

FACING THE CHALLENGE

What do you think the biggest challenge is for today's self-storage managers?

— Poppy Behrens



David Dixon • Universal Management Company

The biggest challenge for self-storage managers today, is marketing in a down economy. All facets of the economy are down, and that is forcing consumers of storage to rethink their storage needs and balance their budgets. High gas prices are the main driving force behind move outs. Managers must constantly battle to keep people moving into their facilities, while keeping the customers they already have.

Marketing to businesses is a real necessity today, because they tend to have more available cash to keep their units—and they pay on time. If managers can get out on the streets and create a need for storage, then they are ahead of the game. Some businesses may not know they have a need for storage. For example, doctors who store files in an empty office can easily store those records in a storage facility and bring in another doctor. The effects are more revenue and a lower cost for record keeping. The same holds true for places like Hallmark Cards, Inc. If they store their extra seasonal inventory at a storage facility, they can put more rack shelves on display and perhaps boost sales.

Knowing that move outs are on the rise and keeping on top of marketing can ease the burden of trying to maximize the bottom line. Most of our clients are a bit anxious about what this economy is doing to their occupancy. Thus, managers are constantly challenged to keep the rentals coming in.



Brenda Scarborough • Accountable Management & Realty

Keeping a positive attitude in an economy that continues to tell them, 'Nothing you can do will make a difference; is important.

I chose to go directly to the source to answer this question, and was surprised that all of the managers I asked seemed to echo the same sentiment: The weakened economy, coupled with increased competition, has forced us to become not just good managers, but creative managers. The key is carefully listening to the customer, analyzing their needs financially, and knowing when and how much of a discount to give in order to get their business.

Not only must they use their creative thinking in marketing and sales to get new tenants in the door, but also to find ways of lowering operating expenses to offset the (temporary) decline in profit.

In the past, managers felt comfortable knowing the basics of what the competition was doing, but now they understand the importance of staying on top of their competitors' every move ... and in today's market, that seems to change almost daily. Again, a common thought was managers were either going to succeed or fail in this economy and failing was not an option.



Kathy Tautenhahn • Amazing Spaces

In my opinion, the biggest challenge for storage managers today is staying motivated. Sometimes, as owners, we fail to inspire them to

maintain a high level of professionalism. Our company tries to motivate managers by offering open lines of communication, bi-weekly management conference calls, and continuing education.

We ask managers to contribute ideas that can have a direct effect on the overall success of the company. When we ask managers to come up with new ideas and help those ideas come to fruition, we see a great sense of pride from each employee.

By encouraging managers to be a part of the company's success, we see significant increases in their overall facility revenue, as well as in customer satisfaction.

Bob Francis • The Huron Group



From our perspective, the greatest challenge facing managers during the current economic fog is the ability to "fly by compass." Flying by compass is always focusing on your destination.

Specifically, professional managers need to trust their training and instincts to guide them through these uncertain times.

Do what you do best. Work with the knowledge that you make the difference. Great curb appeal, exceptional customer service, and being (or becoming) a real part of your community are more critical now than ever. If you've maintained these good habits then you have the confidence necessary for success.

Do you have a question you'd like to see answered by industry experts?
Please e-mail your questions to pbhrens@minico.com.