



Challenge | Find a Better Way to Manage Assistant Animal Requests

Assistance animal requests had been a source of stress for The Management Group's onsite teams. Like many apartment operators across the country, they were often inundated with these requests.

"These requests took up too much time and ended up costing us money," said Jamin Harkness, executive vice president of The Management Group. "For fear of doing something wrong, we frequently engaged with our attorney for advice."

Onsite teams had plenty of community-related tasks to tend to throughout the day, so spending valuable hours tending to assistance animal requests was hardly ideal. Harkness knew he had to alleviate this time constraint, as well as the mental pressure it was putting on his associates.

These issues prodded Harkness to reevaluate The Management Group's pet processes as a whole, and he made it a priority to find a solution.

About The Management Group

- **Location:** Atlanta HQ; communities in Southeast and Mid-Atlantic
- **Units Managed:** 2,000; six additional communities in lease-up or under construction
- **Portfolio:** Owned, operated and fee management

Solution | Adopt the PetScreening Platform to Standardize Pet Processes

Harkness first encountered PetScreening at a trade show and quickly familiarized himself with the functionality of the platform. It included the ability to handle service and support animal requests.

He quickly scheduled a meeting with the TMG and PetScreening teams. Harkness and his team soon discovered that PetScreening also helped onsite teams recover revenue by tracking all pets.

The platform also ensured all residents—pet owners or otherwise—were formally aware of a community's pet policies and that any animals acquired during the lease must be reported. It also tracked animal and owner incidents for the duration of their stay and beyond.

For TMG's purposes, the screening service alone made it an easy decision to adopt the platform. "It seemed like a no-brainer," Harkness said. "The additional benefit of PetScreening handling the pet management for pet owners and non-pet owners made it attractive to us. It was the cherry on top."

Now, when The Management Group gets an assistance animal accommodation request, it outsources it to PetScreening. Much like a credit check, PetScreening's team will review all service and support animal requests and determine whether they are valid.

"This really removes the stress component for our team members," Harkness said. "They no longer have to validate the requests on their own—which can be an intensive process—and they are no longer the bad guy if a request is denied."

"Since partnering with PetScreening, a whopping 80% of pet-owning residents renewed their lease."

Results | Eased Restrictions, Boosted Renewal Rates, Pet-Responsible Communities

The confidence gained from PetScreening's thorough process of screening all future pets and pet owners prompted TMG to change long-standing policies regarding breed and weight restrictions. It has led to increased renewals and happier pet owners.

"We asked ourselves why do we have these limits?" Harkness said. "Do heavier dogs do more damage? Where did the breed restrictions come from? We always thought our general liability insurance had put these restrictions in place, but on review we learned they did not." As such, TMG opened its doors for any and all breeds with no weight restrictions, and now allows each animal to be screened on an individual basis rather than any pre-existing characteristics.

Additionally, when perusing five months of data since partnering with PetScreening, a whopping 80% of pet-owning residents renewed their lease. "Where our competitors are rejecting pets based on weight and breed, our community warmly welcomes all pets," Harkness said. "They just need to go through PetScreening. We've also taken our newly stated love of pets seriously and put our money where our advertising is."

TMG has added more pet waste stations and is more diligent about maintaining the bags in the stations. Onsite teams regularly re-mulch the dog parks and have added benches, water stations and shade areas for pet owners. Pet-friendly resident events are also on the rise, featuring photo sessions, free training sessions and other pet-related activities.

TMG has discovered that fully embracing pets, including the addition of treats in the leasing office, has resulted in a competitive edge.

Jamin Harkness
Executive Vice President
The Management Group

