The Inside Track to Hiring Outside the Industry

OUR COUNTRY HAS HAD a rough couple of years. We have seen high unemployment, a wildly erratic stock market and a financial system that some analysts say was pushed to the brink of collapse. Throughout it all, the apartment industry has fared pretty well. We haven’t witnessed the dramatic job losses experienced by other industries. In fact, we continue to have a need for entry-level professionals to work as apartment maintenance technicians and leasing consultants. This need will continue to grow.

To fill those jobs with the best people, hiring managers need to start looking beyond whether an applicant has apartment industry experience and instead focus on the types of skills, expertise and knowledge that a person can bring to the position. Ours is an industry that requires a team of employees performing a variety of functions, such as management, marketing and communications, customer service, accounting, business analysis and preventive maintenance. We need employees who function well as members of a team, we need professionals who can lead a team and we need employees who enjoy working with people and excel at customer service.

For example, at least once a week, we at NAA’s Education Institute hear a story about U.S. service members returning home to their families only to face the grim reality of few or no job prospects. Some hiring managers become so focused on finding someone with previous apartment industry experience that they overlook this group of professionals who bring integrity, leadership and an accelerated learning curve to the job. Returning veterans perform well under pressure, respect policies and procedures, are tech savvy and conscious of safety standards.

“Multifamily housing is an industry that doesn’t necessarily require employees to have advanced degrees in a field or industry experience,” says John Cullens, CAM, CAPS, CPS, President and Founder of ApartmentCareers.com. “Our workforce is very diverse, and people can find good jobs at all levels.”

Many new and recent college graduates cannot get a job in their field of study, Staciokas says. The challenge for LPC—and for the industry—is to hire them and get them hooked on property management and keep them engaged so they will not want to leave our industry.

Susan Sherfield, CPM, National Director of Education for Mercy Housing Management Group, says working in the apartment industry is ideal for someone fresh out of college. It gives him or her the chance to develop essential job skills, such as how to work with a variety of people, how to work as part of a team and how to operate in a business environment.

For many positions, a successful job candidate does not necessarily have to come with apartment industry experience. In fact, Sherfield started her career working in hotel management. Many skills gained in other industries are transferrable to the apartment industry. For example, skills such as flexibility, organizational ability and good judgment can prove invaluable to a leasing agent or assistant property manager. People with backgrounds in sales, customer service or communication will find they can easily apply those experiences to the apartment industry.

The apartment industry offers exciting career opportunities to people at all levels and with a variety of skill sets. Please visit www.apartmentcareerhq.org to learn more about apartment industry careers.

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