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# Let technology help you run your business

by Christine Wilson, Publications Manager, WMA

**D**o you ever feel like computers are taking over? That people don't really matter any more?

Well, contrary to what the media may be telling you, people *DO* matter – especially in an industry like manufactured housing. And technology can help community owners and operators meet the needs of people better than ever before. Just ask Mike Cirillo, president of Star Mobilehome Community Management in Santa Ana and president-elect of WMA.

"We use alpha-numeric text pagers for our resident managers and maintenance personnel in all of our communities," says Cirillo. "They work great when we have to dispatch personnel to a service call: 'Joe Blow, go get meter readings for space \_\_\_\_.' The message shows up on their pagers. The pagers come in handy in emergencies too."

What Cirillo is really excited about, though, are the combination cellular telephone/2-way radios they recently started using. "These radios are head-and-shoulders above pagers,"

says Cirillo. "The reception is clear and the coverage is great.

"Nextel is the manufacturer," he adds. "They're not a big investment – starting at \$100 each, \$20-40/month. And we save on the monthly pager fee since we don't need the pagers with these."

Cirillo says Star Mobilehome Community Management has used these radio/phones with their property managers for over a year in five of their communities.

"We're also in the process of equipping six community offices with personal computers (PCs), three of which will be on a network configuration," says Cirillo. "This comes in real handy for e-mail, scheduling, resident data and automating standard forms. Our ultimate goal is to get PCs in all of the communities." (In addition to the six communities they own, Star manages 14 others throughout California.)

The biggest challenge Cirillo has found while upgrading the technology in his communities has been the learning curve managers are

undergoing while learning how to use the computers. "The radios have been easy to master," he says.

"So far, we haven't found a lot of software that relates specifically to our needs," Cirillo continues. "We're currently using 'Rent Manager' (produced by WMA-member London Computer Systems) in a couple of communities."

Cirillo's quite familiar with the Internet, as well. "I've been on the WMA website several times," he says. "I usually use it for the membership directory and to look up items in Title 25. I just looked at *mhmarketplace.com* for the first time – pretty slick!"

Community owners like Mike Cirillo have experienced firsthand the major advantages technology offers: greater efficiency, better communications with managers . . . and ultimately, better resident relations. And in the end, isn't that what this industry is all about?

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