

The Current State of the Internet and How it Relates to Condos

So now that the dust has settled and we have come to face the fact that the entire world won't switch to ordering dog food and groceries over the Internet, it's time to step back and see what role the Internet can realistically play in our lives. It may never be as big an influence in everyday life as a lot of people thought it would be during the heady days of the late 1990's. However we must be careful not to over-react and write it off either.

When it comes right down to it, the Internet is a tool. Primarily, it is a communications tool. So, in those aspects of life that are driven by communication the Internet can be a very powerful force indeed.

The Internet itself is getting more powerful every day. Several years ago the vast majority of Internet "surfers" got online using dial-up connections that made using the Internet a painfully slow experience. Nowadays, more and more people are getting online with speedy "broadband" connections from their phone, cable or even satellite providers. Not only does this make using the Internet faster and more enjoyable, it also opens the door to uses for the Internet that simply didn't make sense just a few short years ago. Today it is not at all unusual to go online to enjoy listening to music or watching videos that would have been too time consuming to consider a short time ago.

How does this all relate to condominiums? The answer is that with faster Internet access more and more people are using the Internet for their daily activities. And with this increased acceptance into peoples' everyday lives it makes a great deal of sense to leverage the power of the internet as a communications tool for your condominium.

The two primary ways the Internet can be harnessed and put to work for your condominium are 1) email and 2) a condominium web site. In fact, these two tools can be combined to form a powerful "communications hub" for your condo. Imagine for a minute a web site just for your community that your residents could go to at any time of the day or night and find such things as up-to-the-minute announcements about items of resident interest, an events calendar showing details of every happening they need to know about or see pictures taken at recent community events. There would be a place where they could sign up to get instant emails if something important comes up in the community, or they could read or search the community governing documents, past newsletters or an electronic copy of any other community document they might need. They could write reviews of local restaurants, service providers, contractors, etc. and read those written by their neighbors to find a good place to go. They could quickly and easily take part in an online survey to provide their feedback on important community questions. They could post questions or comments to their neighbors and board members via an online message board and even check out

a fully searchable online resident directory. They could review the current status and payment history of their association account and make an online payment via credit card or electronic check. Well, guess what? There are already services out there that provide all of this functionality and much more. Your first thought might be that this sounds like a lot of work to setup and maintain. The best news of all is that this is not so. The current state of the Internet allows for web sites that are easily configured and easily maintained by just about anyone who knows how to type and use a mouse. If you can send an email you have all the computer skills you'll need to maintain a rich, powerful interactive web site/email communications hub for your community.

And the Internet is not standing still, higher speeds and new technologies are always coming along to make things that didn't seem probable suddenly possible. Things like online broadcasting and playback of board and committee meetings, online official voting, secure access to community web cameras for monitoring access or just checking in on local happenings when you're out of town. The future is exciting and with everything the Internet can already do for your condominium, that future begins today.

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