



Technology is changing how management and tenants interact

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By **Jill Sell**

Many years ago, it was a strategy of apartment managers to place a policeman's hat on the front desk.

The idea was that it would deter any wrong doing, thinking that an officer was nearby.

Joy Anzalone, chief operating officer for Burton Carol Management, LLC, is amused when she shares this story. Anzalone knows how much security has improved over the years in multi-family buildings.

"Technology has been great," said Anzalone.

Technology has given property managers other new ways to interact with tenants and the possibilities continue to grow. Options include online applications, electronic signatures and paying rent through web services such as www.rentpayment.com.

The Automated Clearing House electronic network allows tenants to make automatic rental withdrawals from their bank. No stamps or envelopes are needed, and renters no longer have to hand a rent check to the landlord in person. Anzalone believes that "maybe 30 to 40 percent" of her residents opt for the ACH option.

"This is ideal for people who travel, don't want to think about paying the rent, or don't want to be late because they have so many other things going on in their lives.

It's very convenient," said Anzalone.

The technology can be adapted to include programmable unit keycards instead of actual keys. It can help facilitate renewal terms with renters and provide an electronic record of any maintenance request "so that no one forgets to write it down," said Anzalone.

"I remember when there was a time in the apartment business when people said, 'Don't worry about it. Tenants are with us for 12 months.' But that's wrong. People make decisions every day as to whether they are going to stay somewhere. We need to bring that sense of urgency to please people to the rental industry," said Anzalone.

Anzalone and other property managers believe technology can benefit tenants, but only if it is balanced with personal attention.

