



News Worth Storing!

October 2003

Volume 3, No. 4

MASSA MARCHES ON MARLBOROUGH OCT. 30!

Thursday, October 30th, will see the members, friends and exhibitors of MASSA come together for a full day of Educational Seminars and Vendor Exhibits at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel, Marlborough. Sparked by interesting speakers and subjects, supplemented by vendors offering the latest and best of equipment, systems and products for the self storage industry, and interspersed with a fun luncheon and a later Cocktail Reception, this Annual Meeting and Exhibition kicks off with registration at 8:00 am and the Managers' Training Seminar at 9:00 am. David Fleming of Fleming Management Services, an industry veteran and "hands on" trainer will conduct this seminar, fresh from providing a similar program to managers in both New York and

New Jersey. After a luncheon break, sponsored by a large number of our generous vendors, (please see p. 7 for list of Sponsors), during which Gary DeBode, President of the National Self Storage Association will present the "key note" address entitled "The SSA of the Future!"

Concluding the luncheon recess will be a brief membership meeting mandated for not-for-profit corporations by State law, leaving sufficient time for attendees to visit the Exhibition floor and chat with those exhibiting. Then on to the afternoon programs, which will feature Jim Chiswell, nationally known expert and consultant on all things Self Storage. Jim brings his expertise (and an interesting hand-out) to MASSA in

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STORAGE TIPS TO MAKE OCCUPANTS HAPPIER!

For most people, Self Storage usage occurs at a time of stress, often during unhappy times, such as divorce, death of a parent, selling a home or closing a business. I'm sure that we all have felt like we should put a sign in our offices that says: "Storage Units \$25 a month - Conversational therapy \$250 an Hour." However, as Professionals, we want to make our tenants Occupancy Experience as stress-free and enjoyable as possible. Here are some ways to hopefully make that happen!

The Occupancy experience usually starts with a phone conversation, with the prospective client calling for information. We have found recently that more and more clients are better informed than they were in the past, that they are asking more intelligent questions and know more about what they want and need than they did previously. But we should not take that for granted. Again, as professionals, we must find out the prospective clients level of knowledge, and then guide them appropriately in order to turn the telephone conversation into a visit to the facility and a signed Rental Agreement.

Therefore, Step #1 in our effort to make the Occupancy Experience a happier one is to have a good

telephone script that will give the Potential Occupant the information that they need, while at the same time soliciting the information that you need. You should cover subjects like

- What are they storing;
- Is it a commercial or personal rental;
- Will the rental be a short or long term;
- What size unit do they need;
- The pricing of various sized units;
- Do your hours of operation work for the caller;
- Do they have any special needs?

All of these issues must be covered in the first few minutes of the telephone conversation.

What you are trying to convey is an attitude of helpfulness and professionalism to the client, so that they make your facility one they will visit before making the final rental decision.

Once the client has decided to visit your facility, they should be greeted promptly and in a friendly manner; your showroom should be clean, bright and attractive; your personnel must be courteous and professional looking.

These days, it costs little to have all employees, in

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cluding yourself, dressed in a company shirt or jacket, with a pair of black, navy or tan slacks to complete the look. Your staff should not be dressed in jeans, T-Shirts and sneakers; the look of your staff should give the correct professional impression of your staff and your Facility.

Your Showroom/Office should be organized to give the prospective tenant the information they need. By having a display of boxes, tape, moving and packing supplies and locks in your showroom, you are subliminally telling the client: "Madam, these are the things that you may need; you don't have to hunt around for them, we have them here for your convenience, because, as professionals, we understand your needs and are capable of meeting them."

Having a well thought-out brochure that the prospective client can take with them describing your moving and packing supplies, locks and other merchandise that you have for sale will also help to make storage with you a happier experience as the client can then take the brochure home and actually analyze their needs from it, and, since your name is on the brochure, who do you think they will call when it is time to purchase the supplies and rent the unit? And a nice touch is to have a "Phone In Service" so that whatever supplies

are needed are packed in advance and ready for pick-up when the client arrives. On the other hand, if you do not have a great display of items for sale, you are really missing the boat, both in terms of income opportunity and in terms of making the occupancy experience a happy one for the tenant!

And while considering brochures, your facility should have a Marketing Brochure that high lights the attributes of your facility, and tells the prospective tenant that your Facility has Air-conditioning, temperature and humidity control, individual door alarms, 7 days a week (with extended hours) availability, "Free Pick-up for Move In" with truck and driver provided, or rental truck with first 2 hours free, and free use of material handling carts and wagons or perhaps "drive-up loading at a covered loading dock or any other quality that you think makes your facility better! In short, whatever you have at your facility that might make the difference in making the rental decision and cause the prospective occupant to remember your facility should be prominent in the brochure.

Another brochure that you will want to have available as a "take-away" piece for your prospective clients is a "Moving and Packing" guide; this is a guide that contains

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tips on how to prepare to move items safely to storage. While this is basic information for you and I who are in “the business”, it is a completely foreign subject to someone who hasn’t dealt with storage or a move recently. Some of the basic tips are:

- Avoid making cartons too heavy to move or stack
- Fill cartons to capacity so that they do not collapse or tip over when moved or stored
- Put heavier items at the bottom of the cartons
- Label cartons and note their location
- Pack books flat to protect their spines
- Individually wrap glass items; use blank newsprint paper for best results
- Nest bowls and cups, stand plates and platters; fill air pockets with blank newsprint, wrapping paper or foam peanuts
- Wrap all glass well and stand mirrors, windows screens on edge, not flat
- Lamps and lampshades should be wrapped separately; again use blank newsprint wrapping paper to avoid ink-stains that may damage items
- To save space, stand sofas/mattresses on end; disassemble beds and tables, keep upholstery off floor, place loose light plastic dust covers over furniture
- Clean appliances thoroughly; refrigerators and freezers must be defrosted and dry and washing machines completely drained; remove doors of appliances and store separately; use drying agents if necessary
- Put pallets or a grid of 2 x 3’s on unit floor to give

better air circulation under the goods; leave a walkway or aisle to the rear of the unit; don’t over pack the room; you are going to need access!

These are all tips that most people who have never or rarely moved or stored their belongings may not remember when they are under the pressure to actually pack and move. This same brochure should also have a section in it that allows you to write information such as the size of the units the tenant viewed, the price, your name, etc. All of this information will help the potential client in making a decision when preparing for storage, and he/she will appreciate the help that you provided, so that when they are ready to rent they will come back to your facility!

Once you have turned the Prospective Occupant into a Client, because of your professionalism and helpfulness in teaching them about moving and storage, and because you sold them on the advantages of your facility, you still need to continue to make the experience a happy one for them. This continues with completion of the Rental Agreement. Ask yourself:

- Is it quick and easy to fill out;
- Do you calmly explain why you need all of this information;
- Do you review the Agreement with them so that they understand their obligations - and yours;
- Do you give them a professional looking package to walk away with?

A Good Rental Agreement Package will contain (at least) an executed copy of the Rental Agreement that is clean, concise and legible; an Insurance brochure; a “Move-out Notification Form” (if you require advance notice); a Change of Address or Personal Information Notice; a “How to Store Items Safely” Pamphlet, perhaps combined with a Storage Log for the Occupant to use to list their items and the location of each in the storage unit; and your Rules and Regulations.

As to your rules and regulations, you can’t expect someone who has never used your Facility or has never used Self Storage to know what is expected of them relative to your facility if you don’t tell them things like: use only one lock; notify the facility of a change of address/phone number; your garbage disposal policy; gasoline powered equipment must be clean and empty of

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fuel; rules about propane tanks or cooking grills; your move-out policy; the late payment policy and any other rule you find necessary for your business. And of course, each brochure, must include a business card with your name on it!

All of this will go a long way to alleviating the concerns that one naturally has when they plan to leave their valuable items in a location that they do not know. But your efforts to make the storage experience a happy one are still not over!

I am sure that many of you send a "Thank You" note or card to the new Occupant shortly after they rent a Unit. If you don't, you should, not only to acknowledge and thank them for their business, but also to verify the address and contact information. If the Card comes back "undeliverable", it's an early indication that you may have a problem tenant and you should over-lock that unit until you can talk to that tenant the next time he/she tries to enter so that you can get accurate information regarding their contact information.

But how many of us use this vehicle, the "thank you" note, as an additional image building or marketing tool? How many of us add a discount offer on referrals, or a discount on additional boxes, to let the Occupant know that we really want and appreciate their business? How many of us use the "thank you" note as a way of soliciting Auto-Pay programs where we get permission to automatically charge the occupant's credit or debit cards on the 1st of each month? And how many of us use the "thank you" note to offer discounts from other local merchants? Think how much "good will" you will get, and what a happy experience the Occupant will have, if along with your "thank you" note, you give your clients a coupon book put together "Just for Them" that saves them money at local shops! And the local shops just may let you put some of your brochures in their stores for their customers to take! What a Win-Win situation, particularly for you!

But your effort to make this storage experience a happy one is still not over. How many make a point of knowing our clients names so that we can greet them personally or train our staff to help a client push the cart up the ramp, or make a point of having coffee or a regular's favorite tea available? With our business becoming more competitive, and with self storage facilities being more acceptable in mainstream society, I find that we must do more to attract customers and make them happy with our facility -

or else. Note, there are plenty of competing facilities out there for them to choose from.

In summary, we need to give our prospective occupants and our occupants the same courtesy, knowledge, and professional treatment that we would expect to receive if we were on the other side of the desk. Nothing short of that is acceptable, and in the final analysis, it will lead to a very happy occupancy experience which will in turn lead to longer stays and additional rentals, for you!

Jack Rosenthal is co-owner of Storage 1-2-3 in New Hyde Park, Long Island. He also offers self storage consulting under the name J.R. & Associates. Jack is a Director of the NYSSA and has spoken at a number of industry seminars.

Educational Seminars, Trade Show and Annual Meeting PROGRAM

Our vendors will be available from 8:00 am until 4:30 pm and will meet with you during these times!

Please take advantage of this opportunity to learn more about their equipment, services and products!

8 am..... Registration

9 am - Managers Seminar

noon

David Fleming,

Fleming Management Services

Noon - 2 pm....Lunch followed by Membership Meeting with address by Gary Debode, President, SSA

2 pm - 2:45 pm..... *Mark deStefanis,*

Cost Construction Recovery and Tax Benefits for new Self Storage facilities!

2:45 - 4:00 pm - Visit your Vendors!

4:00 pm - 5:30 pm*Jim Chiswell,*

Chiswell & Associates

Is your Management Team Prepared for the Challenges That Lie Ahead?

5:30 - 7:00 pm..... Cocktail Reception

Thank you to all our attendees, Exhibitors and generous Sponsors!

Safe home to all!

(Continued from page 1)

the form of a talk entitled: "Is Your Management Team Prepared for the Challenges that Lie Ahead?" Spending an hour with Jim will prove to be a worthy investment and give you much food for thought as you seek to improve your own businesses.

In addition to Mr. Chiswell, attendees have a real treasure in store (no pun intended) in the person of Mark deStefanis of Cost Construction Recovery, Inc. who gives a dollars and sense presentation that shows self storage operators step by step how to take better advantage of tax depreciation than perhaps they have in the past. This, in conjunction with the real benefits of the new 2003 Federal Tax Law changes are real eye openers! Come and learn and if you have not utilized Cost Segregation in depreciating your facility, this is worth the price of admission.

Following the Seminars and after you have examined all the wares our vendors offer, MASSA will entertain you with a fabulous Cocktail Reception, sponsored by the folks listed on this page! Over the years, we have found that this is a great way to end an important day for our members, their employees and the industry vendors. Everyone gets a chance to network and head home having learned something new and having met many new friends!

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to our Sponsors!***

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Managers Seminar, Educational Seminars and Trade Show!

Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel
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Jim Chiswell, nationally known self storage guru and consultant, will speak to the need for Management Teams to prepare themselves for the challenges of the future. Jim's workshops have been the highlights of many Self Storage Educational Seminars. This is a high energy, high content event to stimulate your talents, stoke your competitive zeal and help you self evaluate your business!

Gary DeBode, 2003 President of the Self Storage Association (National) will join us and tell us how he has been moving the National SSA in new directions!

David Fleming, Fleming Management Services will present an action packed managers' seminar in the morning from 9:00 am to noon. Be there!

PRE REGISTRATION IS PREFERRED: Complete and fax this form to Judith @ 518-427-6781

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October 30, 2003
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