

Best Practices In **ONLINE** REPUTATION Management

//// //// **FEATURING** ////



Interview with Jimmy Stuart
Assistant Property Manager,
NorthPoint at 68



NorthPoint at 68 is one of the most highly reviewed properties in the RE Carroll Management portfolio. Current and past residents have spoken volumes in their reviews about Jimmy Stuart, the assistant property manager, regarding his professionalism and personalized service.

In early 2017, Stuart was transferred to another property. However, when NorthPoint's online reputation took a dip and the occupancy rate began to fall, he was brought back. Stuart's efforts have earned the property a 96% occupancy rate.

Stuart was the president and owner of a furniture rental company for 18 years. He has been working with RE Carroll Management since 2014. To unwind Stuart likes to cook, listen to music, and go bowling.

Q Jimmy, your exceptional customer service skills and amiable personality have won you countless resident fans. What makes you such a rock star among your residents?

A. | Well, I kind of have that old school mentality that you just have to give that personal touch. That means standing up when anyone comes to the door or, when someone visits us, we walk them to the front door.

I also know 100% of our residents' names, and some of their dog's names, too. Personalized services go a long way in winning residents' loyalty. For instance, one of the things our residents like is the way we handle packages. We send an email alert that they have a package. Residents like the fact that when I see them coming, I've already pulled their name up on the pad, and we're already back there getting their package. They know that we know their name, and that means a lot to them.

Q How do you give a prospect a tour of your property? What do you do differently?

A. | I enjoy people and, when showing our property to a prospect, I take pride in the property as if it is my own. I aim to show the best of myself and the property. I basically start out by asking a prospect what they are looking for. When are they looking to try to move? Do they have a floor preference?

Then I go into the tour, and I am detailed. We have a key fob system here, so I even show them how the key fob works. I am very thorough and show them all the details – where the mailboxes are and how they would get in the front gate. I even go so far as to tell them who the electric company is and who the internet provider is. I'm up front about what the requirements are. And then I show them the fitness center and the pool area.

Plus, I like to keep it light. If I know it is somebody that I can joke around with a little bit, then I adapt to the personality at the time. I will even ask, out of curiosity, how many properties they have looked at. If they say five or six today, I make a joke with them: "That explains your glazed over look." I know I have to make my tour stand out from the others because the prospect is already a little bit bored.

I also make it a point to tell any prospect that I will always remember their name and not their apartment address. I feel if they trust us enough to live here, we should show them the respect of knowing their name. To date, I have done pretty good with that.

Finally, I give prospects the whole price up front, so there are no surprises. I tell them that when I give my quotes I want everyone to know that I give the price for everything, so it doesn't look like at the last minute I am telling them \$865, plus add this, and this, and this. People respond well to that.

Q So you would definitely advise property managers and leasing agents to be up front with all "hidden costs"?

A. | Yes, I think it seems better. Also, what I have found is if I show someone a property today, and the price I quote them could change tomorrow, I make a note in our notes program that specifies the apartment they were looking at, the lease term, and the base price plus maintenance. That way if I am off the next day, someone could come in, and we can say, "Looks like you toured with Jimmy yesterday, and it looks like you were interested in this particular unit at \$900 a month on an 11-month lease." That gives residents a sense of comfort that the whole team knows them and that the team communicates with each other in the office.

Q What are three things you do every day to excel in customer service?

A. | Follow up, follow up, follow up. I'm a man of my word. When I promise to remember a resident's name, I do. I always make sure to put a welcome basket in their apartment and I try to send an email a day or two later, to see how everything is going. If they email me – and I like to mention this in my tours – they can email me 10 times a day, and I will answer all 10 times. So just little things like that.

Q What is your personal rule to respond to email? Do you reply within 24 hours?

A. | I do it in real time, if I'm able to. Unless it is killer crazy in the office, they normally don't wait longer than 3 to 10 minutes for me to respond to an email.

Q How do you handle irate or difficult residents or conflict resolutions?

A. | An irate customer just wants to feel important and be heard. I just listen attentively with no interruptions and let them vent to me, and then we usually can find a resolution. After listening to a resident, I might refer them to several documents that break down our prices and policies, that they already signed. Or I ask them what they would suggest and what would make them happy. I let them know that I will hear them, and that means a lot to them. They even say that they know they probably aren't going to get that, but if they feel like you are receptive to even considering it, that takes a lot of the sting out.

Q How do you communicate with residents? Do you use social media tools?

A. | We communicate mostly through email blasts and Facebook.

Q What kind of support do you get from your corporate office?

A. | Our corporate office responds quite promptly to any and all needs we have. They also provide seminars and classes for any kinds of change in procedures and policies.

Q How do you manage your team?

A. | I basically lead only by example. I like details and things done right, quickly and correctly, and I never ask anyone to do anything I wouldn't do. We have two people on our maintenance team, and unless we are waiting on a part, we try to get a maintenance request resolved the same day.

Also, when people do a good job, I like to tell them that they are doing a good job. I compliment people to death and never have a problem with that.

