In the event of a return line leak, being alerted by the system allows us to address the problem sooner rather than later.

We have examined a few ways in which technology can help your building and investment run smoothly and become lucrative in the process. As Bill Gates' Golden Rule ordains, "The first rule of any technology used in a business is that automation applied to an efficient operation will magnify the efficiency." When an owner has their prized property in the hands of a trustworthy and transparent management company, that comprises the first step. To make the entire operation work and sustain itself at profit, the onus should ultimately fall upon management.

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