



ACMO 2000

A strong foundation for success

By Steven Hill, RCM



Starting a property management company is no small feat. It takes courage, strength, energy and, most of all, creativity. We opened Whitehill Residential with all the best intentions – to take what we have learned from working in the industry over many years to create a business of “best practices.” What we didn’t realize is that there are only so many hours in a day and the ideal is something that is attained over time, not over night.

ACMO 2000 helps to take time out of your busy day to focus on the operation and ensure there is a strong foundation for success. Whether your company is brand new or well established, I would strongly recommend that you consider obtaining your ACMO 2000 certification. It will be worth the effort and will make your company stronger.

Whitehill Residential recently achieved its ACMO 2000 certification. The process began by seeking the resources of a consultant with extensive experience in this certification process, and by reviewing the criteria for the certification from the ACMO website.

The eight principles of the ACMO 2000 certification are:

1. Customer Focus
2. Leadership
3. Involvement of People
4. Process Approach
5. Systems Approach to Management
6. Continual Improvement
7. Management by Facts
8. Supplier Relationships

These principles help to focus your attention to set your company on the road to success.

Customer Focus: The property management business is all about customer service and understanding

the needs of our clients. We opened our company with the mindset to do something different and to bring something unique to the industry. Our day-to-day work is serving the residents and the board of directors of condominiums. They require a management company and property manager that is capable of recognizing attention to detail, doing research to determine possible solutions to items requiring change, and obtaining quotes to allow the board to make informed decisions. While going through the ACMO 2000 certification, you need to demonstrate that your management reports, building inspections and communications can accomplish this. You need to demonstrate that you seek out and implement feedback from your clients to ensure you are making progress and meeting their needs.

Leadership: This is an important principle, as being an entrepreneur is not enough. As a management company, you need to have a vision, goals, budget and financial accountability. These things need to be quantifiable and help you to continually reflect to ensure effectiveness. In preparing our ACMO 2000 manual, we were able to see our accomplishments clearly and set goals for future growth. We were able to identify areas for growth and put a plan in place. Ensuring our own house was in order better enabled us to focus on assisting our clients in setting and accomplishing their goals.

Involvement of People: You've heard many leadership experts say that you are only as good as your people. This has been the key to many successful companies. One of the requirements of the certification is to develop an organizational chart and ensure that there are written job descriptions. This helps everyone understand who they report to and what their role is in the company. In addition, there must be systems and processes in place for hiring, conflict management, termination, and staff interaction. There is a need to review agendas and minutes of manager's meetings to ensure that there is an educational component, and an opportunity for engagement from all team members. Peoples' ideas, initiatives, hard work and company support assist in ensuring the workplace environment is positive and maintains a team approach. One person's knowledge, experience and input limits the success of an organization.

Process Approach: The single largest benefit of the ACMO 2000 certification process is the documenting of your

processes. Every business owner starts their new company with the greatest of intentions. However, the busy-ness of running a company makes it difficult to pause and ensure that the foundation is solid for success. ACMO 2000 requires you to document important tasks such as your communications, human resources, accounts payable, accounts receivable, and financial and management reporting. By engaging your staff to document the processes, you create a manual not only for your existing staff, but one that is utilized in the training of new employees. This helps you to attain your vision, goals and ideals of bringing something unique to the condominium marketplace.

Systems Approach to Management: The process details the task and the system demonstrates the implementation. You can have the best of intentions and be a good communicator, but there is often something lost in the translation. The ACMO 2000 auditor will review your processes and will randomly visit sites that your company manages to talk to the staff in the field to ensure the implementation. Think about this principle as the franchise approach: McDonalds has a recognizable brand and consistency in product delivery. Your systems implemented at your sites through your staff is the branding of your company.

Continual Improvement: Part of the ACMO 2000 audit and recertification process every three years deals with how you have solicited feedback from your clients and staff and what you have done with that feedback. All successful companies continue to grow, evolve and develop. As an entrepreneur, it is important that you keep

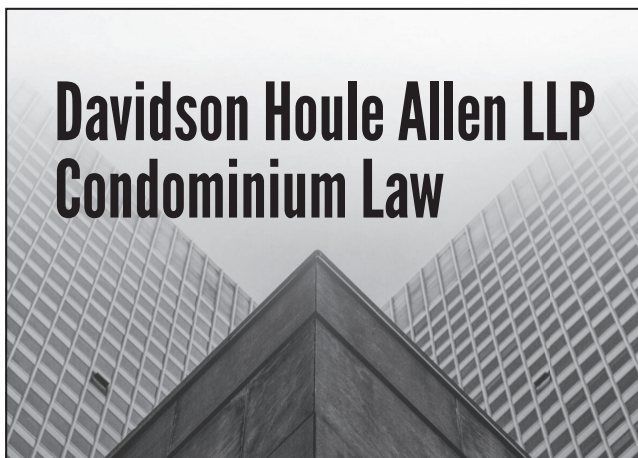
an open mind and are accepting of change. It is a part of both personal and business growth.

Management by Facts: As the one who is ultimately responsible for your company, you must check for and ensure the accuracy of information in order to make informed decisions for your business.

Supplier Relationships: This provides written notification to your employees of your principals related to how they manage relationships with trades, suppliers, consultants and experts in the industry. Through this principle you can address the purchasing process, spending limits, and expectations with tendering gifts from contractors. It is most important that your vendors are treated professionally and without unethical behaviour, as your managers are a direct reflection on your company. Having each manager sign the ACMO code of ethics and by posting the Corporate code of ethics in each office acts as a continual reminder of what the RCM stands for. ■

Whitehill Residential is a proud ACMO 2000 Company. We believe that the certification process has helped solidify our vision and goals and provides a strong foundation for our success. We would encourage all property management companies to consider becoming ACMO 2000 certified. The certification will put you among industry leaders and provide you with a competitive edge.

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