



ATTRACTING TALENT TO THE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT INDUSTRY

Insights to Hire and Retain Community
Association Professionals

In 2020, the Foundation for Community Association Research identified a potential crisis in the community association housing model—a shortage of candidates to fill community association manager job opportunities. Through the work of Foundation and Community Associations Institute (CAI) volunteer leadership, the Foundation embarked upon a survey to better understand the extent of the crisis and to create tools to help management companies and communities increase the pipeline of community association managers today and tomorrow.

The Foundation and CAI discussed the **need for attracting new talent** to community association management and how to identify the benefits and challenges of the profession.

To accomplish this, the Foundation developed two surveys—one to understand the need for attracting talent to the community association management profession and another to identify its benefits and challenges.

In the first survey, CEOs of management companies and hiring managers shared where they have found success recruiting new people for positions and what benefits or perks are most attractive to new hires. In the second survey, community managers revealed how they learned of the industry, what line of work they did before accepting this position, what attracted them to the role, and what they like most about the profession.

Both surveys were fielded by the Foundation in December 2020 with close to 700 management professionals responding: 171 CEOs and hiring managers of management companies and 524 community managers either employed by a management company or hired directly by an association. The main points we sought to identify with the surveys were:

- **How and where CEOs of management companies and hiring managers find potential candidates.**
- **What other professions have transferable skills that make candidates ideal for a community association manager career.**
- **The benefits that are most attractive to new hires and whether they align with what CEOs and recruitment staff believe managers want.**
- **What community managers enjoy or find rewarding about their work.**
- **Challenges that can deter qualified individuals from remaining in the community management profession long term.**
- **Areas that can be improved to reduce job dissatisfaction—both at the management company and community association levels.**

The Foundation's goal for this research is to better understand the extent of the need to increase the pipeline of community association managers, and to help inform efforts to find, recruit, mentor, and position community managers for success in their careers. By providing insights on recruitment appeals, key benefits, work motivations, and potential obstacles to job satisfaction, those responsible for hiring qualified candidates can offer a rewarding, meaningful, and competitive profession that also benefits the community associations they serve.

COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT

Managing a community association, no matter how it's structured, requires knowledge in areas such as laws and regulations, finances, organizational management, governance, staffing and contracting, property maintenance, and resident relations.

Many community associations turn to community association management companies or association-hired managers for expertise in these areas to help boards of directors effectively fulfill their responsibilities to homeowners.

As community associations continue becoming the preferred places to call home, it's crucial for management companies and communities to locate, hire, and retain quality community association managers. Finding ideal candidates from different backgrounds is critically important. Equally essential is ensuring that management companies and associations support managers' growth within the profession.

It's important for CEOs and hiring managers to consider two crucial factors when deciding their recruitment strategy: the best places for finding prospective community managers and providing the job responsibilities, workplace culture, and benefits that will appeal to them.

SNAPSHOT OF RESPONDENTS

CEOs and Hiring Personnel

171 RESPONDENTS

52 years

Average age of CEOs and hiring personnel respondents

21 years

Average tenure in community management profession

86%

Respondents who have at least one professional certification or credential

Community Managers

524 RESPONDENTS

49 years

Average age of community manager respondents

7 years

Average tenure in current community manager role

69%

Female community managers

28%

Male community managers



HIRING AND RECRUITMENT

Hiring Shortage

Since the 1970s, growth in the community association housing model has been exponential. Currently, more than 26% of the housing stock is in a community association. In states like Florida and California, that figure is upward of 50%.

The demand for professional community management is outpacing the number of individuals entering the profession. Community association management companies are seeking creative ways to find talent and increase the pipeline of community managers.

- The majority of CEOs and recruitment staff (97%) believe there is a shortage of community managers.
- Sixty-three percent report they have current openings for community managers. Around 59% say they have between two and six open positions.
- The average tenure of a community manager currently employed by a management company is five years.

Candidate Profile

Some companies and association boards may prefer candidates for community manager positions who can hit the ground running—meaning that they have the experience and skill set to do their work with minimal training required. However, are experienced managers sought out more frequently than those who have just entered the profession?

- 27% of CEOs only hire experienced managers, while 31% of CEOs only hire inexperienced managers. Forty-two percent hire a mix of both.
- Half of respondents prefer hiring community managers with some experience, while the rest were split evenly in terms of preferring candidates with no experience or having no preference.
- Referrals are critically important for CEOs and hiring personnel looking for candidates. The most reliable sources of referrals are from job search sites (34%) and from other employees at the management company (30%).

Source of Referrals



34%

Job search websites



30%

Other employees



15%

Business partners
or service providers



6%

Industry job boards
(e.g., CAI Job Market)



3%

Recruitment agency



2%

Community association board
members or homeowners



11%

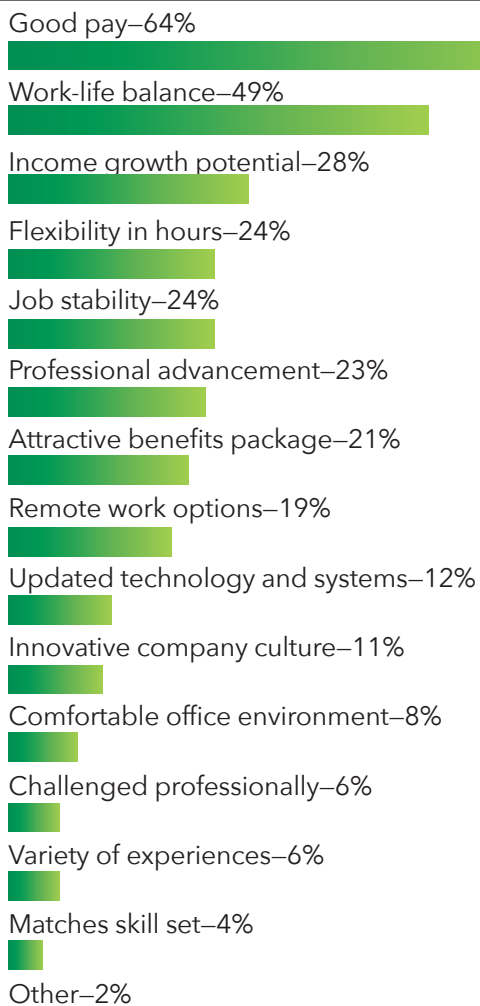
Other (personal network, word of mouth, etc.)

Benefits Breakdown

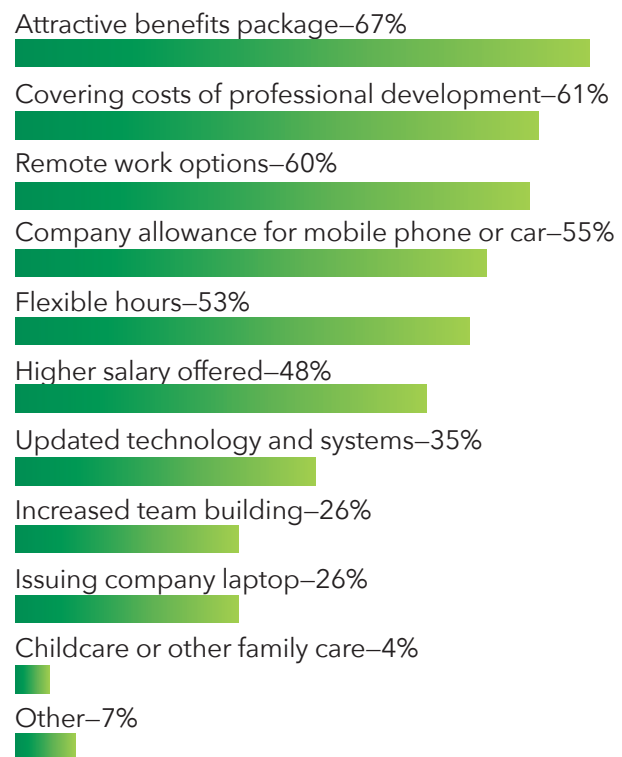
Prospective community managers are **not just seeking adequate compensation and benefits**. They also look for a role that offers them flexibility in how they work and opportunities for professional advancement.

- Sixty-four percent of CEOs and hiring personnel say that good pay ranks as the top benefit sought by candidates for community manager positions. Income growth potential also is one of the top desired benefits, according to 28% of CEOs and hiring managers surveyed.
- Close to half of CEOs and hiring managers (49%) say that candidates want to achieve a proper work-life balance in their role. This ties into the desire by community managers to have flexibility in hours (24%) and the option to work remotely (19%).
- The top three benefits that CEOs and hiring personnel say must be offered to recruit and retain managers are a strong benefits package (67%), covering costs of professional development such as education courses or credentials (61%), and the flexibility to work remotely partially or fully (60%).

CEOs' Top Perceived Benefits for Candidates



CEOs' Must-Offer Benefits for Candidates



MANAGER VIEWPOINT

Whether someone is entering the job market for the first time, looking to switch industries, or is an established professional seeking a career change, **community management can be a good fit for individuals with varying knowledge, skills, and qualifications.**

Profession Awareness

While some colleges and universities offer coursework in community management, there isn't a college degree in community association management—at least not yet. Instead, those who apply to community manager positions typically come from a job that may put them in direct contact with common interest communities, such as real estate or property management, or an entirely unrelated industry.

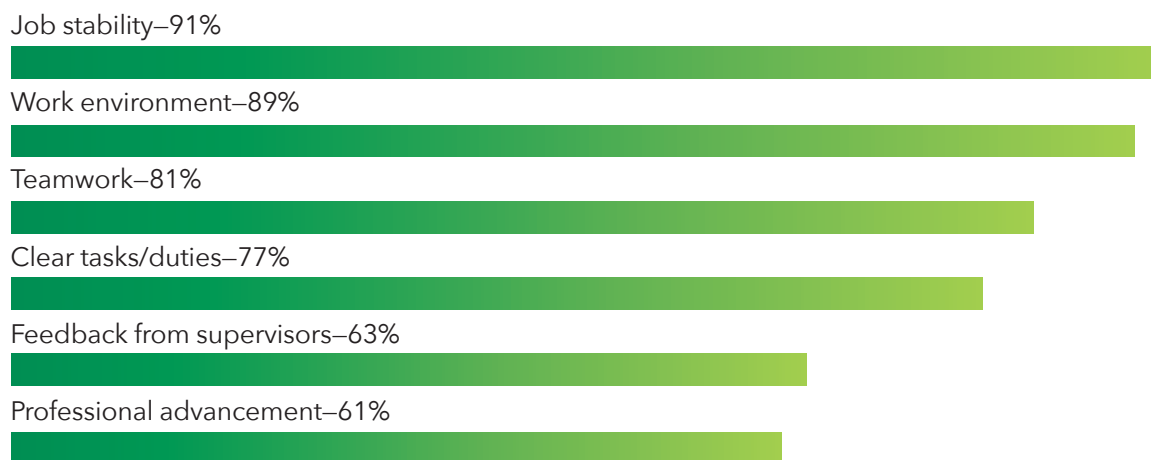
- Community managers say they entered the profession most often by referral from friends or relatives working in community management (27%), followed by job search websites (19%), and referral from another employee (17%).
- About 32% note that they learned about the profession while working in other areas within a community association. One in 10 heard about a manager role after serving on an association board or a committee.
- Only 7% learned about an open community manager position because they were contacted by a recruiter, a college career center, or a state employment department.

Career Factors

Long-term job security has frequently been an attractive trait of community management, especially during times of economic uncertainty. Community managers also value a positive work environment, collaboration and teamwork, and moving their career forward.

- Nearly half of community managers say the perceived job stability was the main draw for entering the profession.
- Job security and a good work environment are the most important career factors for nine in 10 managers in their current position.
- Working together with colleagues to achieve goals is a crucial factor for 81% of community managers.
- Sixty-one percent of manager respondents note that the most important factor is advancing in their career.

Importance of Career Factors

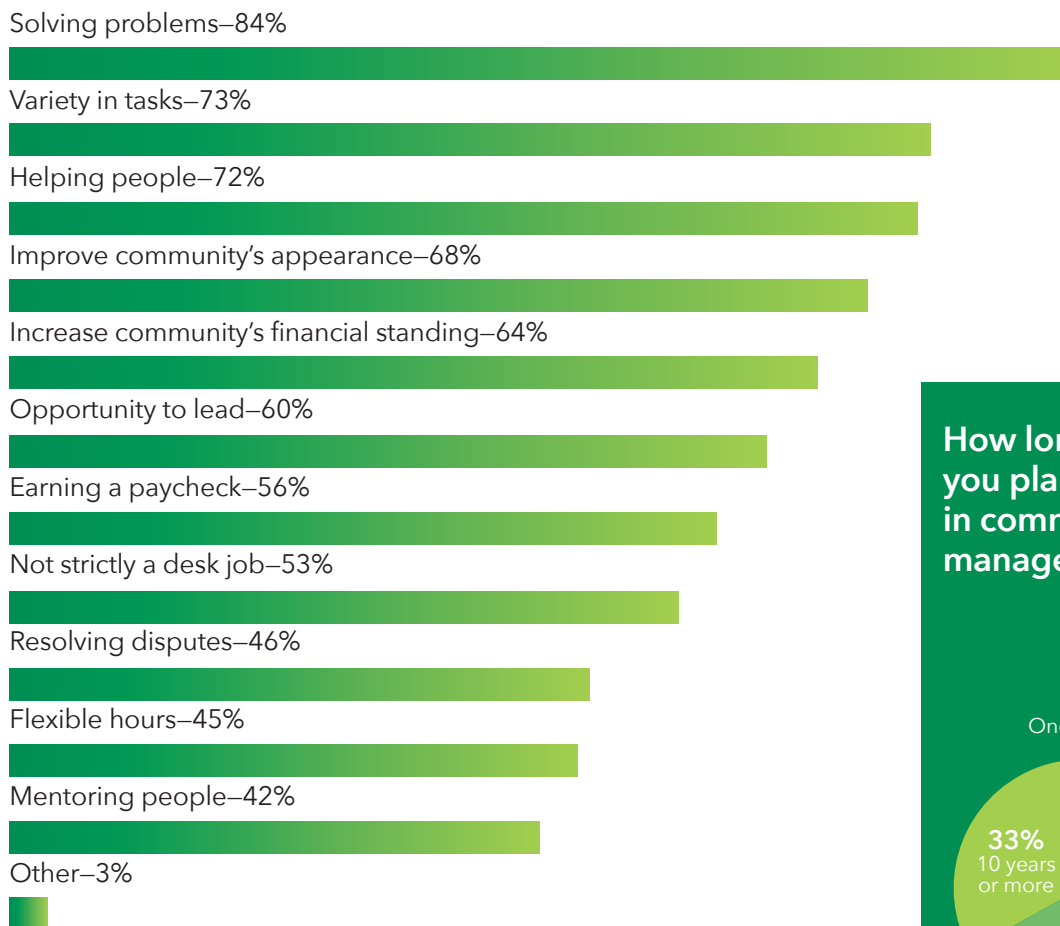


CAREER SATISFACTION

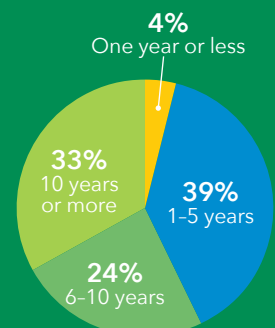
Community managers bring expertise that helps them carry out the policies set by the association's board and oversee a community's daily operations. **Having multiple responsibilities, among other factors, are significant in their overall sense of satisfaction**—and may contribute to their longevity in the profession.

- Solving problems is listed as the main contributor to job satisfaction by 84% of community managers, followed by variety in their tasks each day (73%), and helping people (72%).
- Community managers want to be able to improve the communities they serve, both in appearance (68%) and financially (64%).
- Sixty percent of those surveyed say that the opportunity to lead contributes to their overall satisfaction.
- Most managers plan to stay about eight more years in the profession.

Major Motivators



How long do you plan to stay in community management?



CHALLENGES

As community associations continue growing in popularity, the need for qualified community managers to assist boards in fulfilling their responsibilities will grow as well. **However, several issues can make it difficult to recruit and retain talented individuals in the profession.**

Professional Culture and Support

Community managers employed by a company need to feel supported. Lacking a positive environment and unfulfilled career aspirations are some of the reasons that would lead managers to move on to a company that is a better fit.

- A toxic work environment (59%), unpleasant company culture (55%), and poor benefits (48%) lead the reasons for why community managers would leave a management company.
- Forty-two percent say that the lack of opportunity for advancement would lead them to quit.
- In addition, not covering costs for professional development (including education courses and credentials) would cause 28% to leave their management company.

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Possible Detractors



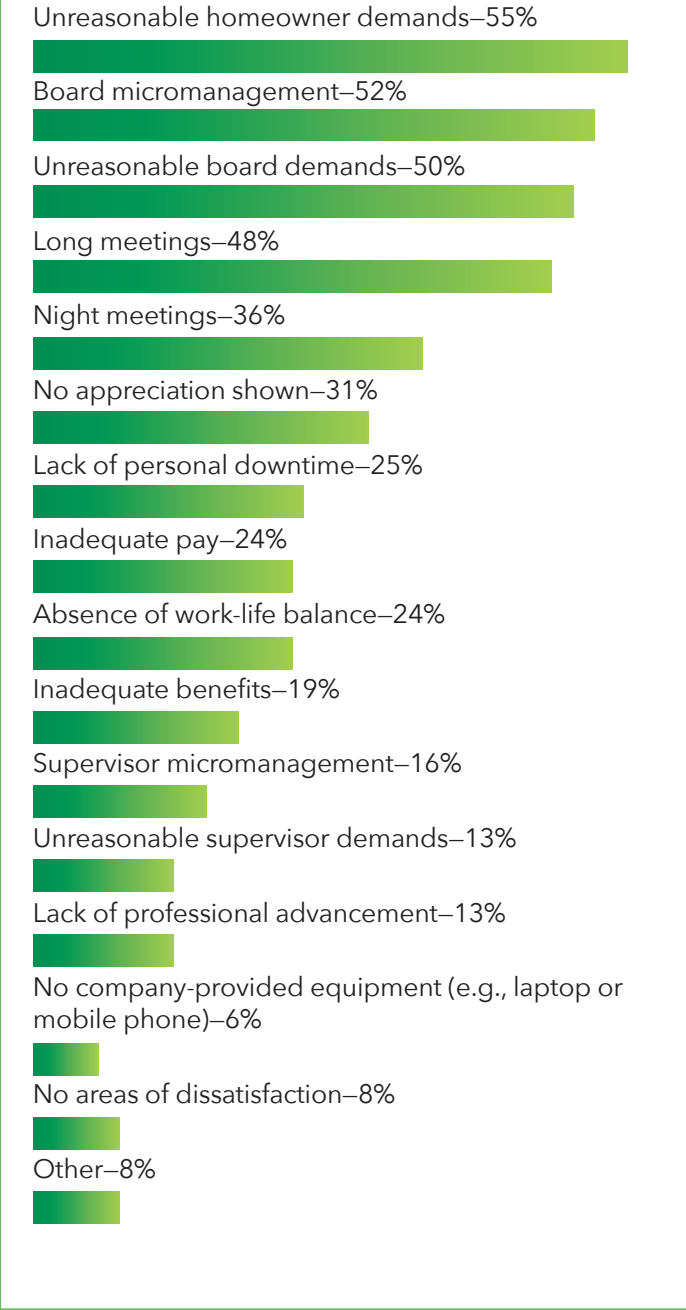


Demanding Job

Community management is an incredibly rewarding profession where managers have the opportunity to create a positive impact on a homeowner's or a family's daily life in their community. At the same time, **there are challenges facing community association managers:** balancing demands from association boards, homeowners, and their management company while facing limitations that prevent them from properly fulfilling their role.

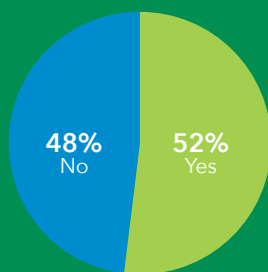
- Unreasonable demands from homeowners is listed by 55% of community managers as the top contributor to job dissatisfaction.
- Micromanagement from the board (52%) and unreasonable demands from board members (50%) also contribute to managers' unhappiness with their job.
- More than a third (36%) of respondents say that their association board imposes certain requirements or restrictions that prevent them from professionally managing communities. These may include general lack of communication, imposing unrealistic deadlines, and not following their advice in decision-making.
- Only 11% of managers say that their management company imposes requirements or restrictions. However, 54% listed lack of administrative support as a major contributor to dissatisfaction, followed by selecting service providers who aren't a good fit for the community (42%) and the expectation to be on call after business hours or on weekends (34%).

Contributors to Dissatisfaction



Unreasonable demands from homeowners was listed by **55%** of community managers as the top contributor to job dissatisfaction.

Does your management company have a training program to promote staff to manager positions?



Community association management is an appealing profession for many reasons. As a CEO or hiring manager, ensuring that community managers are supported, understood, and empowered is crucial to their longevity in the role and their long-term success.

Reevaluating Workloads

A significant way to support community managers is to lessen their workload.

This is not necessarily about taking away core tasks but rather reassessing how these tasks are conducted and facilitating their completion through broader support and improved technology.

- Forty-nine percent of CEOs and hiring personnel say they are working to reduce the workload for portfolio managers. Only around 16% say they are doing the same for on-site managers and 15% for assistant managers.
- For portfolio managers, the primary areas to reduce workload are encouraging online meetings (87%), rebalancing portfolios (80%), and hiring additional support staff (74%).
- Reducing workloads for on-site managers includes improving technology (81%), soliciting feedback on ways management can improve (77%), and encouraging online meetings (69%).

Retention Strategies

It's important for those who focus on hiring and recruiting community managers to ensure talented individuals grow within the profession. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways—from offering competitive pay and benefits to creating programs that provide on-the-job training for those interested in entering the profession.

- Eighty-five percent of CEOs and hiring staff say they are taking steps to increase manager pay between 2–4% to make compensation more competitive.
- Increasing benefits also is a priority for 60% of CEO respondents, mainly by offering options to work remotely (79%) and a stronger benefits package (72%).
- Fifty-two percent of CEOs and hiring managers say their company has a formal training program designed to promote current employees to community manager roles.
- Although just under a quarter (23%) report having internship programs at their management companies, the vast majority (98%) note that internships are paid.

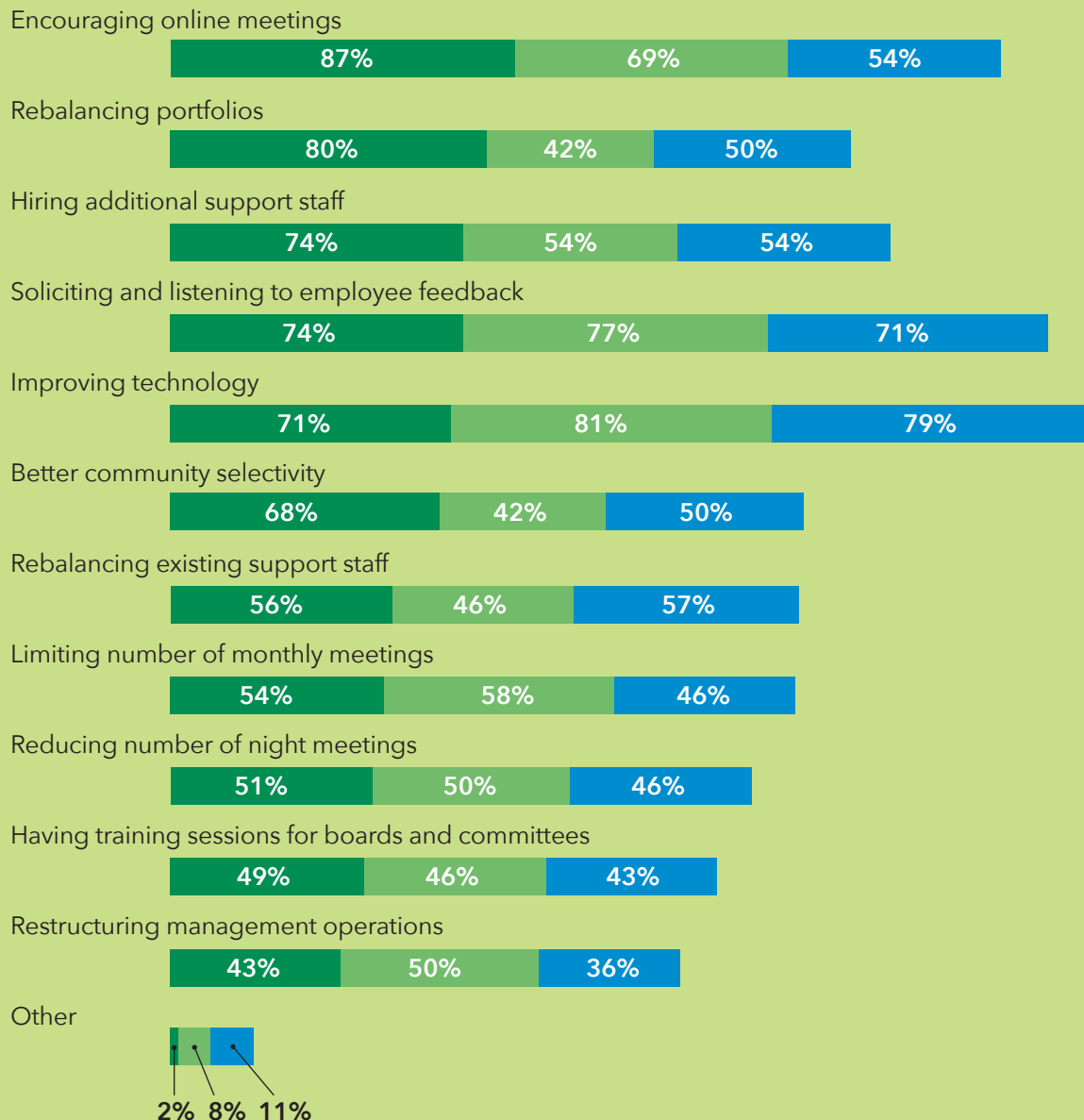
A significant way to support community managers is to lessen their workload. This is not necessarily about taking away core tasks but rather **reassessing how these tasks are conducted** and facilitating their completion through **broader support** and **improved technology**.



Workload Management

POTENTIAL STEPS TO BETTER BALANCE WORKLOAD

■ PORTFOLIO MANAGERS
■ ON-SITE MANAGERS
■ ASSISTANT MANAGERS



TAKEAWAYS

The following takeaways resulting from this research can help CEOs and hiring staff identify, attract, and retain qualified community managers:

- Use a multichannel recruiting strategy to find managers.
- Invest in professional development for management company staff—particularly those interested in being promoted to a community manager role.
- Create a culture where managers see their contributions as part of the goals of the community association and the management company.
- Meet with association boards at least once a year to establish expectations for their community. Identifying these objectives will allow the manager to fulfill their role accordingly.
- Draft a clear management contract that specifies the community manager's duties and responsibilities. This will empower managers to handle all aspects of the association's business under the approved budget and stated goals of the board while minimizing factors that lead to job dissatisfaction.
- Reassess current work arrangements to offer more flexibility. As evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual meetings and the option to work from home partially or fully are now preferred by many community managers. This also can help management companies hire qualified workers outside of the immediate geographical area.
- Provide sufficient administrative support to community managers to prevent unmanageable workloads.
- Consider the benefits of hiring those who are returning to the workforce after raising children and those who are switching careers. Applicants with backgrounds in hospitality, apartment management, retail, real estate, military, teaching, and technology have valuable, transferable skills and can often times ramp up quickly to a manager role.
- Support staff is no longer tied to the same geographic area as the management or association office. In the age of work from home, outsourcing to another state or country has become much more commonplace and offers cost-effective solutions. Cloud-based meetings, computing, phone, and printing help facilitate off-site support staff.



RECOMMENDATIONS BASED UPON THE RESEARCH

Community association governance has many moving parts, and boards may frequently feel reluctant to work with a community manager who doesn't have specific industry experience. It's important for CEOs and recruitment personnel to position prospective managers for success while ensuring that a community's needs are met. Based on the results from this research, here are some recommendations:

- Establish an onboarding process and training program for new hires, especially if they come from a different industry.
- Highlight the community manager's relevant work history, knowledge, skills, and qualifications.
- Meet with the board to share a sense of the management company's culture. That can assist if they are not immediately invested in an individual manager.
- Have a senior manager transition a community for the first few months and complete all major tasks (e.g., drafting and approving budgets or organizing an annual membership meeting). Once the board is comfortable with the level of service, the new manager can take over the day-to-day responsibilities.
- Consider bringing in retired community managers for temporary assignments or part-time work, especially to fill in for managers who are on vacation, parental leave, or who have left their position on short notice. This benefits the community because they will have someone with years of experience providing service.

Management Companies: How to Find the Right Community Association Professional. A guide to help community associations in the process of selecting the right management company. www.caionline.org/shop

On-Site Managers: How to Find the Right Community Association Professional. Details steps for associations to find, interview, and hire the ideal community manager. www.caionline.org/shop

Community Manager newsletter. A bimonthly publication that covers news, topics, and trends specifically for community association management professionals. www.caionline.org/cm

CAI Job Market. A resource that connects employers and job applicants to positions in community association management. jobs.caionline.org

Community Association Manager Compensation and Salary Survey. A report that collects data on compensation and benefits given to community association management professionals. foundation.caionline.org

CMCA Exam Preparation Guide. Tools and reference materials to prepare for the Certified Manager of Community Associations (CMCA®) examination. The credential is administered by the Community Association Managers International Certification Board. www.camicb.org

Employing Interns: Guide to Hiring Successful Community Association Management Interns. A resource for management companies to organize internship programs, including practical solutions for recruiting, hiring, mentoring, and evaluating interns. www.caionline.org/CommunityManagers

CAI's Education Program. Education courses designed for community managers to achieve professional credentials, meet state licensing requirements, and advance their career. www.caionline.org/LearningCenter

Professional credentials. CAI designations that experienced community managers and management companies can pursue to remain competitive in the industry. www.caionline.org/Credentials

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Our mission—with your support—is to provide research-based information for homeowners, association board members, community managers, developers, and other stakeholders. Since the Foundation's inception in 1975, we've built a solid reputation for producing accurate, insightful, and timely information, and we continue to build on that legacy. Visit foundation.caionline.org.

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