2025 Edition

The Performance Ecosystem

What's Really Driving Property Management Performance?

Introduction

The United States economy continues on a moderating growth path, with low unemployment, resilient consumer spending, and a shifting monetary stance as we move toward 2026. However, economic activity is also facing headwinds: Inflation remains above the Federal Reserve target, adding pressures on consumers contending with a slowing job market, rising debt levels, and housing affordability.

The labor market is shifting from the employee-driven "Great Resignation" of 2021-2023 to a more cautious "Great Stay," as the number of job openings diminishes. At the same time, Generative and Agentic AI is taking a more prominent role as an economic force, automating processes and changing job skill demands.

Within the macro landscape, the U.S. rental housing market is navigating a period of normalization, characterized by slower but positive rent growth and an increase in vacancy rates. After a significant construction boom, new supply has been peaking, particularly in the Sunbelt and Mountain West regions. The influx of new units elevated vacancy rates, but strong demand — driven by high home prices and mortgage rates that put homeownership out of reach for many — is helping to absorb the new supply.

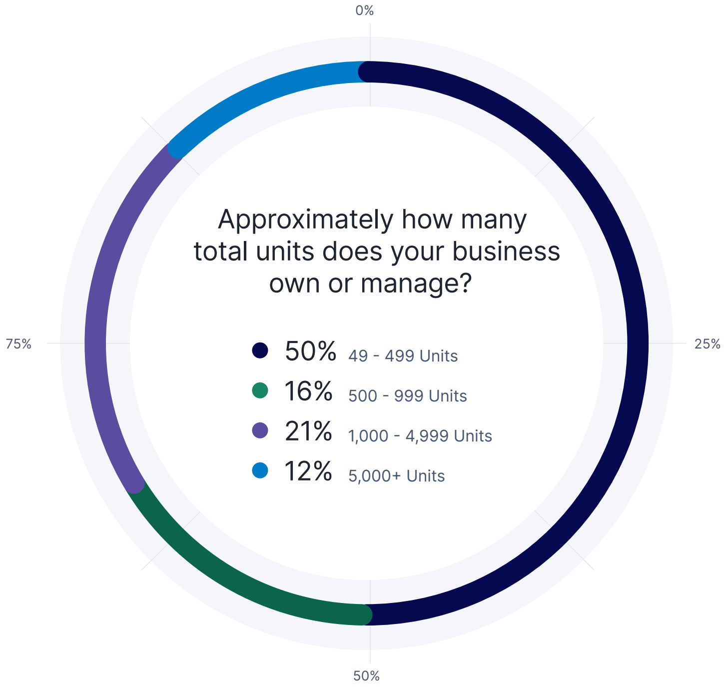
While national rent growth is positive, it's expected to fall short of the long-term average, with significant regional variations. Markets with less new supply, such as those in the Midwest and Northeast, are outperforming,while high-supply metros in the South are seeing more muted or even negative rent growth.

Relatively high interest rates continue to be a dominant factor, especially for new construction. However, recent moves by the Federal Reserve to lower borrowing costs are expected to improve the outlook for builders and investors. Overall, despite some short-term headwinds, the multifamily market is expected to remain stable, supported by a fundamental demand for housing and demographic trends that favor renting: College graduates and young professionals looking for a first apartment, families with young children ready for more space or retirees seeking less maintenance and more convenience.

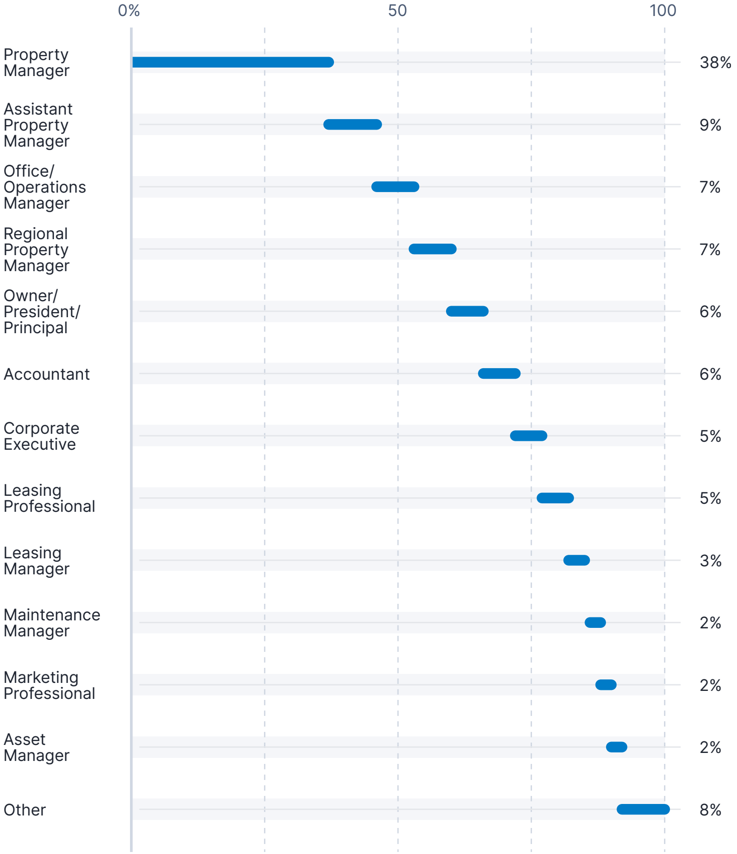
Research Project Methodology

Against this backdrop, the National Apartment Association (NAA) explored current trends in multifamily performance, ongoing management challenges, and key operational factors. Sponsored by AppFolio, the research initiative centered on a survey of industry professionals across the country. The survey was administered from July 16 through August 4, 2025, receiving 1,984 complete responses.

Respondents to the survey represent a wide range of companies, from independent rental owners with fewer than 49 units to large-scale operators managing more than 30,000 units. In terms of operational roles, most respondents are focused on property management.



Which of the following best describes your role?



Report Highlights

In an ever-evolving real estate landscape, understanding the intricate dynamics that drive performance is crucial for industry professionals. This year's report delves into the multifaceted challenges, trends, and opportunities within the residential property management industry. This comprehensive study examines how teams, technology, and customer experiences intersect to shape outcomes, providing valuable insights for operators of all sizes.

The report identifies the foremost challenges faced by industry professionals, including operational efficiencies, revenue maximization, and technology adoption. It also explores the varying impacts of these challenges based on the size of the operators' portfolios, offering tailored solutions to enhance productivity and performance. Furthermore, the study sheds light on the allocation of time and resources, confidence in best practices, and the critical contributors to a company's success.

By analyzing performance visibility, financial outcomes, and employee and resident experience, the report presents a holistic view of the current state of the industry. It also addresses the role of artificial intelligence in property management and the barriers to performance, providing actionable recommendations to overcome these obstacles.

As we navigate the complexities of the real estate market, this report serves as a valuable resource for professionals seeking to optimize their operations, improve stakeholder engagement, and drive sustainable growth. Through a detailed examination of industry trends and best practices,The Performance Ecosystem: What's Really Driving Property Management Performance offers a roadmap for success in an increasingly competitive environment.

Top Challenges

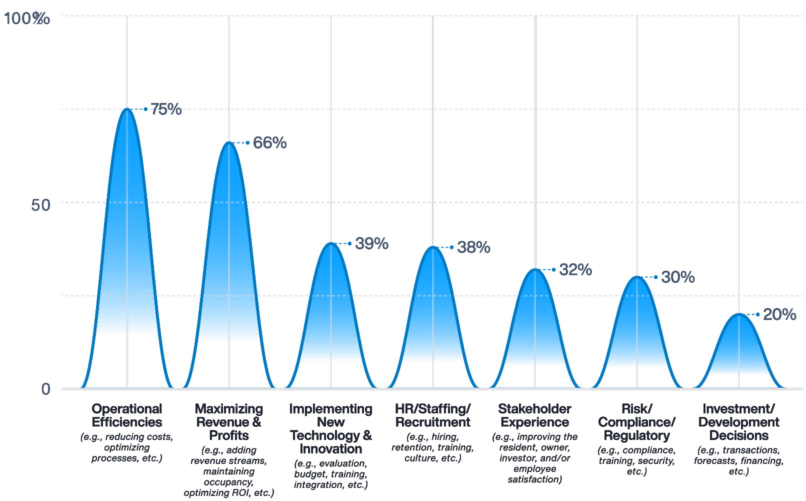
Amid shifting macro trends, industry professionals contend with a number of challenges. At the top of the list is the pursuit of operational efficiencies, focused on reducing business costs and optimizing processes.

Three quarters of respondents marked this category as their top challenge, mirroring the inflationary pressures that have increased costs across the board.

In a nod to changing market dynamics, maximizing revenue was the second-highest ranked challenge, with 66% of respondents selecting it. For apartment operators, the influx of new units on the market has refocused the need to maintain occupancy and retain revenue. In addition, with rising costs, industry professionals are looking for ways to manage higher expenses while preserving profitability.

The other top challenges this year are implementation of new technology and managing human resources, with 39% and 38% of respondents, respectively, ranking each category as a top challenge, highlighting the role that technology is playing in today's operations and the fact that apartment operations remain a people-centric business.

What are your company's top three most important challenges today? Please select three options.

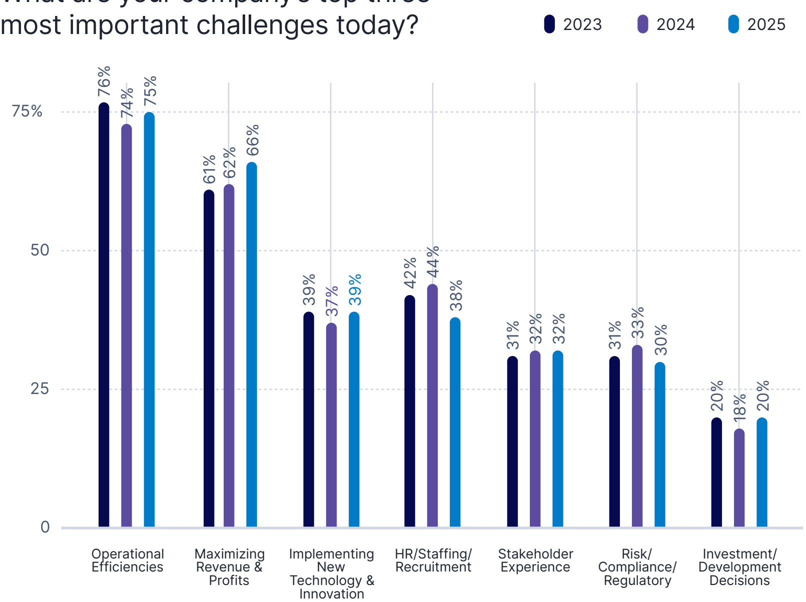


Trend Changes Over Time

The challenges reported by apartment operators in 2025 mirror longer-term trends while highlighting the shifting role of technology. This year's top challenge — operational efficiencies — has been cited in the top three list every year going back to 2021, ranked either as number one or two in the list. Similarly, the focus on revenue and profits has also been a top challenge for apartment professionals for the past six years.

However, this year marked the first time that the "Implementing New Technology & Innovation" category rose into the top three list of challenges. The move likely points to the critical role that technology platforms and solutions play in today's property management operations, as well as the rising number of tools that are being offered on the market. Technology challenges replaced another long-running category that highlighted managers' difficulties with human resources, staffing and training.

What are your company's top three most important challenges today?



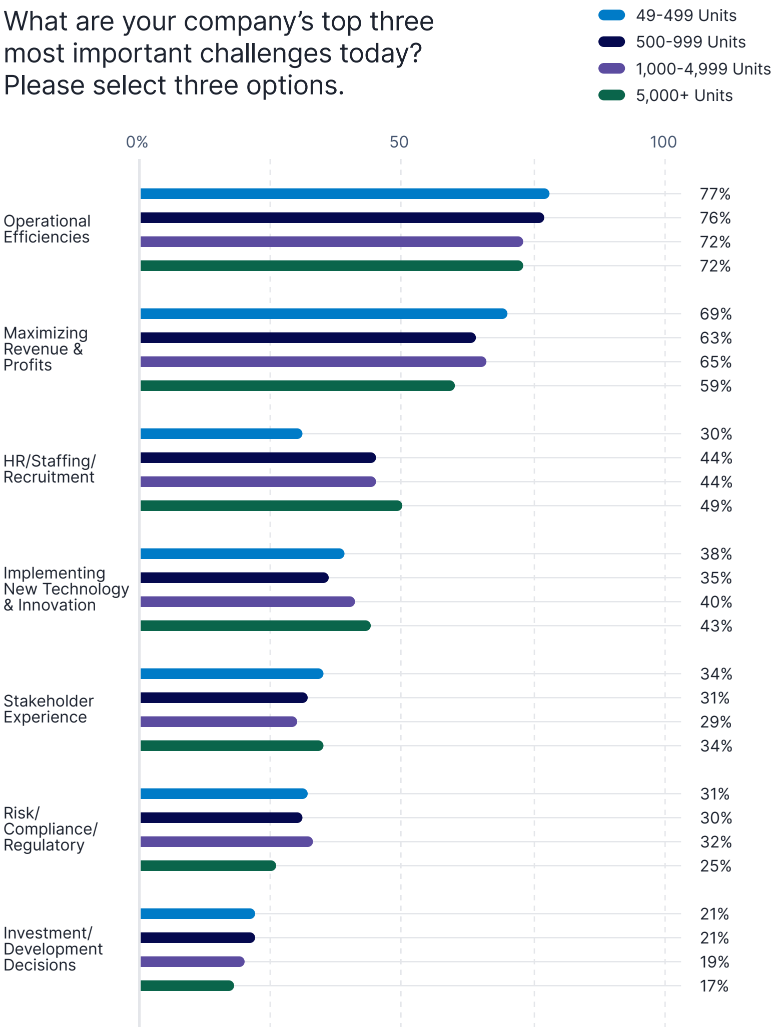
Top Challenges by Property Size

A clear picture emerges when examining today's top challenges through the lens of unit count. While the industry shares a common set of pressures, the weight and nuance of those challenges shift significantly depending on operator scale.

For smaller operators (49-499 units), the most pressing issues center on operational efficiency (77%) and maximizing revenue (69%), a similar trend for other operator types. Technology adoption is a growing priority (38%), but for many in this group, it appears to indicate that it is less about enterprise-level innovation and more about finding cost-effective tools that can streamline day-to-day operations without straining limited budgets. Staffing challenges, while notable (30%), do not dominate the picture as much as they do for larger operators, likely because these companies often operate with lean teams and tighter control.

As for emerging operators (500-999 units), the pressure points begin to shift. Staffing and recruitment take a more prominent role (44%), signaling the difficulties of scaling operations beyond a small, tight-knit team. Operational efficiency (76%) and revenue (63%) remain dominant, but now with the added layer of managing growth: standardizing processes, building middle management, and ensuring consistency across an expanding footprint. Technology adoption (35%) continues to be important, possibly suggesting that the challenge is no longer just affordability but also selecting systems that can scale alongside the organization.

What are your company's top three most important challenges today? Please select three options.



For mid-size operators (1,000-4,999 units), staffing concerns remain high (44%), but technology adoption grows further (40%), appearing to indicate a turning point where digital infrastructure becomes central to managing complexity at scale. Revenue (65%) and operational efficiency (72%) continue to dominate, but the challenge is more about maintaining efficiency as portfolios diversify across markets. These companies face heightened compliance and regulatory risks (32%), underscoring the operational weight of growth.

Finally, among larger operators (5,000+ units), the narrative shifts again. Staffing challenges peak at 49%, becoming the single most consistent pain point across this group. This aligns with broader labor market pressures in property management, where talent shortages and high turnover make retention strategies critical at scale.

Technology and innovation adoption (43%) also reach their highest levels here, appearing to indicate that large operators wrestle with integrating advanced systems across vast portfolios, from AI-powered leasing tools to advanced reporting systems. Interestingly, maximizing revenue drops slightly (59%) compared to smaller operators, suggesting that the biggest players have better leverage to optimize revenue strategies and focus more on operational consistency and workforce stability. Regulatory challenges (25%) are lower than in the mid-size segment, possibly reflecting that large operators have more robust legal and compliance infrastructures in place.

Collectively, these findings indicate that revenue growth and operational efficiency are persistent challenges for operators of all sizes, while staffing and technology become increasingly prominent as companies expand. The survey results show a direct correlation between staffing issues and unit count; larger unit counts are associated with more staffing concerns. There is also an inverse relationship between unit count and investment decisions: As companies increase in size, investment challenges appear to be a less significant concern. Smaller operators experience more technology adoption and stakeholder challenges, whereas mid-size and larger operators face complexities related to workforce management and innovation. In other words, the core challenges remain the same, but their supplementary issues change with size. Therefore, solutions must be tailored, not one-size-fits-all.

State of Performance

Property professionals in the apartment industry face significant challenges balancing routine operational tasks with strategic and stakeholder engagement activities.

Despite aspirations to focus more on planning and relationship-building, much of their time is consumed by reactive and administrative work. Meanwhile, confidence in best practices varies by process and company size, with collaboration and training being key drivers of success.

Performance visibility is strong for historical and current data but limited for predictive and prescriptive analytics. Financial returns remain solid for many companies, while resident satisfaction shows improvement. Surprisingly, a large share of companies survey staff satisfaction less frequently.

Work Productivity and Time Allocation

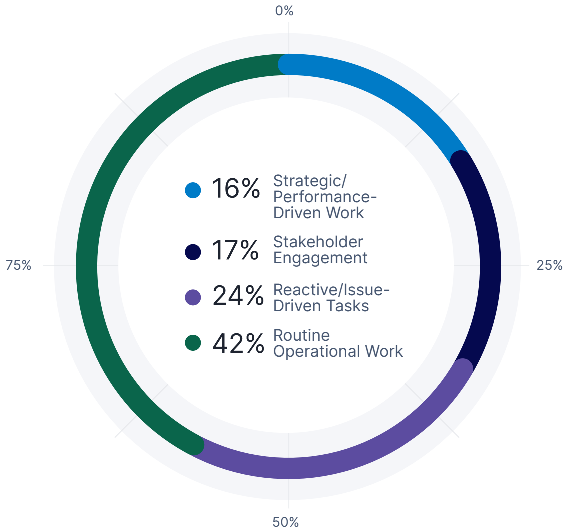
Survey results highlight a pronounced gap between how property management professionals currently spend their time and how they would ideally like to allocate it. The results paint a familiar picture in property operations: Most professionals spend far more time reacting and maintaining than planning and building. On average, respondents devote 42% of their week to routine operational work (things like paperwork, data entry, and administrative tasks) and another 24% to reactive tasks such as troubleshooting, tackling service disruptions or responding to urgent requests. That means two-thirds of the average week is consumed by the kinds of activities that keep things running but rarely move the business forward.

By contrast, only 16% of time is currently spent on strategic or performance-driven work like long-term planning, reporting, and team development. Stakeholder engagement (resident and client relationships, proactive outreach) accounts for just 17%. Yet, when asked how they would ideally like to spend their time, respondents revealed a clear aspiration: 26% on strategic work and 23% on stakeholder engagement, with reduced percentages on routine and reactive activities.

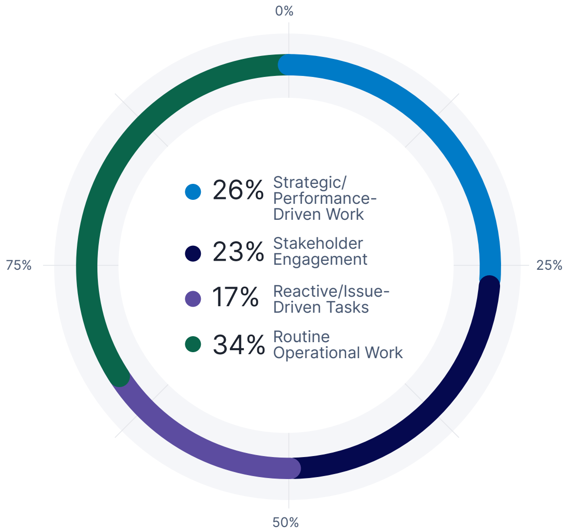
This gap between current and ideal time use reflects a broader tension in the industry. Operators know the value of strategic planning and relationship-building, especially in today's environment of evolving renter expectations and competitive pressures.

But the operational grind continues to dominate, shifting priorities away from higher-value activities. In many ways, this misalignment mirrors what's happening across the wider economy: Organizations want to innovate, but day-to-day execution often leaves little room for it.

In a typical week, what percentage of your time do you currently spend on the following categories?



In a typical week, what percentage of your time would you ideally prefer to spend on the following categories?



Obstacles to Optimal Time Allocation

Property management professionals are faced with competing priorities, needs and audiences, and they must juggle resources and time to optimize the performance of the business. With the existing divergence between time spent on routine or reactive issues and the desire to invest more in strategic performance-driven work, we asked survey respondents to share what the primary issues are that are preventing them from spending more time on achieving performance outcomes. Their narrative answers to open-ended questions reveal some familiar themes that resonate across most industries.

01 — TIME CONSTRAINTS AND OVERLOAD:

A significant number of responses highlighted limited time, overwhelming workloads, and competing priorities as major barriers. Many professionals mentioned that they did not have enough hours in the day, faced frequent urgent tasks, and were challenged by balancing daily operations with strategic goals.

02 — STAFFING SHORTAGES AND TRAINING ISSUES:

Staffing problems, including high turnover, insufficient personnel, and lack of qualified staff were cited as significant barriers. Respondents also noted that some companies did not offer adequate training or struggled with onboarding challenges. And for some, the need for better staff motivation and development was a major issue holding back performance.

03 — INEFFICIENT PROCESSES AND SYSTEM FRAGMENTATION:

Many responses pointed to inefficient or manual processes, lack of streamlined systems, and fragmented or outdated software as obstacles. Issues included repetitive tasks, poor integration between systems, and frequent changes in procedures.

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05 — DAILY DISTRACTIONS AND REACTIVE OPERATIONS:

For some apartment professionals, frequent interruptions from emails, phone calls, resident issues, and emergencies disrupted focus and productivity. Respondents described a reactive work environment, with constant “firefighting” and difficulty maintaining proactive, outcome-focused work.

06 — FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE LIMITATIONS:

Survey respondents also highlighted budget constraints, rising costs, and lack of necessary resources as recurring themes. Some answers mentioned that companies provided limited funding for improvements or additional staff and struggled to maintain service levels amid financial pressures.

State of Performance: Best Practices

During the past few years, the rental housing industry has experienced a fast pace of growth and change. From the significant inflow of new apartment buildings to the broader adoption of centralization processes and the acceleration of technology, professionals have been navigating myriad new systems and procedures. Amid this shifting landscape, managing the multiple facets of the business remains a top priority. And for owners and operators it is also paramount that best practices are implemented and followed.

We asked survey respondents to share their degree of confidence that best practices are followed 100% of the time, for various aspects of the business. The responses indicate a high degree of confidence across the spectrum, as highlighted by the “Completely Confident” and “Moderately Confident” categories. However, there were nuances in the answers.

Looking at the "Completely Confident" category, the top-ranked processes were those centered on the resident experience, including applications and screening, move-ins, communication, and processing invoices, all of which garnered over 50% of responses. The answers point to the focus that apartment operators place on ensuring an effective front-end experience for renters. Survey respondents also gave high confidence marks to lease renewals, rent collection and maintenance requests. Communicating with prospective renters, marketing vacancies and move-outs garnered "Completely Confident" marks from over 40% of responses. The categories where respondents were less confident that best practices were always followed were investor relations and overall company performance.

For each of the following areas, please choose your level of confidence that best practices are followed 100% of the time.

Confidence in Best Practices by Property Size

When confidence in best practices was examined by unit count, one factor consistently rises to the top: Strong team collaboration.

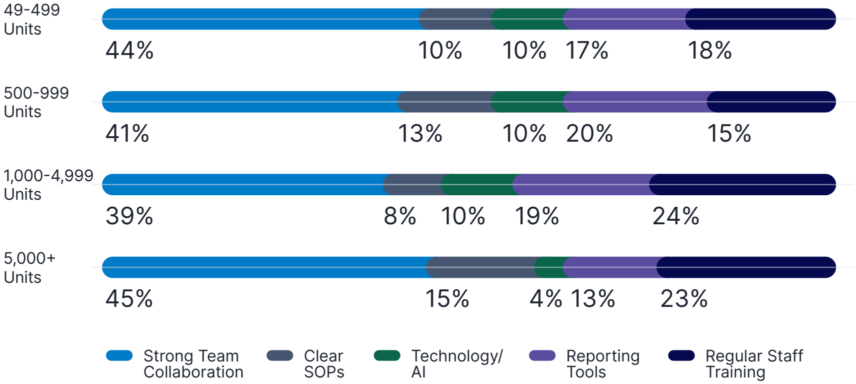
Regardless of operator size, collaboration is the most common driver of complete confidence, with responses ranging from 39% to 45%.

Across all groups, clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) — ranging from 8% to 15% of respondents — maintain a foundational support for team collaboration. However, the methods by which operators reinforce confidence diverge as their portfolios expand.

For smaller operators (49-499 units), after collaboration, regular staff training (18%) emerges as an important confidence driver. This reflects the hands-on nature of smaller operations, where tight teams benefit from frequent skill-building to ensure consistency. The use of reporting tools (17%) is also significant, showing that these operators employ tools for visibility and accountability to strengthen their oversight systems.

Among emerging operators (500-999 units), the picture begins to shift. Reporting tools rise in importance (20%), overtaking training (15%) as the second-most cited factor. This indicates that as organizations grow, leaders rely more heavily on systems that provide oversight and assurance across multiple sites, where direct supervision is no longer feasible.

What is the main factor that makes you completely confident best practices are being followed 100% of the time?



For mid-size operators (1,000-4,999 units), the role of training grows significantly (24%), nearly matching team collaboration in weight. At this scale, portfolios are complex, and confidence depends on equipping staff at all levels to apply processes consistently across diverse markets. Reporting tools remain important (19%), but training becomes the stronger differentiator.

Finally, larger operators (5,000+ units) reflect a blend of both trends. Collaboration remains high (45%), but regular training (23%) takes on a more central role, nearly equal to that of mid-size operators. Interestingly, reporting tools (13%) and technology/AI (4%) are less prominent, underscoring that at scale, confidence in best practices comes less from system-generated oversight and more from building a skilled, collaborative workforce supported by clear processes.

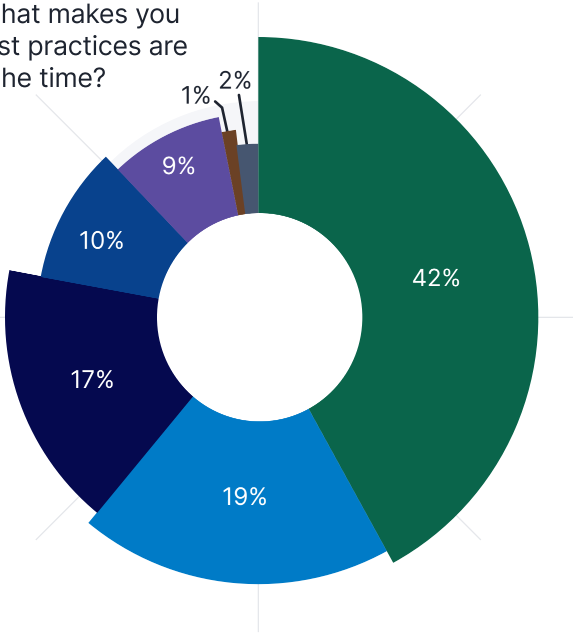
Overall, the findings suggest a progression of confidence drivers as operators scale. Smaller companies lean on training and reporting tools to supplement team collaboration, while mid-size and larger companies put heavier emphasis on staff development, recognizing that a trained workforce is the most reliable safeguard against inconsistency. Across all groups, collaboration remains the universal anchor, but the reinforcements shift with size.

Confidence Drivers

Following the question about best practices, we looked to uncover what factors underpin the respondents' level of "Complete Confidence." Apartment professionals indicated that strong team collaboration is the top factor, with slightly over 40% of respondents picking the choice. Regular training of staff was the second-highest ranked factor, with 19% of respondents selecting it, underscoring the importance of a company's employee expertise and engagement. Having reporting tools at the ready accounted for 17% of respondents, ranking as the third-highest confidence factor. Clear standard operating procedures and technology were almost tied with about 10% of respondents crediting these factors for their high degree of confidence.

What is the main factor that makes you completely confident best practices are being followed 100% of the time?

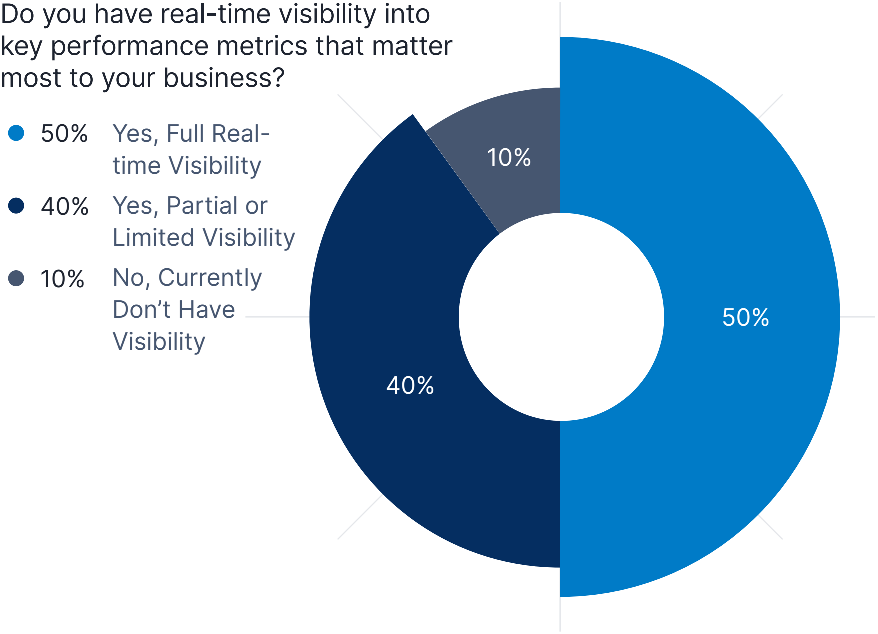
- 42% Strong Team Collaboration
- 19% Regular Training of Staff
- 17% Reporting Tools
- 10% Clear SOPs
- 9% Technology/AI
- 1% Years of Experience
- 2% Other



State of Performance: Visibility & Access Metrics

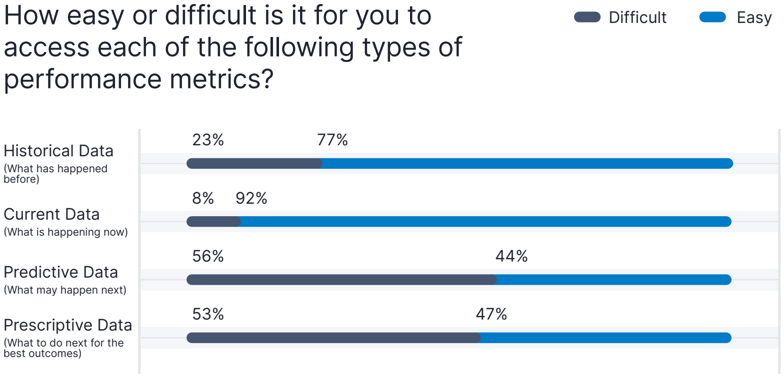
Visibility into performance metrics presented varied outcomes. Half of the respondents report having full real-time visibility into the key indicators that matter most to their business, while 40% say they have only partial visibility and 10% disclose having no visibility at all. Given the sector's reliance on measuring factors such as occupancy, rent growth, expenses and satisfaction, limited transparency may present a substantial operational challenge that impacts performance, particularly for positions requiring ongoing monitoring of these metrics.

Do you have real-time visibility into key performance metrics that matter most to your business?



The picture sharpens when we look at how easy or difficult it is to access different types of data. Historical and current data are largely accessible: 77% say historical data is easy to obtain, and 92% say the same of current data. But when the focus shifts to forward-looking analytics, the numbers flip. Only 44% find predictive data easy to access, and just 47% say the same of prescriptive data. The majority still find these forms of insight difficult to come by.

How easy or difficult is it for you to access each of the following types of performance metrics?



This gap reveals something fundamental: The industry is effective at documenting past events and monitoring current developments, but less equipped in anticipating future trends or determining optimal actions. This suggests that while operators are equipped to report on the past and track the present, many lack the tools or infrastructure for advanced analytics that support forecasting and prescriptive decision-making.

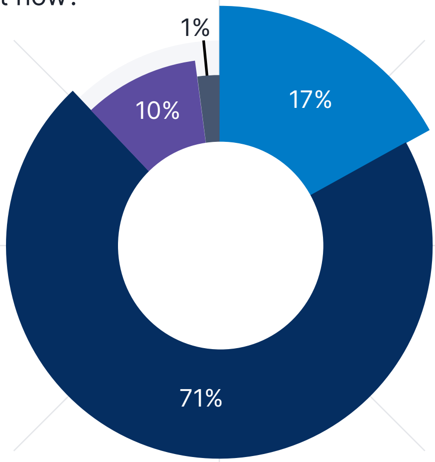
State of Performance: Financial Outcomes

There are multiple metrics that can be leveraged when analyzing the state of performance for apartment owners and operators. At the same time, professionals learn to synthesize many of these metrics into more concise ways to describe how their businesses are faring. In that spirit, we asked survey respondents to choose a description that best describes their company's performance in terms of a baseball analogy.

The main takeaway is that a majority of respondents considered that their company is squarely "in the ballpark, hitting a few home runs [along with] some hits and misses." In addition, 17% indicated that they felt that their business was "at the top of our game, winning consistently." The remainder highlighted struggles and challenges, with 10% pointing out that the company has "a hard time hitting the ball," and 1% indicating that they are "not even in the ballpark." Most property managers describe their company's performance trajectory as good, but with room for improvement.

Which best describes your company's performance trajectory right now?

- 17% We're at the top of our game, winning consistently
- 71% We're in the ballpark, hitting a few home runs, some hits and misses
- 10% We're struggling, having a hard time hitting the ball
- 1% We're not even in the ballpark



Within the context of consistent performance, a majority of apartment professionals also highlighted that their companies deliver strong financial returns for investors and owners. This aspect is an important consideration for not only housing providers but investors looking to build new projects, as well as millions of Americans whose retirement savings are partially invested in real estate properties and funds.

Do you believe your company consistently delivers strong financial returns for investors or owners?

State of Performance: Resident & Staff Satisfaction

Resident satisfaction remains a focal point for operators, and the survey results reflect encouraging momentum. Sixty percent of companies report actively surveying their residents, and, among those, an overwhelming 85% have seen improvement in satisfaction scores during the past 12 months. Within this context, property operators are doubling down on resident experience as a differentiator.

Does your company currently survey residents about their satisfaction with the property and overall experience?

Have resident satisfaction scores improved in the past 12 months based on your survey data?

(Among the 60% who survey residents)

What's striking, however, is the asymmetry between resident and staff focus. Only 35% of companies conduct staff satisfaction surveys, yet 87% of those that do report improvement over the past year. The lack of structured staff engagement raises questions about long-term retention. The multifamily and single-family sectors are experiencing staff shortages in certain roles and organizations that neglect to capture and act on employee feedback risk their core initiatives to enhance residents' experience.

Does your company survey staff on their day-to-day work experience and level of job satisfaction?

Based on the most recent results, have staff satisfaction scores improved over the past 12 months?

(Among the 35% who survey staff)

The qualitative responses around what drives changes in satisfaction, ranging from technology adoption and workload management to training and compensation, underscore a critical truth: Resident and staff experiences are interdependent. Improvements in one often stem from progress in the other. As the labor market remains tight, especially for onsite roles, operators who treat staff well are more likely to deliver consistently strong resident outcomes.

Resident Satisfaction Factors: Improvements vs. Declines

For residents, the strongest contributors to improvements in satisfaction were tied to visible service enhancements. Faster maintenance response times, better communication channels, and the adoption of digital tools for payments and requests created a sense of convenience and reliability. In many cases, residents also pointed to community programming or upgrades to shared amenities as factors that made them feel more connected and valued within their properties. In short, companies where management prioritized responsiveness, quality of living spaces and community connection, satisfaction metrics rose.

On the other hand, the drivers of the declines were more often tied to rising costs, inconsistency in service delivery and strained staff capacity. For some residents, even when physical improvements were made, poor follow-through or lack of transparency around decisions overshadowed the positives. In effect, what residents valued most was not just the physical space, but the day-to-day reliability of the service experience. Operators also pointed to broader market and policy challenges: Regulatory changes and ownership transitions all filtered down to residents in ways that hurt the overall experience.

The common thread here is a mismatch of expectations. Residents are most forgiving when service is transparent and timely, but when financial burdens rise while service lags, dissatisfaction becomes inevitable.

Staff Satisfaction Factors: Improvements vs. Declines

For staff, improvements in satisfaction largely stemmed from investments in culture and process. Teams that reported better training, clearer expectations, and technology that streamlined routine tasks were more likely to feel supported. Recognition and leadership communication also played an important role in fostering a stronger sense of purpose and belonging. Ultimately, satisfaction improvements were not tied to any single lever but rather to an ecosystem: Fair compensation, visible recognition and tools that facilitated more effective job performance.

Where declines occurred, they were most often linked to staffing shortages, heavy workloads and fragmented systems that created inefficiencies. In some cases, employees expressed frustration that while new technology was being introduced, the support to use it effectively was lagging behind. In other words, staff satisfaction depends not just on pay and benefits, but also on how well employees feel prepared to succeed and whether they have access to the tools they need to do their jobs well and prevent burnout. Corporate transitions and issues with upper management also factored heavily. Frequent ownership changes, shifting expectations and lack of advancement opportunities leave staff uncertain about their futures. When paired with increasing regulatory and compliance demands, employees felt they were being asked to “do more with less,” which is a recipe for disengagement.

Business Performance Challenges

While most rental owners and operators are successfully navigating the current market conditions, they recognize that challenges remain present in day-to-day operations.

The survey aims to shine the spotlight on some of these challenges, including shortcomings in staffing performance, technology, AI or other factors.

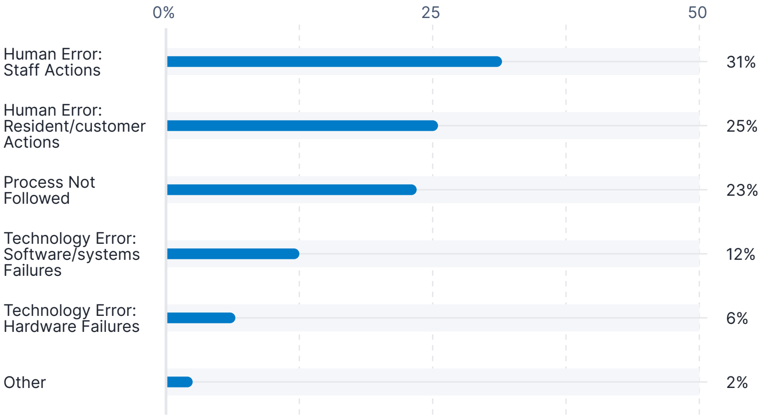
Business Performance Challenges: Error Frequency & Types

Organizations managing residential properties monitor errors that negatively affect business performance or profitability. Almost half of those surveyed indicated that they find errors on a daily or weekly basis. A quarter of respondents pointed out that their companies singled out errors at a monthly cadence, while another 19% find errors quarterly. The data suggests that fixing mistakes and problems is a priority for owners and operators.

Error Types

When it comes to errors that contribute to performance issues, the survey sought to distinguish between human and technology errors. Based on respondents' answers, more than half of errors were attributed to human actions, be they staff or residents or customers, which accounted for 56% of all responses. An additional 23% of respondents indicated that errors occurred as a result of processes not being followed. Errors stemming from technology accounted for 18% of respondents, with 12% of those coming from software or systems failures and 6% due to hardware failures.

Which of the following errors most often contribute to performance issues in your organization?



Human Error

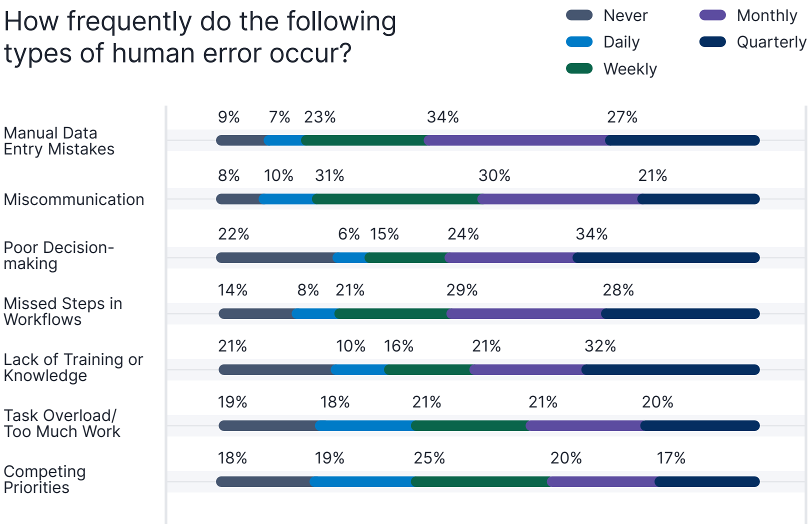
To gain a deeper understanding of the types of human errors that impacted business performance, the survey followed up with a question asking about several types of mistakes along with the frequency with which they were likely to occur. On average, about 84% of respondents indicated that human errors were part of business operations.

The most common errors in the course of daily business operations were competing priorities and task overload, or what respondents identified as too much work. Lack of training or adequate knowledge tied with miscommunication for other frequent daily shortcomings.

These daily errors echoed throughout the weekly workflow. Respondents highlighted that during a workweek, miscommunication, competing priorities and manual data entry mistakes accounted for a large share of problems hampering operational performance.

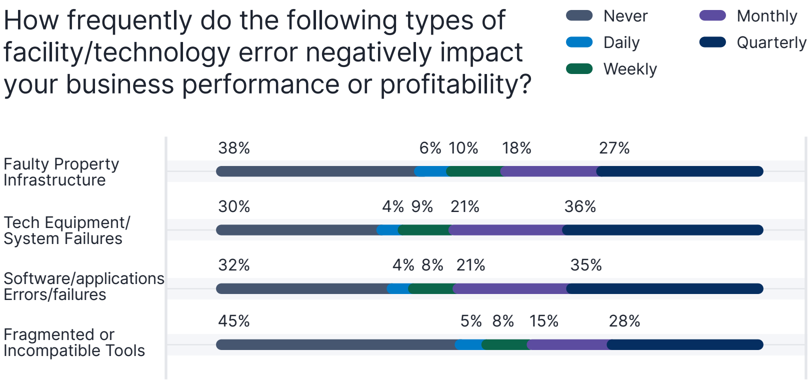
At a monthly cadence, manual data entry mistakes, miscommunication, and missed steps in workflow comprised a noticeable portion of errors. And, on a quarterly basis, respondents identified poor decision-making, lack of training and missed workflow steps as leading errors that would need to be addressed.

Interestingly, about 16% of respondents indicated that human errors never happened in their organization, with some variation across categories. The least-likely errors to occur in business operations were in the categories of “poor decision-making” and “lack of training or knowledge.” At the other end of the spectrum, the most likely human errors centered on miscommunication and manual data entry.



Technology Errors

On the technology side, apartment operators identified several factors that negatively affected business performance and profitability. The most likely failures were of technology equipment or systems, followed by software errors. Looking at frequency, most respondents indicated that they were likely to be experienced at monthly or quarterly intervals, rather than daily or weekly.

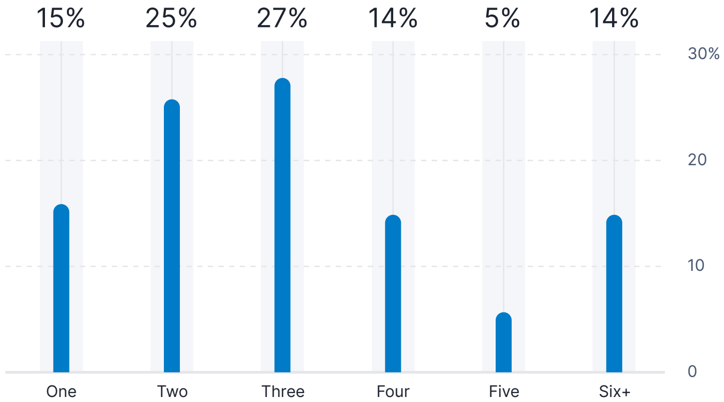


Business Performance Challenges: Disparate Software & Data Tools

In today's business environment, software and analytical tools are an important component of successfully managing rental properties and operations. For many professionals, the proliferation of data has also led to an increase in the number of software platforms, each requiring separate credentials.

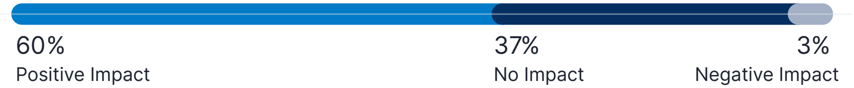
We asked survey respondents to share how many different software tools or logins they used in a typical day to manage work. Only 15% indicated that they used just one tool or login. A quarter of respondents mentioned that they used two logins. Almost 60% of professionals surveyed pointed out that they used three or more logins.

How many different software tools or logins does your business use on a typical day to manage work?



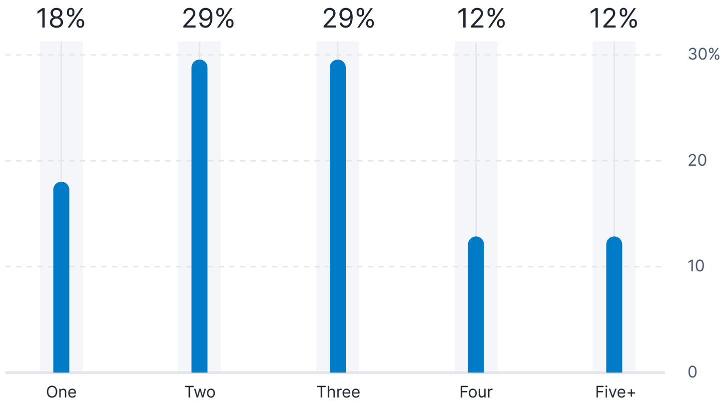
Given the relatively large number of different software tools and associated logins, it is not surprising that a majority of apartment operators would appreciate a more streamlined approach. Sixty percent of respondents said that consolidating software logins would have a positive impact on business and performance. While 37% did not expect any impact from having fewer tools or logins, only 3% believe consolidation would have a negative impact.

How would consolidating software logins impact your business and company's overall performance?



In the same vein, we asked industry professionals how many distinct software solutions they employed to gain visibility into key performance metrics at their companies. Over 50% of them shared that they used three or more applications, while only 18% use one.

How many distinct software solutions are you using to achieve visibility into your company's key performance metrics?

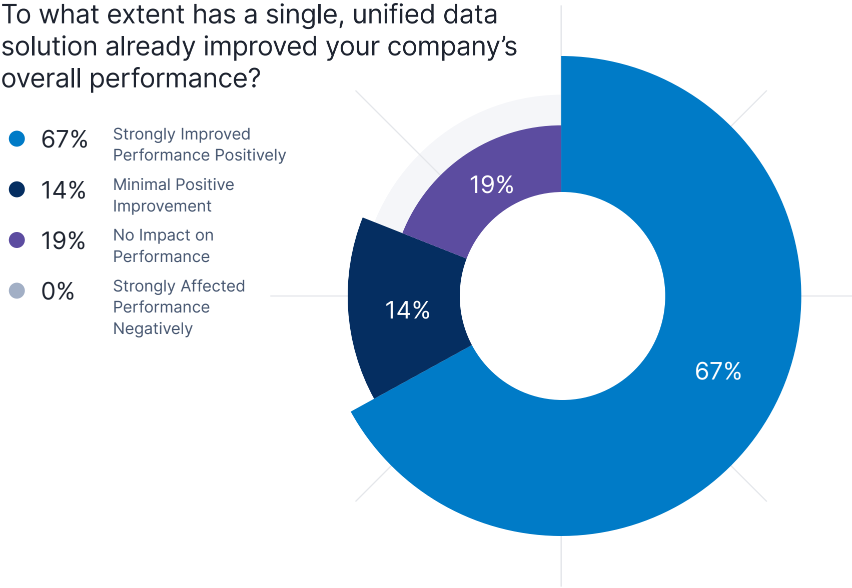


Echoing earlier questions, operators lean in favor of consolidating multiple systems into one to improve overall performance and 67% percent of respondents indicated that they expected improvements in their companies' performance from a single platform solution.

Would consolidating data into one system improve your company's overall performance?

Survey results highlight that for operators who have already implemented a unified data solution, there have been tangible results, with 67% indicating they saw strong improvement in performance. The remainder of the respondent group saw either minimal positive improvement or no impact on performance.

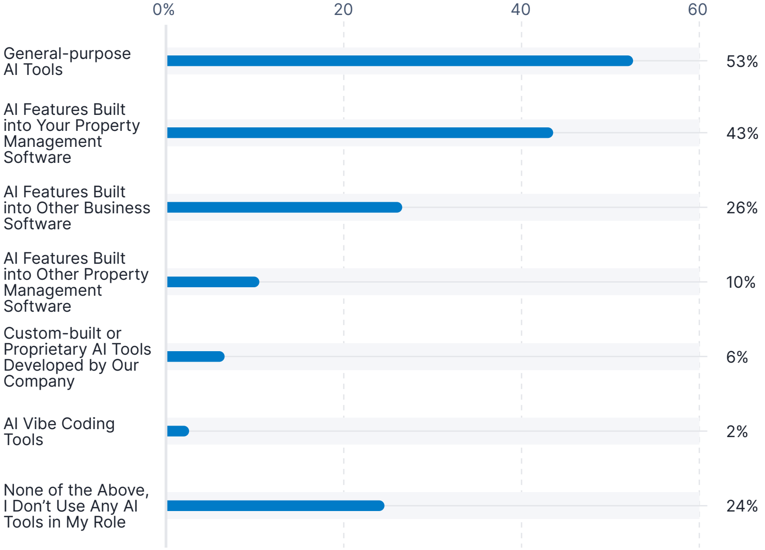
To what extent has a single, unified data solution already improved your company's overall performance?



Business Performance Solutions: Artificial Intelligence Adoption & Perceptions

The conversation around AI is no longer hypothetical in real estate operations, it's already here, though the industry is still calibrating its expectations. More than half of respondents (53%) report using general-purpose AI tools such as ChatGPT and Gemini, while 43% are tapping into AI features embedded within core property management software platforms. Another 26% are using business software AI add-ons (e.g., Microsoft Copilot). Taken together, the data reveals that AI has become a part of the daily workflow for a majority of operators, often embedded in the systems on which they already rely. However, 24% of respondents indicated that they do not utilize any form of AI tool in their current role.

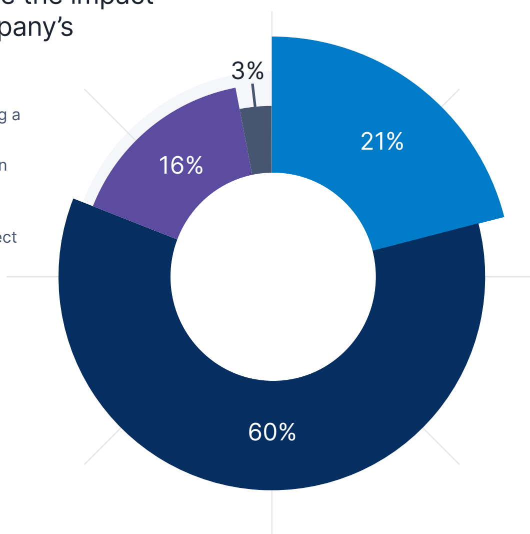
Which, if any, of the following types of AI tools does your company currently use the most?



Perceptions of impact from users of AI tools, however, are more measured. The majority (60%) describe AI as “moderately helpful” in assisting staff with projects and tasks: Drafting communications, handling documentation, or automating simple workflows. Just over one in five respondents (21%) say the technology has been “revolutionary” for performance, while 16% see no effect at all, and 3% remain skeptical, calling it “overhyped.” This distribution mirrors broader economic sentiment: AI is undeniably reshaping business processes, but most industries are still in the incremental adoption stage rather than full-scale transformation.

How would you describe the impact of AI tools on your company’s performance?

- 21% It’s revolutionary, driving a leap in performance
- 60% It’s moderately helpful in assisting staff with projects/tasks
- 16% It does not have an effect on performance yet
- 3% It’s overhyped, we’re not using it



Have AI tools improved your company's overall performance?

The fact that 77% of companies report overall performance improvements from AI use points to a clear upside, but the industry's cautious framing suggests two barriers: Trust and integration. Operators are more comfortable with AI when it's embedded in trusted platforms rather than free-floating tools, and it is possible that they are still determining how far to push automation into decision-making versus staff enablement.

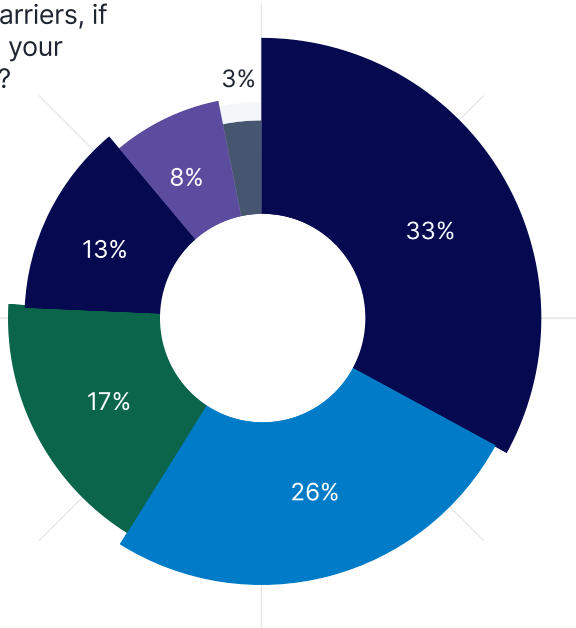
Business Performance Challenges: Broader Barriers & Solutions

The previous findings echo a broader challenge in real estate and property management. The industry has no shortage of data or technology; it has a coordination and consolidation problem. Operators are still struggling to put together integrated systems, and many teams are asked to navigate multiple platforms without unified visibility. This results in both inefficiency and frustration, reinforcing the time-allocation imbalance seen earlier in the survey.

Resolving these barriers would directly support the shift operators want: Away from routine and reactive work and toward strategic planning and stakeholder engagement. It would also reinforce both resident and staff satisfaction, as better-aligned processes and integrated tools reduce friction on the front lines. In many ways, the barriers point to the same solution: Clearer processes, smarter automation and systems integration.

Which of the following barriers, if resolved, would improve your company's performance?

- 33% Human Error
- 26% Processes Not Followed
- 17% Performance Visibility
- 13% Fragmented Technology (Too Many Overlapping Systems)
- 8% Data Silos (Too Many Isolated Data Sources)
- 3% Other



Barriers to Achieving Performance Outcomes

01 — TIME CONSTRAINTS AND OVERLOAD:

A significant number of responses highlight limited time, overwhelming workloads, and competing priorities as major barriers. Many mention not having enough hours in the day, frequent urgent tasks, and the challenge of balancing daily operations with strategic goals.

02 — STAFFING SHORTAGES AND TRAINING ISSUES:

Staffing problems, including high turnover, insufficient personnel, and lack of qualified staff are frequently cited. Respondents also note inadequate training, onboarding challenges, and the need for better staff motivation and development.

03 — INEFFICIENT PROCESSES AND SYSTEM FRAGMENTATION:

Many responses point to inefficient or manual processes, lack of streamlined systems, and fragmented or outdated software as obstacles. Issues include repetitive tasks, poor integration between systems, and frequent changes in procedures.

04 — DAILY DISTRACTIONS AND REACTIVE OPERATIONS:

Frequent interruptions from emails, phone calls, resident issues, and emergencies disrupt focus and productivity. Respondents describe a reactive work environment, with constant "firefighting" and difficulty maintaining proactive, outcome-focused work.

05 — FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE LIMITATIONS:

Budget constraints, rising costs, and lack of necessary resources are recurring themes. Respondents mention limited funding for improvements, inability to hire additional staff, and challenges in maintaining service levels amid financial pressures.

Analysis by Property Type

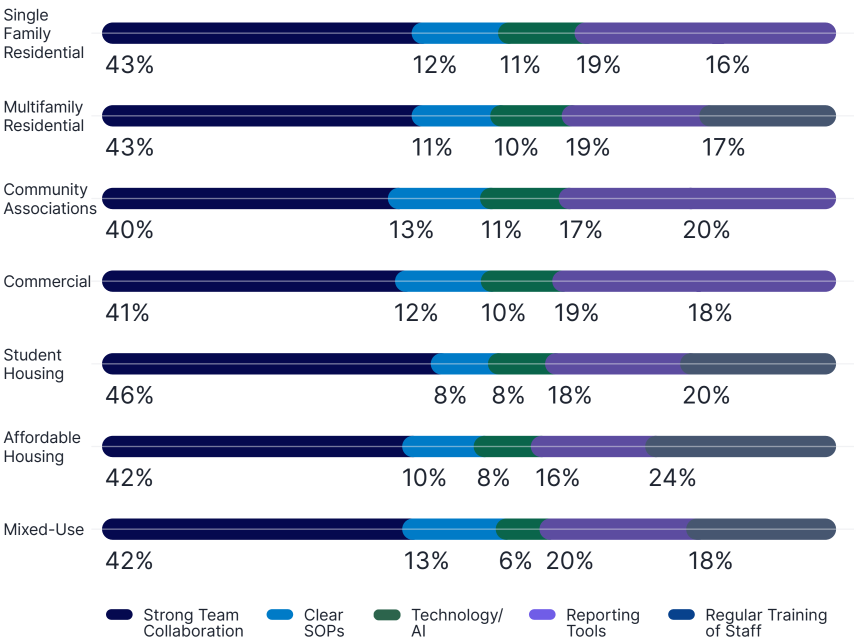
The following analysis explores how survey results vary across property types. Respondents were allowed to select multiple categories because many operators oversee more than one property type.

As a result, the findings should be read as directional insights that highlight shared patterns and distinctions across asset classes.

Confidence in Best Practices

Across property types in the real estate industry, strong team collaboration consistently led the way as the biggest driver of confidence in best practices. Whether in conventional multifamily, student housing, affordable housing or commercial settings, collaboration was the most often cited factor, giving respondents complete confidence that best practices are followed.

Beyond these universal drivers, however, the secondary preferences reveal important distinctions. In affordable housing, regular staff training (24%) carried the greatest weight, reflecting both the regulatory complexity of this sector and the importance of equipping teams to manage compliance effectively. Student housing respondents also leaned heavily on training, a likely response to the high turnover of residents and the need for staff who can adapt quickly to changing demands.



In contrast, mixed-use properties placed a heightened focus on reporting tools, highlighting the importance of visibility and accountability in managing multiple asset types within a single facility. Although reporting tools were valued similarly across various property types, their role is especially significant in the mixed-use sector as they enable systematic tracking and alignment of diverse operations. Additionally, standardized operating procedures (SOPs) form a critical framework for mixed-use facilities, accounting for 13% of responses. Community associations also demonstrated a slightly more process-oriented approach at 13%, while 20% expressed a preference for training initiatives, which may be attributable to the involvement of volunteer boards and the range of stakeholders typical in HOA and co-op environments.

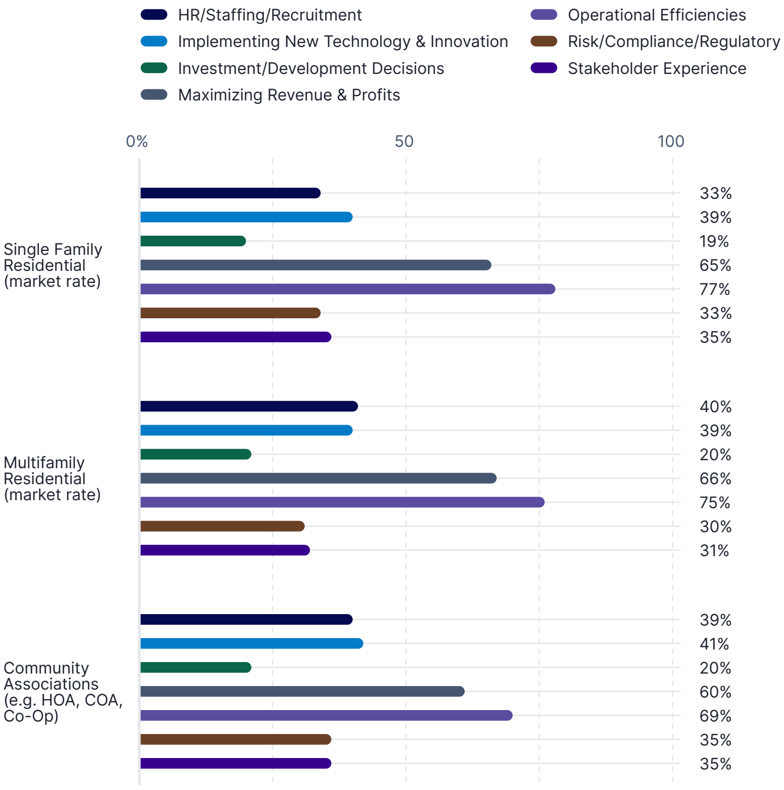
The approach to understanding what boosts confidence in following best practices is clearly outlined. In student and affordable housing, ongoing staff training plays a key role; meanwhile, market-rate and mixed-use properties rely heavily on strong reporting tools and systems.

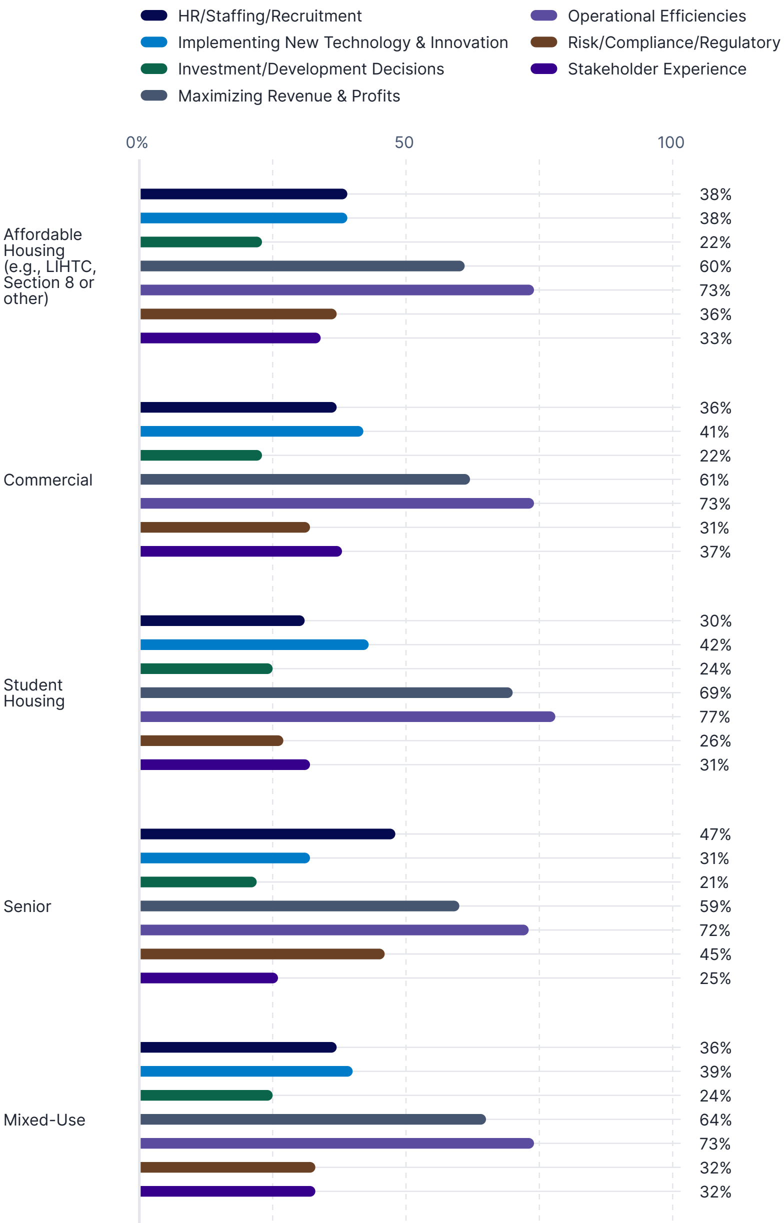
Interestingly, technology and AI remain a less reliant factor across all property types, not exceeding 11%.

This suggests that while innovation is on the horizon, trust in best practices today is still built more on human collaboration, clear processes and reinforcement through either training or reporting, depending on the specific situation.

Top Challenges Facing Companies

Operational efficiency and revenue maximization consistently dominate as primary challenges across all property types. However, secondary challenges reveal nuances. Senior housing operators stood out, reporting HR and staffing issues as their biggest challenge (47%), substantially more than other sectors, followed closely by risk and regulatory compliance (45%), and with less emphasis on new technology implementation (31%). Given the labor-intensive care and services tied to senior living, this emphasis isn't surprising. Conversely, in all other property types except conventional multifamily, the adoption of new technologies was cited as a greater challenge than staffing concerns.




HR/Staffing/Recruitment
Implementing New Technology & Innovation
Investment/Development Decisions
Maximizing Revenue & Profits
Operational Efficiencies
Risk/Compliance/Regulatory
Stakeholder Experience
0%
50
100
Affordable Housing (e.g., LIHTC, Section 8 or other)
38%
38%
22%
60%
73%
36%
33%
Commercial
36%
41%
22%
61%
73%
31%
37%
Student Housing
30%
42%
24%
69%
77%
26%
31%
Senior
47%
31%
21%
59%
72%
45%
25%
Mixed-Use
36%
39%
24%
64%
73%
32%
32%

Student housing and single-family housing operators both put revenue at the very top of their list (77% and 65%, respectively), while community associations prioritized operational efficiency (69%) over revenue maximization (60%). In multifamily and commercial real estate, the themes are more balanced: Both listed revenue maximization (75% and 73%) and operational efficiency (66% and 61%) as equally critical.

Affordable housing, meanwhile, reflected a mixed profile. Seventy-three percent highlighted operational efficiency and another 38% cited both HR and new technology as subsidiary challenges, mirroring the strain of managing compliance-heavy programs with limited resources. The broader takeaway is that while efficiency is a shared concern, staffing matters most in senior living and revenue pressures dominate in student and single-family sectors.

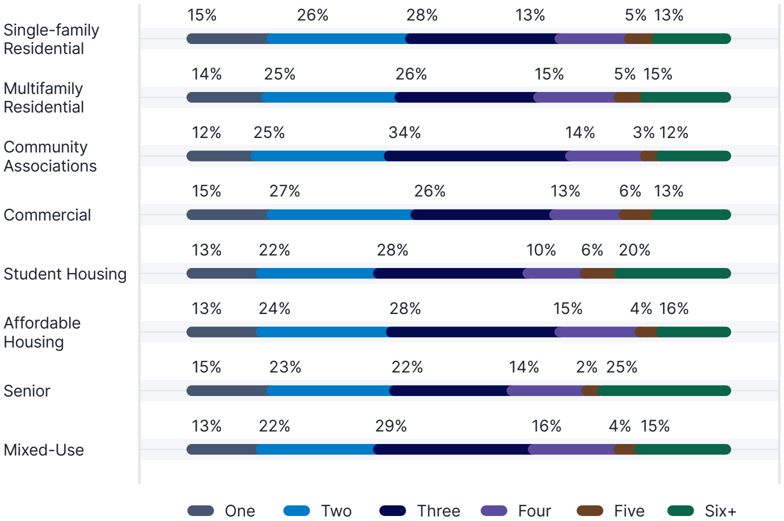
Frequency of Errors

When it comes to identifying errors that hurt business performance, student housing operators once again offered a different profile: 21% said errors are spotted daily; the highest of the group. That constant error detection reflects the pace of move-ins and resident turnover, where small mistakes quickly surface. Senior housing followed closely at 20%.

In contrast, mixed-use operators leaned more toward weekly error spotting (37%) with fewer daily detections (12%), suggesting that complexity across asset types leads to a more structured, less reactive review process. Market-rate multifamily and single-family operators clustered in the middle, most commonly identifying errors on a weekly or monthly basis (32-34% weekly, 24-25% monthly). The insight here is that frequency of error detection often mirrors the operational tempo: Faster-moving environments catch issues sooner, while more complex portfolios track them in cycles.

Technology Stack Complexity

When asked about the number of tools used daily, most property types clustered around two to three logins. Community associations reported the heaviest spread: 34% indicated juggling three different tools daily. Senior housing, on the other hand, showed the highest rate of six or more logins (25%), reflecting the complex requirements for managing both housing operations and care services.

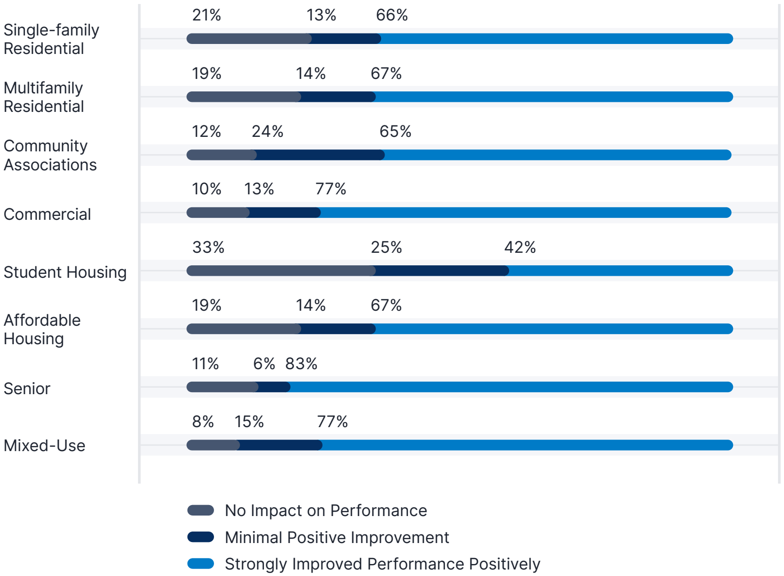


Student housing stood out again: 20% of respondents reported relying on more than five distinct systems, a higher rate than any other group except senior housing. Multifamily and single-family operators demonstrated greater efficiency, with the majority relying on two or three platforms.

This highlights that fragmentation is not uniform across sectors. Student and senior housing typically exhibit greater technological diversification, whereas market-rate housing generally features fewer integrated systems.

Unified Data Solutions and Performance

Perhaps the most striking divergence shows up in the impact of unified data solutions. Senior housing operators reported the strongest benefits: 83% said a single system had strongly improved performance. Commercial and mixed-use operators followed closely at 77%. By contrast, only 42% of student housing providers felt a unified solution delivered strong improvements, with one-third reporting no impact at all.



This split reveals that in complex, multi-stakeholder environments like senior and mixed-use housing, unified data creates tangible gains. But in student housing, where turnover cycles and academic calendars already impose rigid rhythms, a unified platform may feel less transformative.

Property Type Crosstab Takeaways

Viewed by property type, the story is less about universal truths and more about contextual priorities. Student housing emerges as fast-moving, with a larger margin for error and more collaboration-driven. Senior housing is shaped by staffing shortages and heavy tech stacks, but benefits most from unified systems. Affordable housing is compliance-heavy, leaning on staff training and battling human error the most. Market-rate sectors, whether single-family or multifamily, show steadier alignment around efficiency, revenue and consistent processes.

These differences are significant. They suggest that while the industry talks broadly about technology, performance and efficiency, the most effective solutions tend to resonate differently depending on the operational characteristics of each property type.

Key Takeaways

The property management industry is undergoing a critical evolution, marked by a necessary shift from managing tasks to optimizing performance.

The Path to Real Performance: Bridging the Efficiency and Data Gaps

External pressures — like economic headwinds and the fast pace of technological change — have exposed a significant performance gap where daily operations consistently overshadow strategic growth. To succeed, businesses must rethink how they prioritize time, unify their data, and harness integrated technology. This study surfaced several key takeaways.

Reclaiming Strategic Time

A striking finding is the misallocation of resources, particularly time, which actively impedes performance. The majority of the work week is consumed by keeping the lights on: 42% is devoted to routine operational work and 24% is spent on reactive troubleshooting.

In contrast, just 16% of time is allocated to strategic, high-value activities (like planning and team development), and only 17% to critical stakeholder engagement. Bridging this gap requires a structural change to free professionals from the operational grind and empower them to focus on the activities that drive true customer value and business growth.

Performance is Deeply Intertwined with People and Processes

Tracking Errors for Improvement: A significant portion of errors are attributed to human actions and failure to follow processes, along with technology failures. Encouragingly, over 50% of organizations monitor and identify errors on a daily or weekly basis. Maintaining this frequent cadence of fixing mistakes is crucial for continuous improvement.

Investing in Team Satisfaction: Only 35% of companies actively survey staff satisfaction. This is a missed opportunity, as those who dothis report seeing performance improvements linked to better leadership, work-life balance, development, and technology. Making strategic investments in culture, process, training, and compensation is essential, as staff are the core resource for maintaining operational performance and managing the resident experience.

The Need for Unified Data

The performance gap is exacerbated by system fragmentation, a major obstacle to efficiency and insight. The data shows:

Fragmentation Costs: Nearly 60% of property professionals must use three or more separate software logins daily, leading to fractured data and inefficient workflows.

Benefits of Consolidation: 67% of operators believe consolidating all data into a single system would improve their company's overall performance. Among those who have successfully achieved this consolidation, 67% reported a strong positive improvement in performance.

A single, cohesive data foundation is no longer a luxury but a competitive advantage. It enables end-to-end management, transforming disconnected activities into smooth workflows that boost efficiency and mitigate risk (e.g., consolidating multiple systems into one and achieving 100% compliance adoption in key areas).

Moving Beyond Historical Data to Prescriptive Action

While the industry excels at tracking past and present performance — with high accessibility to historical (77%) and current (92%) data — insights into future performance are severely limited. Less than half of operators find predictive data (44%) or prescriptive data (47%) easy to obtain.

True performance management requires a technology framework that can move beyond reporting on what has happened to guiding what to do next for the best possible outcome.

This necessitates consolidating platforms and leveraging AI to simplify access and management, while carefully balancing technology solutions with the essential human element, to ensure efficiency gains and resident satisfaction.

Looking Ahead

These takeaways highlight the importance of strategic planning, effective communication, and technology adoption in driving performance and satisfaction in the apartment industry. Addressing these challenges and barriers can lead to better alignment of operational and strategic tasks, ultimately enhancing overall performance.

The future of property management belongs to those who successfully shift from a cycle of reactive efficiency to one where everyone — businesses, residents, staff, investors, and owners — truly wins.

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