

Attracting Talent to the Community Management Profession

Snap Survey

January 2026

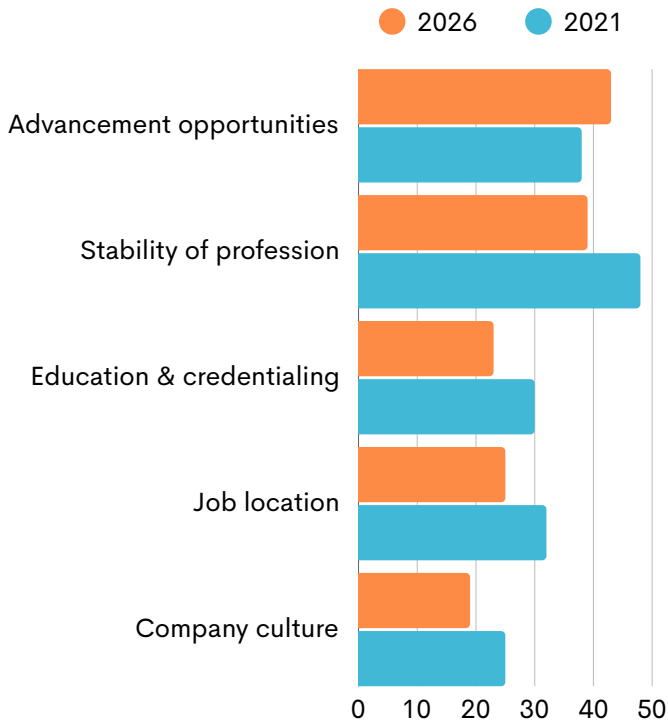
201 Respondents
from 34 U.S. states

Five Years of Change: Key Benchmarks (2021–2026)

In 2021, the Foundation for Community Association Research conducted a national study examining how professionals entered—and stayed in—the community association management profession.

In 2026, we revisited many of the same questions to better understand how priorities, expectations, and workplace realities have shifted over time. The comparisons below highlight where perceptions have remained consistent—and where meaningful change has occurred.

What attracted you to your first management position?



Key Insight:

While job stability continues to matter, respondents in 2026 were more strongly drawn by opportunities for advancement—signaling a shift toward growth-oriented career decision-making.

Which of the following factors contribute most to your job satisfaction?



Key Insight:

While problem solving and helping people remain the strongest drivers of job satisfaction, the 2026 results suggest a shift away from day-to-day variety toward leadership, mentoring, and sustained impact.

Five years apart, the message is consistent: community association management remains a career defined by service, complexity, and resilience—but expectations around flexibility, organizational support, and long-term sustainability have clearly evolved. The remainder of this Snap Survey presents findings from the 2026 study. To review the 2021 report, *Attracting Talent to the Community Management Industry*, visit foundation.caionline.org.

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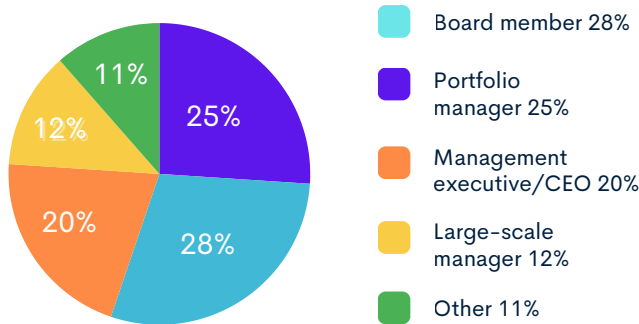
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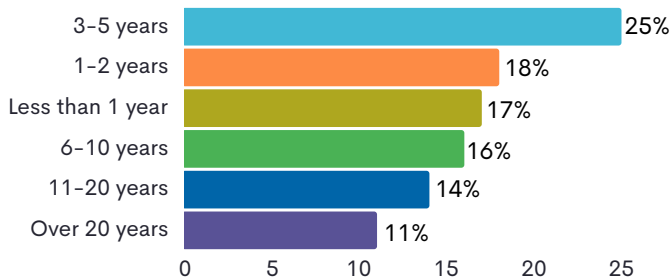
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About the Respondents

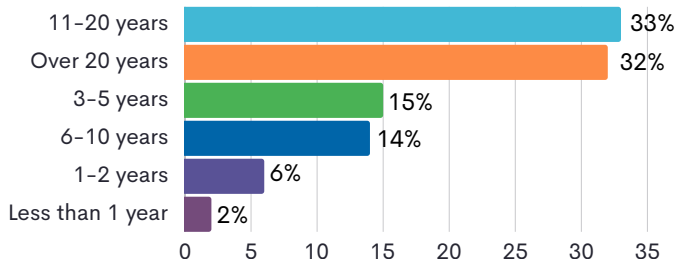
What is your role in the community association industry?



How long have you been in your current position?

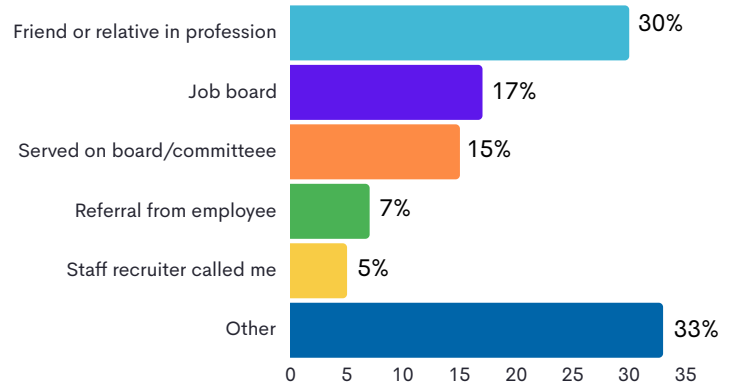


How many years have you been managing community associations?



Entering the Profession

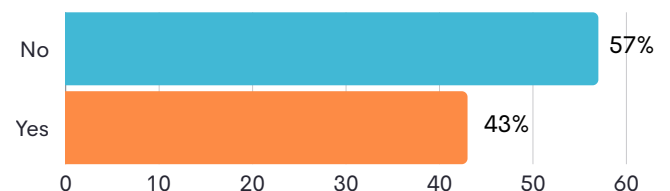
How did you first learn about the profession?



Common Trends

- Community association managers most often discovered the profession through personal networks, referrals, and prior work in related industries such as multifamily housing, property management, hospitality, and construction. Many respondents entered the field through entry-level or administrative roles—often without prior awareness of the profession—and advanced through on-the-job experience.
- Board service, community involvement, and lived experience within associations also served as meaningful entry points.
- While traditional newspaper advertisements were frequently cited by longer-tenured respondents, newer managers more often referenced online job boards and search engines.
- Collectively, these findings underscore that the profession is frequently discovered informally or incidentally, rather than through structured career pipelines.

Before applying, were you aware that this profession existed?



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"I took a receptionist job at a management company not knowing what an HOA was—and never left."

— Survey respondent

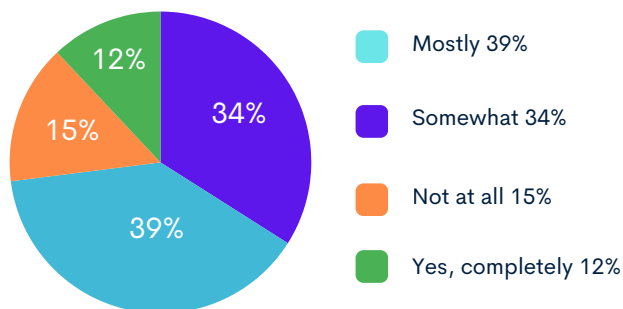
What field(s) were your previous positions in?

- 23% Real estate
- 21% Retail/commerce
- 19% Hospitality/tourism
- 16% Apartments
- 10% Education
- 8% Health care
- 6% Student
- 2% This is my first position
- 50% Other

Common Trends

- Prior experience spanned finance, construction, real estate, government/military, hospitality, nonprofit, legal, administrative, and technology fields, reflecting a highly diverse talent pipeline.

Did your first job in community management match what you expected



What attracted you to your first management position?

- 43% Opportunity for advancement
- 39% Stability of profession
- 23% Industry education and credentialing opportunities
- 25% Location of office and portfolio
- 19% Company culture
- 16% Office environment
- 15% On-the-job training
- 15% Benefits
- 13% Reputation of company
- 13% Size of company
- 11% Work-from-home capability
- 9% CEO leadership style
- 3% Technology
- 2% Appearance of office/work sites
- 22% Other

Common Trends

- Practical opportunity and timing were major drivers, with many citing job availability, economic necessity, limited alternatives, or life transitions as the primary reason they accepted their first management role.
- Flexibility, stability, and proximity mattered, particularly roles that offered predictable income, benefits, housing, flexible schedules, or locations close to home—often making the position attractive for early-career professionals or those balancing family responsibilities.
- Transferable skills and career curiosity played a strong role, as respondents from real estate, multifamily, hospitality, facilities, and operations were drawn to the profession, and potential for long-term growth.

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Motivations, Values & Job Satisfaction

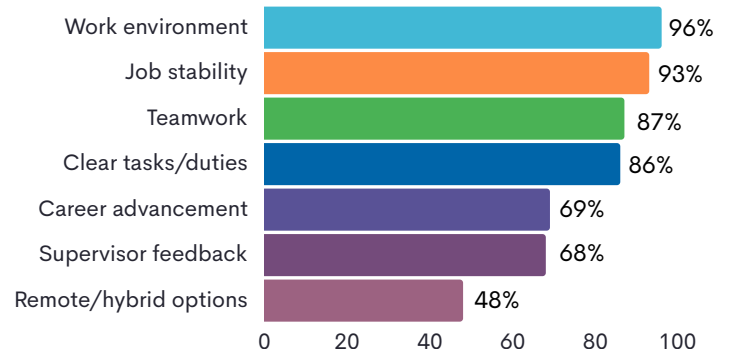
What are the top THREE benefits you look for in a new position?

- 69% Good pay
- 56% Work/life balance
- 39% Income growth potential
- 34% Matches my talents and skills
- 31% Attractive benefits package
- 24% Option to work remotely
- 23% Flexible working hours
- 23% Opportunity for advancement
- 22% Challenging professional environment
- 14% Innovative corporate culture
- 6% Other

Other Common Trends

- **Alignment with personal values.** Respondents emphasized the importance of working in roles and organizations that reflect their personal values, ethics, and approach to community service.
- **Sustained job satisfaction and learning.** Many respondents noted that continued enjoyment of their work—along with opportunities to learn, grow, and stay intellectually engaged—plays a key role in their interest in a position.
- **Supportive and respectful work environments.** Cohesive boards, realistic expectations, supportive management, and a positive company culture were frequently cited as essential to long-term satisfaction.
- **Opportunities to mentor and contribute meaningfully.** Respondents valued roles that allow them to mentor others, share expertise, and make a positive impact on the communities they serve.

How Important are the following in your current position? (Rated as "Very" or "Extremely Important")



How much do you agree with the following statements? (Rated as "Strongly Agree" or "Agree")



How much do you agree with the following statements about compensation and benefits? (Rated as "Strongly Agree" or "Agree")

- 82% Employer invests in professional development
- 75% Satisfied with leave/vacation policy
- 66% Happy with benefits package
- 61% Satisfied with compensation
- 52% Satisfied with promotions/raises

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Which of the following factors contribute most to your job *satisfaction*?

- 68% Solving problems
- 64% Helping people
- 49% Variety in work
- 40% Opportunity to lead
- 40% Mentoring people
- 35% Improving community appearance
- 33% Not strictly a desk job
- 25% Teamwork
- 24% Improving community finances
- 24% Getting a paycheck
- 23% Flexible hours
- 17% Resolving disputes
- 4% Other

Other Common Trends

- **Purposeful collaboration.** Respondents emphasized satisfaction from partnering with boards, executing shared goals, and helping communities grow, learn, and operate more effectively.
- **Effective use of skills and impact.** Many cited the alignment between their skillset and the profession—along with the ability to elevate experiences, stabilize expectations, and deliver tangible results—as a key source of satisfaction.
- **Work environment and flexibility.** Factors such as working remotely or managing well-run, high-quality communities also contributed to job satisfaction.

Which of the following factors contribute most to your job *dissatisfaction*?

- 59% Unreasonable homeowner demands
- 46% Board micromanagement
- 39% Unreasonable board demands
- 35% Night meetings
- 32% Not being appreciated
- 25% Meetings longer than 1.5 hours
- 23% Absence of work-life balance
- 21% Inadequate pay
- 16% Lack of time for myself
- 12% Inadequate benefits
- 10% Supervisor micromanagement
- 10% No opportunity for advancement
- 6% Unreasonable supervisor demands
- 2% No company laptop/cell phone
- 11% Other

Other Common Trends

- **Lack of support and alignment,** including not being heard as credentialed professionals.
- **Unrealistic expectations and workload strain,** driven by regulatory complexity, excessive demands, and misunderstanding of managers' roles.
- **Challenges in self-managed communities and frequently changing boards,** where turnover and inconsistent governance can disrupt continuity, expectations, and working relationships.

"I enjoy helping my board and community grow and learn about HOA living."

— Survey respondent

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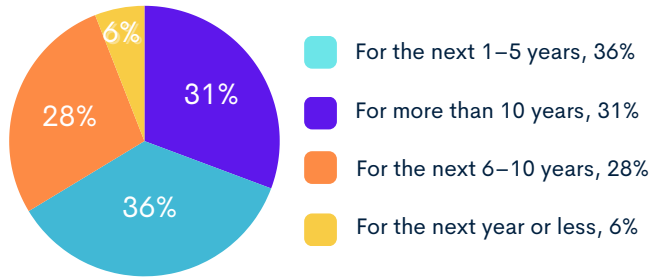
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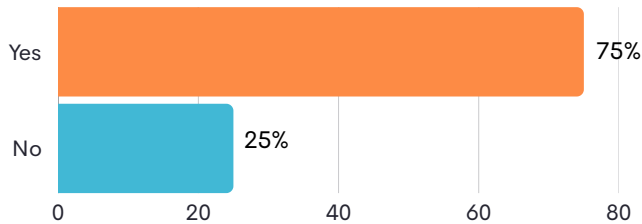
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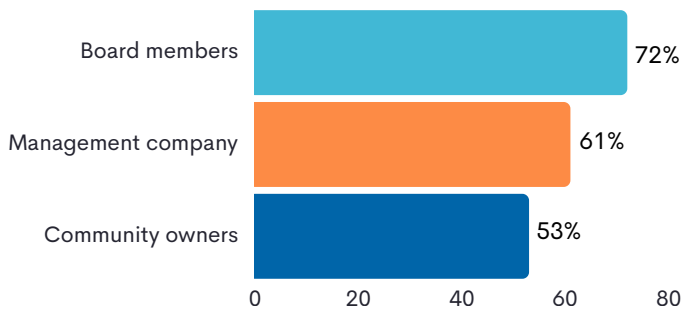
How long do you plan to continue in the profession?



Do you encourage others to become community association managers?

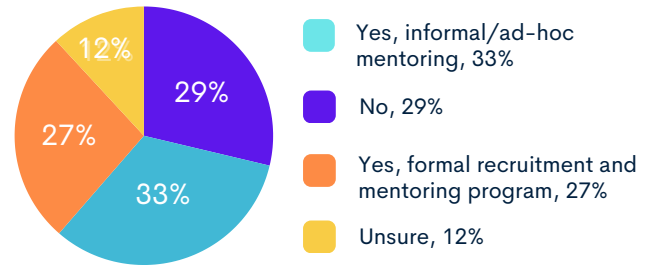


How much do each of the following value your work? (Rated as "A great deal" or "Quite a bit")



Recruitment & Mentorship

Does your company actively recruit or mentor new managers?



What methods are most successful for finding new talent?

- 74%** Employee referrals
- 53%** Job boards (CAI, Indeed, LinkedIn, etc.)
- 27%** CAI or other industry events
- 14%** Internship or apprenticeship/training programs
- 12%** Marketing the profession through CAI or media campaigns
- 12%** Partnerships with property management or real estate programs
- 9%** Outreach to local colleges/universities
- 3%** Military/government transition programs
- 2%** Outreach to local high schools/career education
- 13%** Other

Other Common Trends

- **Personal networks and referrals dominate**, including friends, colleagues, vendor referrals, association owners, manager groups, and professional peer networks—highlighting the continued importance of relationship-based hiring.
- **Online job postings remain a key tool**, with respondents citing platforms such as Indeed, ZipRecruiter, and general online advertisements as effective for reaching candidates.
- **Internal pipelines and professional communities show promise**, including internal promotions, staffing agencies, professional organizations, podcasts, and industry groups.

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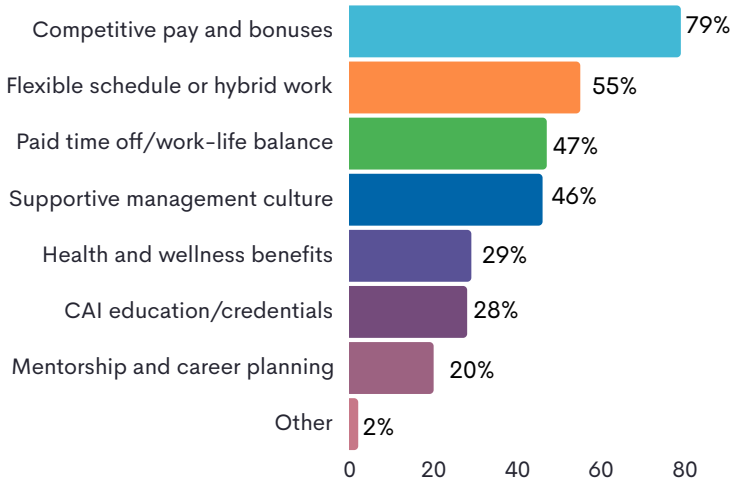
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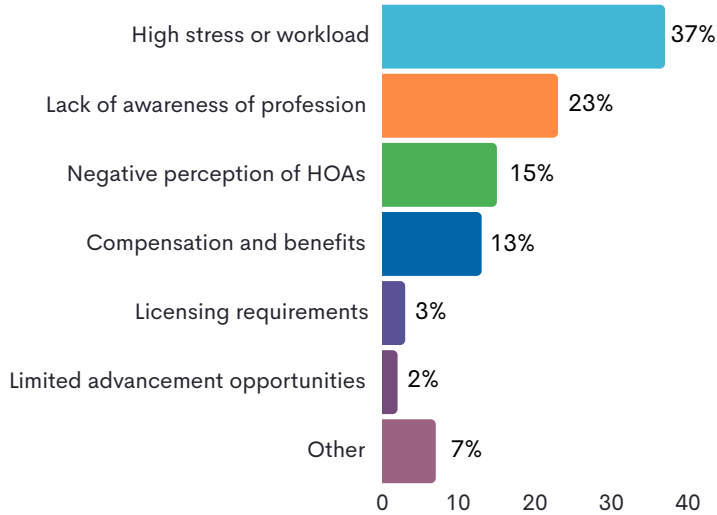
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Which benefits/perks are most attractive to new hires?



What is the biggest barrier to attracting new managers?



Workplace Flexibility & Back-to-Office Trends

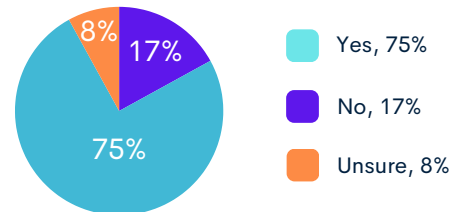
What is your current office attendance requirement?

- 44%** Work from the office every day of the work week
- 15%** Employees working in the office up to four days per week
- 11%** Work remotely indefinitely
- 10%** Work from the office one or two days a week (days chosen by individual employees)
- 8%** Work from the office one or two days a week (specific days required by my employer for all employees to be in the office the same day)
- 13%** Other

Common Trends

- **Hybrid and flexible arrangements are most common**, with many organizations allowing a mix of in-office and remote work based on role, workload, or individual needs rather than fixed schedules.
- **Role-based expectations are widespread**, with administrative staff more likely to work on-site regularly, while managers are often granted greater flexibility or autonomy to determine where they work.
- **Trust and outcomes matter more than presence**, as many respondents emphasized flexibility, self-managed schedules, and performance-based expectations over strict attendance requirements.

Do you like your current office attendance requirements?



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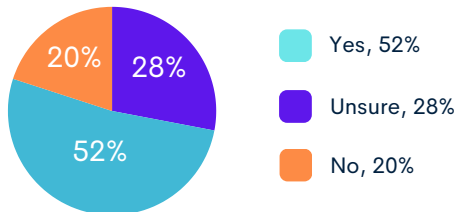
What is your preference for office attendance requirements from your employer?

- 23%** Employees working in the office up to four days per week
- 23%** Work from the office every day of the work week
- 16%** Work from the office one or two days a week (days chosen by individual employees)
- 12%** Work from the office one or two days a week (specific days required by my employer for all employees to be in the office the same day)
- 11%** Work remotely indefinitely
- 14%** Other

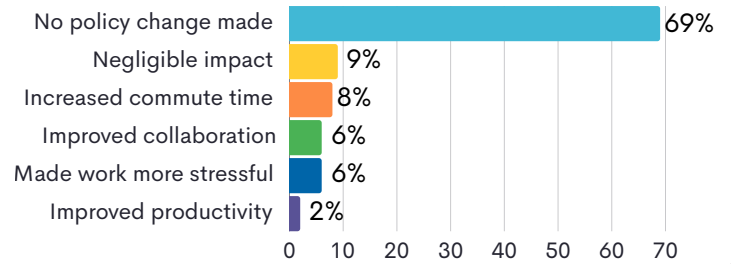
Common Trends

- **Flexibility over fixed location.** Most respondents prefer the ability to work where it makes the most sense—remote, in-office, or hybrid—as long as expectations are clear and work gets done.
- **Role- and community-based attendance.** Many emphasized that office presence should be driven by community needs (meetings, inspections, resident access) and role type, rather than a one-size-fits-all policy.
- **Trust, autonomy, and outcomes matter most.** Respondents frequently cited trust, earned flexibility, and performance-based expectations—preferring autonomy in how they structure their workday over rigid attendance rules.

When looking for a new job, are you more likely to apply to a company with remote work?



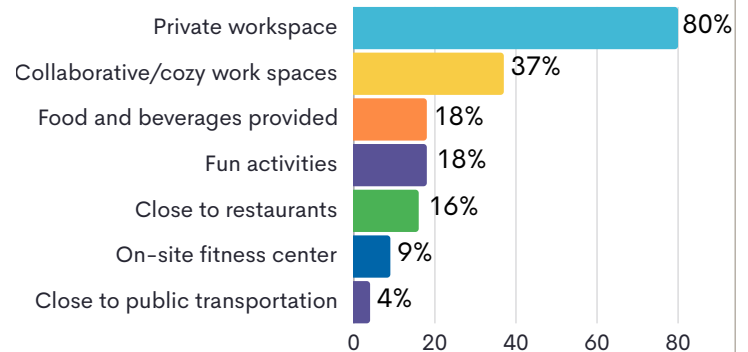
If your company implemented a return-to-office policy in the past two years, how has it affected your work experience?



Which of the following have you experienced from being in the office with colleagues?



What amenities are important to you?



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What Managers Would Tell You—In Their Own Words

In one sentence, what would you tell someone considering a career in community association management?

"Community association management is a fast-paced, multi-faceted career that requires organization, problem solving, and resilience—but the impact makes it worthwhile."

"The juice is worth the squeeze. You can excel and make a career out of it if you take the initiative and drive yourself."

"If you connect to this work, lean into it. It takes a certain kind of person who finds joy in helping others—but if you do, you'll be successful and fulfilled."

"You must have a servant's heart to succeed in this industry and remember the value of helping people improve their communities."

"The work will be challenging almost every day, but with the support of your team, the results are incredibly rewarding."

"If you love problem solving and helping others while never having the same day, this profession is for you."

"This is the hardest profession you'll ever love—challenging, demanding, and deeply rewarding."

— Survey respondent

"You will never be bored—there is always something new to learn, and the opportunities for growth are real."

"Our industry is perfect for lifelong learners who don't want to feel stagnant in their careers."

"No day is the same, and you will make a real difference in the lives of the people and communities you serve."

"Community association management allows you to build stronger communities, solve meaningful challenges, and make a lasting impact every day."

"Some days may not be easy—but you are making a difference every single day."

"Now is the best time to join our industry, the opportunities have never been better for a rewarding career."

Common Themes

Across responses, community association managers described a career that is demanding, emotionally complex, and often misunderstood—yet deeply meaningful for those who embrace it. Respondents emphasized that success comes from resilience, a service-oriented mindset, and the ability to set healthy boundaries, paired with a genuine commitment to helping communities thrive. For individuals drawn to variety, problem-solving, and public service, community association management offers more than a job—it offers the opportunity to make a lasting impact. Challenging by nature, the profession is also profoundly rewarding for those willing to grow with it.

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