

## Customer Service Excellence Starts With The Right Team Member

To build a strong customer-service oriented team, we all have to start in the same place. At the beginning! As we seek to hire new people, we must ensure that we are making the most informed hiring decisions. All of our industry contributors make very similar comments when it comes to the importance of the selection process for new onsite staff.

**Jana Muma**, Gables Residential Vice President of Training, believes in first class employee selection. “We continue to use a hiring and testing model that helps us identify the candidates who are equipped to succeed. New associates are encouraged to memorize the **12 Pledges of Customer Service**.” The Gables training curriculum teaches the Leasing Professional to sell the services of their community keeping the sales presentation a service in itself!

“It still goes back to the people you hire, how you train, and how you monitor and evaluate. When it is *not happening* at the sales position, it is usually not happening at the top. The business manager or regional supervisor is not communicating the right message,” says LPC Vice President of Marketing and Training, **Maria Lawson**. “After all these years, we are proud to be at a place in the industry where we can proudly wear this new banner, our new corporate motto: **“Our Reputation is our Foundation!”**”

LPC tends to promote from within. Those apartment professionals that rise to the top have often been with the company for years, and the former corporate slogan, **Lincoln People Care**, really means something to them. The “people are important” mentality and customer service orientation is seen in all aspects of operations including onsite leasing! According to Lawson, the shopping reports do reflect the LPC Leasing Professional’s customer service tendencies. Lawson adds, “The right leasing associate will get more than a good score. They will also get a lot of positive comments.”

Hiring the right person is important, but **Wendy Muse**, Vice President of Education for Tarragon Management, Inc., reminds us that the “right” team means having the right leaders, too! They look for and train to superior people skills and customer service. When the opportunity to deal with a prospect or resident arises, the Leasing Professional should exude the desire to serve and perform as, taking the lead from the **Ritz Carlton Gold Standards Service** motto, “ladies and gentleman”. Supervisors have the same training as the new team members and must model the visible and audible behavior that is considered “good” customer service.