

EXPERIENCES


THAT RECHARGED MY CAREER
AS A COMMUNITY MANAGER

RE-FOCUS | RE-CHARGE | RE-FRESH

By Shanne Ho, CCAM-HR®, PCAM®

I KNEW WHEN I WAS LITTLE GIRL THAT I WANTED TO BE IN BUSINESS. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF BUSINESS, JUST SOMETHING OF IMPORTANCE. WHILE MY FRIENDS PLAYED HOUSE OR WITH DOLLS, I PLAYED CUSTOMER SERVICE OR BANKING. I REMEMBER USING THE SEARS CATALOG TO "TAKE ORDERS" OVER MY YELLOW ROTARY PHONE. I ALSO REMEMBER TAKING DEPOSIT AND WITHDRAWAL SLIPS FROM THE BANK AND BEING A BANK TELLER WITH MY STUFFED ANIMALS. AT TIMES, I WOULD EVEN PLAY SCHOOL AND MIMIC MY KINDERGARTEN TEACHER. WHAT I DIDN'T KNOW IS HOW ALL THIS PLAY TIME WOULD EVENTUALLY MOLD AND SHAPE MY FUTURE.

I'VE BEEN BLESSED IN MY CAREER PATH to have worked with great supervisors and mentors. Mind you, since college I've only worked with five companies. My first job was with Walt Disney Travel and it was a great learning experience about customer service the Disney way. More than just that was the company culture I enjoyed. There was laughter, camaraderie, and a sense of team. It was only a summer job, but in those three months I learned how to anticipate and deliver on the client's needs and wants—all with a smile. After that, I was at The Irvine Company working in the marketing division. Our concentration was Newport Center in Newport Beach as well as other business centers in Irvine, and we developed incentive programs and marketing collateral for the leasing agents and provided a concierge-type service to new tenants. The environment was more corporate; there was structure and accountability. The customer service we extended had to be above and beyond—as the brand, image and company



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name said it all. While I was on the marketing team, I was surrounded by other individuals with whom I spent time to learn about their job scope on the property management side —engineering, construction, IT and accounting. I found it all fascinating.

The rest feels like history because several years later I entered the community association industry. My initial journey started with a large well-known Mission Viejo community management company. I remember their three-phase interview process, and I thought it would be a miracle if I made the cut. I will never forget the woman who conducted my first interview. She asked me questions that really made me think about who I am and what I wanted to do. The best part was that we had a Disney connection, as she had worked there previously. When I got the call-back congratulating me, I was ecstatic. The training program and team culture were top-notch, and I'll never forget the moment when the company president was walking down the hall and called me by name as I walked by her. I had not yet met her, but she knew my name. Impressive! I was there for just a little less than a year. As a new inexperienced community manager, this job was difficult. The administrative and financial side was easy, but not all the dots were connecting for me. The difficult part was working with the City on issues, easements, architectural plans, new development turnovers, etc. It was a sea of information, and tasks and knowledge that I didn't have. I couldn't learn fast enough to process anything, and only pieces of knowledge

were sticking. I felt like a failure, and it was something that really bothered me. I would ask myself, "What am I doing?" I've never thought of myself as a quitter, but I felt like I was in over my head. Like any manager who has felt this way, I resigned. This just wasn't for me.

A **NOTHER WOMAN WHO WAS HIRED** into that company at the same time eventually left and went to a smaller south Orange County community management company. She had told the owner about me and recruited me over there. You can imagine my thoughts—how am I going to do this again? Fortunately for me, the owner took me under her wing. I attribute much of what I have learned from her. She opened my eyes in this industry, not only from the capacity of a customer-service-related business but also from the perspective of a business owner. She made me see that nothing was impossible. In the first year, I will never forget when she told me to "create my own destiny." I climbed the corporate ladder, wore many hats and was given the opportunity to create, develop and execute upon many things. Ideas that fostered in my head came to fruition and, of course, I couldn't have done it without the collaboration of those around me with whom I had worked for so many years. Their words of encouragement and support made things come alive. The company foundation was strong, and my future was bright. The company encouraged education, and I earned my

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Experiences that Recharged My Career as a Community Manager

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Professional Community Association Manager (PCAM®) designation through Community Associations Institute within the first three years. This broadened my horizon as I networked with other community managers nationwide, sharing best management practices and making new friends. It was also during my time there that I started to get involved in the Orange County Chapter of CAI. Over the years, I had the opportunity to serve as Chair of the Membership Committee and also be an active participant on the Social and Education Committees. I was honored to receive the Outstanding Service Award from the Chapter in 1997. I felt accomplished in my 20 years and am forever thankful for the opportunities.

Feeling it was time to move on and start a new chapter in my life, I was asked to consider joining a smaller management company. There was a need for leadership in the property management division, and it was felt that my background and experience would be an asset in developing that part of the organization. I was humbled by the opportunity because working alongside the husband and wife owners took me back to the sense of family. I'm grateful to have been there for two years. The graciousness and love shown to their staff was overwhelming, and it was about how they made you feel. At a busy time where a lot was

happening, the owner came to my office and she asked simply, "How are you doing? I'm worried about you." Like auto-pilot, I responded that I was fine. What she didn't know was that I went home later that evening and I cried. She cared—and I felt it hit my heart. The people and the culture are two things I miss there and will definitely never forget.

HAVING BEEN IN THE INDUSTRY FOR ALMOST 25 YEARS, I have been fortunate on my professional career path to have been surrounded by people who brought different things to my table. My appetite for learning and thirst for knowledge were always full. Being able to be reflective of myself in areas where I knew I needed to grow was imperative, as this created the small changes along the way to be a better person and overall leader. Trust me, this part never stops. I always found the validity behind criticism and feedback and glad that I had colleagues I could trust and be so forthcoming. They wanted the best for me. Of course, I was also appreciative of the kind kudos. For better or for worse, I always said "yes" where help was needed. You could say I was always in FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) mode, but I always saw it as a learning opportunity. To me, all of these experiences continued to mold and shape me.

Now, I have to say I am at the peak of my career. A wonderful business ownership opportunity presented itself, and I joined a small management company as president. My years of



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experience will help shape and guide the vision and mission of the organization. It's an exciting time, and I am looking forward to what the future will bring!

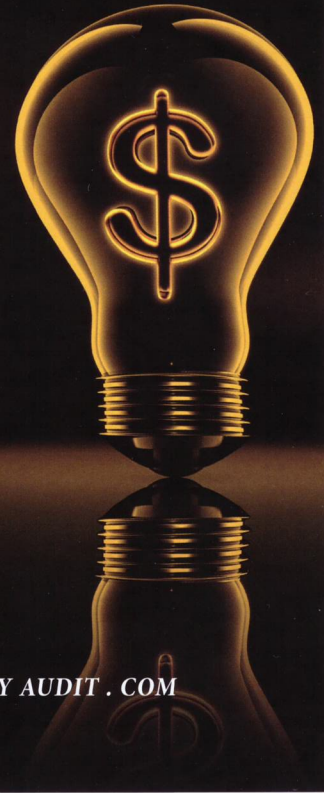
There have been many moments in time where I reflect and ask myself, "How did I get here?" I can easily say hard work, determination and sacrifice, but anyone would expect those elements since they are just part of the ride of life. At the end of the day, every moment and every decision that is made helps further you along professionally and personally, whether or not you are conscious of it. Surround yourself with great people and hear what they have to say, especially those who are smarter than you. Be a sponge for knowledge! Every person you have met and will meet leaves a message or a memory that should not be forgotten. Find a few people to be your sounding board. Remember to create an experience and be present anywhere you are, as there are times when it is not about you, but your purpose will be for those around you. Lastly, always say "please" and "thank you." All these are simple essentials that helped further me in my career path and get me to be that person that I wanted to be ever since I was that little girl.



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