



Make the Most of an Existing Asset

The fifth of the month. Residents make their way into your offices dropping off rent checks with a big surge of people walking in as you're trying to close the office for the night. The next morning you take the checks to the bank, leaving happily, when you happen to look at your receipt and realize only half of the checks were credited to your account. You look at the bag you were carrying and see that there is a large hole in the bottom of the bag, just big enough for a check to fit through...

While this story is pretty implausible and silly, the point is that it would be really unfortunate to miss out on half of your income from any source. But we do it all the time with our residents' television service. Most owners have some sort of marketing agreement worked out with the cable company that either provided an upfront fee for allowing the provider to install at the property and sell their services to your residents, or they give a percentage of the income they make from some of the revenue from each subscriber. They may have even offered you more money for letting them be the only cable company you allow on the property. And that's great, but you're still missing out on a half to a third of your residents who subscribe to satellite service.

Tens of millions of people in the U.S. are satellite subscribers and chances are a good portion of your residents are too. Every eight seconds someone switches from cable to satellite, so that number is probably on the rise in your community as well. On average satellite offers more movies on demand, sports and HD content than cable, so it makes sense that their market share is growing.

Yet all those satellite dishes aren't doing anything for you. They just sit there like little empty collection plates pointed at the southern sky. But it doesn't have to be that way! There are several companies who work with all of the national satellite companies that can also offer you revenue for every existing dish on your property as well as for all future subscribers. You're doing a service to them by providing a set of current and future subscribers, so you should be compensated for that service.

Be sure to read any contracts carefully and ask a few key questions before signing any deals, however.

Ask about customer service.

What kind of changes will your resident see? Who will their bill come from? Who will provide customer support and what levels of quality do their call centers offer? Who will come out and install new dishes?

Ask about your income.

How is your revenue arranged? Will there be a one-time access fee or ongoing revenue from your community's subscribers? What guarantees are in place to make sure you have a contractual right to your money?

Ask about reliability.

What is this company's track record? Ask for references, especially of properties similar to yours.

Regardless of who you go with don't let your community's satellite dishes sit idle on your property. Do some research and find a reputable company that can help you capitalize on these assets.

Susan Knowles works with Connexion Technologies, a national telecommunications network builder and manager based in Cary, NC. She can be reached at susan.knowles@cnxntech.com.

