

Delighting Owners:

The Key to Success in the Vacation Rental Industry





Introduction

If your main goal with owners has been to keep them satisfied, you're not alone. Sometimes, that's the best you can hope for. Owners cover a wide spectrum of personalities, financial goals, and engagement levels. They choose property management companies based on criteria you might not even be aware of and can jump ship for any reason or no reason.

In other words, owners aren't your typical business partners. But you can safely assume they all want two things out of the relationship: a healthy ROI and mutual trust. Both are largely under your control.

A solid and reliable return on owner investment is a function of your business savvy and the main reason your company exists. In a sense, you're an asset manager. The better you do at managing owner assets, the better their return. But their slice of the pie is based on top-level revenue performance. Yours starts at about twenty percent and only goes down based on your expenses and operating efficiency. Some of that time and money must go into making owners so happy that they'd be foolish to leave.

Trust is built through outstanding communication, transparency, consistency, respect, and accountability. Again, all of these are under your control, and you can start improving on them immediately.

The Operator Imperatives

After two decades of working with customers in the short-term rental industry, Track has identified three primary keys we call Operator Imperatives:



Optimizing Demand



Build for Scale



Delighting Owners

Optimizing Demand deals with the modern best practices of generating revenue and delivering consistently excellent performance on KPIs that speak to the overall health of your business, such as occupancy and ADR.

Build for Scale describes the tools, processes, and mindset that ensure sustainable growth. In other words, it's how you avoid becoming a victim of your own success.

This eBook focuses on the second imperative, **Delighting Owners**. This is the supply side of your business.

The word "delight" is used a lot in business, usually with respect to customers. Indeed, the whole point of experience marketing is to create an end-to-end experience so tightly connected to the brand that the customer becomes a raving fan. A broader definition of "delight" for our purposes would be to build the kind of relationship that inspires both loyalty (*owners stick with you*) and advocacy (*owners help recruit new owners*).

The Case for Delighting Owners

A property management company (PMC) needs properties, and properties have owners. Thus, attracting and retaining owners ought to be among your highest priorities.

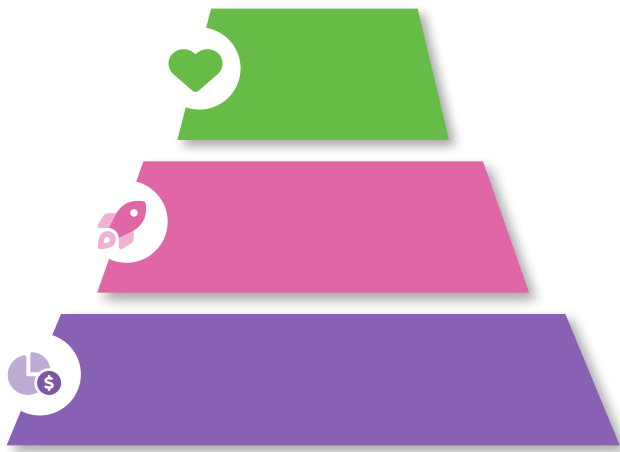
For better or worse, those owners have more choices than ever for PMCs. Our industry has grown markedly over the past two decades, and it's a bigger game with more players. Expectations are always evolving, and the competition for both owners and guests is fierce. Keeping owners satisfied is great, but it's not enough anymore.

Improved owner management helps shore up the supply side of your business.

Understanding Owners' Fundamental Needs

To understand needs in the context of short-term rentals (STRs), we must define them more broadly. For that, we turn to the late psychologist Abraham Maslow and his famous Hierarchy of Needs.

According to Maslow, the fundamental human needs are physical, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization (see graphic). Applying these to short-term rentals yields the following breakdown:



Self Actualization: Revenue and profit maximization/ optimization and ROI

Social: Communication - open, effective, actionable

Self-Esteem: Proactive retention by VRMs

Physical: The property

Safety: Insights, data, market knowledge, benchmarking

Physical and Safety Needs

As property managers, the protection of owner assets is our most sacred duty. Their trust demands that we make all reasonable efforts to screen guests, clearly communicate house rules, collect all necessary fees and deposits, and make it easy for guests to troubleshoot issues.

Sometimes, things break. It's an occupational hazard. But as in life, it's not what happens so much as how we deal with it. Prompt attention to issues, clear and thorough communication to owners, and swift resolutions are opportunities to build (or rebuild) this foundational trust.

There are two aspects to safety: guest safety and the safety that owners need to feel from you. We'll focus on the latter.

Apart from communication, which is paramount, owners need assurance that you know what you're doing and what they care about. For this, we rely on analytics and KPIs.

If you were choosing a financial adviser to invest your money, you'd want to know about their track record. Do they clearly understand the securities market? Do they boast a long list of satisfied clients? Are their historical returns consistently solid? Property managers must demonstrate similar performance to owners and be able to contextualize the data in layman's terms.

Put simply, **owners need to feel that they are safe leaving their property in your hands.**

Social and Self-Esteem Needs

An owner's social needs are met by maintaining a quality relationship with you.

Maslow refers to social needs as love and belonging, but the principles are the same. The hallmark of a healthy social relationship between you and owners is communication. Consistent, accurate, transparent, and timely communication is the way to an owner's heart.

Self-esteem, in this case, refers to how owners feel about your relationship. Any relationship, personal or in business, benefits when both parties feel valued, respected, and special. That builds the kind of loyalty and enthusiasm that turns owners into advocates.

Proactive retention measures are a crucial part of the mix. Here again, communication reigns supreme. Savvy owners know they have other options (usually) for property management in your area, and if you fail to show appreciation and an eagerness to implement feedback, somebody else will.



Self-Actualization

The top of the pyramid in Maslow's model, self-actualization, refers to the realization of an individual's potential and their pursuit of personal growth.

In this context, **self-actualization is the logical outcome of building a strong and mutually beneficial relationship with owners.** Doing so clears the path for more lofty pursuits such as revenue and ROI optimization. It's like learning to walk before you can run, but in the relational sense. Once you establish a track record of consistent revenue performance and occupancy, then you can start talking about tweaks.

Protecting the Owner's Investment: Be Brilliant in the Basics

Obviously, you can't even think about delighting owners until they're supremely confident that you respect and will protect their assets. Fail this test, and the rest won't matter.

In business as in sports, many problems can be fixed by going back to the fundamentals. But that means regularly checking in with yourself so you don't get complacent.



Maintenance

There are two basic types of maintenance in short-term rentals: Regular wear and tear, and value-added.

Things break or get damaged by guests all the time. A TV remote gets dropped, a piece of furniture breaks, etc. It's a cost of doing business, and security deposits are your primary hedge against that cost. But the devil is in the details, and it's those details you need to audit occasionally. Some questions to ask include:



Do we plan and resource appropriately for these occasions?



How happy are we with our maintenance providers, especially their responsiveness?



Are the tools we use cost-effective?



Are our workflows effective?
Can they scale?



Where are the bottlenecks and/or scheduling challenges?

Value-added maintenance is mainly about upgrades. Many owners take a set-it-and-forget-it approach. If they're happy with their ROI and with you, they're less likely to question whether the property's amenities and appointments align with your portfolio and target market.

However, you and your team know better than anyone what a property's potential is. Some types of maintenance and upgrades can command significantly higher rates that easily justify the expense. For example, let's say a house in a ski town rents for \$500/night. A comparable property in your stable rents for \$650, partly because it has a hot tub. If you're reasonably confident that adding a hot tub would increase your ADR by 30%, then it might compel the owner to make the investment. If you have such a recommendation, be prepared to make the business case for it.

More commonly, however, you'll be recommending action on deferred maintenance, such as repainting a room, refinishing the floors, etc. Just remember that some owners rarely or never visit the property themselves and therefore depend on you to note maintenance issues that might be affecting their ROI.






Housekeeping

There's a wide gulf between a good housekeeping staff and a not-so-good one. Sometimes, it's a matter of the provider's standards and practices. Other times, it boils down to specific people's work ethic. Either way, it's a fairly high turnover business with plenty of room for inconsistency. Ensuring excellence in housekeeping is a collaborative effort between you and your provider.

Whether you're choosing a new provider or auditing your current one, it's always a good idea to compare their standards and practices with your own to ensure alignment. For example, if they swear by a certain floor wax but your guests don't like the scent, then changes should be made.

Consistency and quality are the big variables here. Housekeeping staff play a critical role in delivering on the promise of the property. Some questions to consider when evaluating your housekeeping:

	What are your standards and quality control for your housekeeping?		What are you doing today to ensure high quality and consistency in housekeeping?		Do you manage your housekeeping directly, or use a third party cleaner or service?
Do they align with your provider's own standards and capabilities?	Could you be doing more?		Do your tools and workflows ensure timely and accurate communication?		Do you offer cleaning inspections?



Security, Guest Screening, and Home Automation

As the saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. So it is with security, guest screening, and home automation—all of which amount to forms of insurance.

A security deposit still is the simplest, time-honored way to protect yourself and your owners. Just ensure the amount of the deposit is appropriate for both the property and your target guest. A security system generally won't be up to you, but it can provide added reassurance for guests and may even justify a higher rate.

Guest screening practices become more stringent as ADR increases. Many companies, such as Safely, Autohost, and Guest Ranger (all [Track Certified Partners](#)), offer everything from fraud protection to security deposit collection. The goal is always the same: mitigate risk to you and your owners through the reasonable screening of guests. Not only does it help prevent issues, but if something happens and you're called to account, you'll be able to say you performed some due diligence.

Home automation is really starting to catch on with vacation rentals, and for good reason. Integrations with your PMS can now automate much of the check in and check out process. Such features contribute to a seamless and often contactless guest experience. In addition, many systems can log guest access, giving you an audit trail that you might not have had otherwise.



Communication and Education

As noted earlier, **effective communication and education with owners is imperative**. Living up to owner trust requires more than just good service—it demands open communication, tailored to their needs, and ongoing education to keep them informed without overwhelming them.

Here's how communication and education can become your secret weapon in delighting owners and driving long-term success.

Building Bridges with Open and Effective Communication

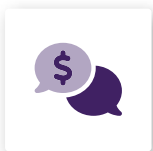
Trust is an outcome of clarity and connection. Open and effective communication creates that foundation and ensures owners feel valued and informed. Key tools for achieving this include:



Owner Portals: A well-designed owner portal acts as an information hub. It provides owners with easy access to their property's performance metrics, such as occupancy rates, revenue trends, and upcoming bookings. By allowing owners to check this data at their convenience, you emphasize partnership while reducing the need for back-and-forth emails.



Reporting: Detailed, clean reports help owners understand their property's performance. Monthly or quarterly reports can summarize critical insights, such as financial performance, guest reviews, and maintenance updates. Presenting this data clearly demonstrates your commitment to their success.



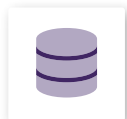
Statement Comments: Beyond raw numbers, adding personalized comments to owner statements can make a big difference. For example, highlighting a particularly lucrative booking or explaining a maintenance expense fosters clarity and shows attention to detail. These small touches help humanize the process and build stronger connections.

When these tools are integrated into your operations, they provide owners with the transparency they crave while showcasing your professionalism and care.

Avoiding Information Overload

While transparency is vital, too much information can quickly overwhelm owners, leading to confusion or frustration. The goal is to strike a balance that keeps them informed without getting too deep in the weeds.

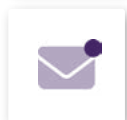
Here's how to find that sweet spot:



Prioritize What Matters: Focus on the key metrics that matter most to your owners. For example, an investment-minded owner may care primarily about ROI and occupancy rates, while another may be more concerned about guest feedback and property conditions.



Simplify Complex Data: Visuals like charts, graphs, and summaries make complex information easier to digest. A quick snapshot of performance is more useful than pages of data.

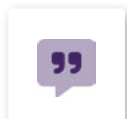


Segment Communication: Not every update needs to go to every owner. For example, a notice about system updates may only be relevant to a select few, while a significant change in pricing strategy should be shared with all. Segmenting your communications ensures owners only receive what's pertinent to them.

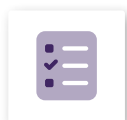
By keeping communications concise and relevant, you enhance your credibility and ensure owners stay engaged but not overwhelmed.

Tailoring Communication to Individual Preferences

Owners are all cut from different cloth. Some want to be deeply involved in every detail, while others are more set-it-and-forget-it. Understanding and adapting to these preferences is essential to delighting them.



Ask the Right Questions Early: During onboarding, find out how involved an owner wants to be. Do they want to approve maintenance expenses, or are they comfortable with you taking the lead? Would they prefer weekly updates or monthly summaries? Gathering this information upfront sets the stage for a solid relationship.



Offer Flexible Options: Use technology to offer customizable communication settings. For example, Track's Owner Portal allows them to opt in or out of specific notifications such as booking updates or maintenance alerts. This ensures they only receive the information they care about.



Balance Transparency with Autonomy: While some owners want all the details, others just want results. For those who prefer less involvement, provide high-level updates while assuring them you have everything under control. For more hands-on owners, offer regular check-ins and more granular insights.

Tailoring communication to individual preferences not only increases owner satisfaction but also strengthens your relationship, as it shows you respect their unique needs and expectations.



The Role of Education in Owner Delight

Beyond communication, educating owners elevates your relationship. Many owners may not fully understand the complexities of STR management. By sharing your expertise and helpful resources, you help them see the value you provide.



Market Insights: Explain how market trends impact their property's performance and how your strategies adapt to these shifts. For instance, sharing data on how pricing strategies boost occupancy can reinforce their confidence in your approach.



Operational Transparency: Help owners understand the "why" behind decisions. Why was a guest booking canceled? Why did maintenance costs increase this month? Educating them on these points builds trust and reduces potential friction.



Empowering Owners: Provide resources, such as webinars or guides, to help owners feel more informed and involved. This positions you as a partner in their success rather than just a service provider.



Maximizing ROI: Partnering with Owners to Drive Revenue in Short-Term Rentals

For STR businesses, success isn't just about filling properties with guests—it's about delivering strong returns for owners (and you). After all, maximizing ROI is why they work with property managers in the first place. By applying data-driven strategies, you can align your efforts with owner expectations, building trust and ensuring long-term partnerships.

Here's how to work alongside your owners to optimize revenue and help them achieve their financial goals.

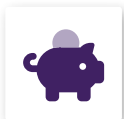
ROI: The Cornerstone of Owner Engagement

For property owners, STRs are an investment. Whether they're seasoned investors or second homeowners, their primary focus is maximizing returns while minimizing costs and risks.

As a property manager, **your ability to communicate and demonstrate financial performance is as critical as guest and employee management.** Owners want answers to key questions like:



How much revenue is the property generating?



What are the expenses, and how are they being managed?



How does their property compare to local and regional market averages?

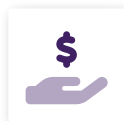
By framing your services around maximizing ROI, you position yourself as a partner who understands and prioritizes their financial goals. This strengthens the relationship and builds confidence in your management ability.

Using Key Metrics and Data Insights to Drive Success

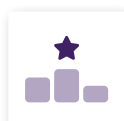
Owners need tangible proof of their property's performance. Key metrics and actionable insights ensure transparency and help them make informed decisions.



Occupancy Rates: This is one of the most critical metrics for STR owners. Regular updates on occupancy trends, paired with context about market demand, give owners a clear picture of performance.



Forecasted Revenue: Owners value predictability. Sharing revenue forecasts based on historical trends, seasonal demand, and current booking data helps set realistic expectations and underscores your business savvy.



Market Benchmarks: Comparing a property's performance to similar rentals in the area adds depth to your reporting. Highlighting areas where the property excels or falls short shows that you actively monitor the competitive landscape and know how to position their property for success.

Insights shared through owner portals, detailed reports, or even quick summaries can make a world of difference in owner satisfaction.

Tools for Revenue Maximization

To truly delight owners and maximize ROI, you need to go beyond tracking metrics and actively implement strategies to drive revenue. This requires a mix of technology, market expertise, and creativity.

Pricing Adjustments

Dynamic pricing is one of the most effective tools for optimizing revenue. By adjusting rates based on demand, seasonality, and local events, you help ensure the property remains competitive while maximizing income. For example:



Higher rates during peak travel seasons or holidays



Discounts to fill gaps during slower periods

Communicating these adjustments to owners, along with your rationale, fosters trust and showcases your strategic thinking.

Dynamic Booking Strategies

Encouraging owners to embrace flexible booking policies can significantly impact ROI. For example, allowing shorter stays during low-demand periods or incentivizing early bookings with discounts can attract more guests while reducing vacancy.

Optimizing the property's listing on multiple booking platforms is another way to ensure it reaches the broadest possible audience.

Owner Incentives

Owners are more likely to invest in upgrades if you make a strong business case for it. Highlighting the potential impact of small investments—like high-quality photos, updated furnishings, or smart home technology—can lead to higher guest satisfaction, better reviews, and premium rates.

By guiding owners through proposed enhancements and showing results, you create a win-win scenario: guests enjoy a superior experience, and owners reap the financial rewards.

Partnering with Owners for Long-Term Growth

Maximizing ROI isn't a one-time effort—it's an ongoing partnership. Regularly reviewing performance, adjusting strategies, and sharing new opportunities keeps owners engaged and reassured that their property is in good hands.

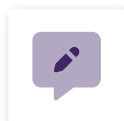
To strengthen this partnership:



Schedule Regular Check-Ins: Discuss revenue performance, market trends, and future strategies.



Offer Education: Share insights about industry trends, pricing strategies, and guest preferences. Educated owners are more likely to support your decisions and invest in improvements.



Adapt to Feedback: Be open to owner suggestions and adjust your approach as needed. Collaborative decision-making builds trust and fosters stronger relationships.



Show Appreciation and Build Community: Owners-only events help them feel valued while fostering a sense of kinship between them. This isn't always possible due to owners living far away, but just being invited shows your appreciation.







Scaling Owner Relations: A Blueprint for Growth

As STR businesses grow, so do the complexities of owner relationships. While managing 50 units might facilitate personalized interactions, scaling to 300 or more requires a shift toward systems and processes that maintain the same level of attention and care. Achieving this balance is critical to sustainable growth and long-term success.

Here's a closer look at the challenges of scaling owner relations, how to build a scalable framework, and the role of technology and automation in maintaining consistency.

Challenges in Scaling Owner Relations

Scaling from 50 to 300+ units brings unique challenges:

-  **Less Personalization:** Personalized service can be tricky to scale up. Owners may perceive a service decline if communication becomes less frequent or generic.
-  **Increased Workload:** More properties mean more reports, updates, and communications to manage. Without efficient systems, this increased workload can overwhelm your team, leading to delays and mistakes.
-  **Diverse Owner Needs:** As the portfolio grows, so does the diversity of owner types—from hands-on investors to absentee second-homeowners. Tailoring services to meet their varying expectations becomes more complex.
-  **Maintaining Consistency:** Ensuring the same high standard of service across hundreds of owners is a challenge. Small lapses in communication or service can erode trust and satisfaction.

Without a strategic approach, these challenges can strain owner relations and inhibit growth.

Building a Scalable Framework for Owner Success

To manage growth effectively, STR businesses need a framework that supports owner success at scale. This involves:



Standardizing Processes: Establish consistent workflows for onboarding, reporting, and communication. A standardized approach ensures every owner receives the same high-quality service, regardless of portfolio size.



Segmentation: As noted earlier, however, you should categorize owners based on their needs and preferences. Segmenting allows you to tailor interactions without overburdening your team.



Dedicated Owner Teams: As your portfolio grows, consider creating specialized teams to handle owner relations. For instance, a Client Success team can focus on retention and satisfaction, while an Operations team ensures smooth day-to-day management.



Proactive Communication: Regular updates on market trends, property performance, and upcoming changes show owners you're actively managing their investments.

A scalable framework ensures that as your business grows, your owner relations remain strong and effective.

Technology and Automation: The Key to Consistency

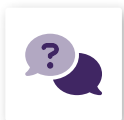
Scaling owner relations is nearly impossible without technology and automation. These tools allow STR businesses to manage growth while maintaining personalized service.



Owner Portals: A centralized owner hub reduces the need for manual communication and empowers owners with on-demand information.



Automated Reporting: Use automation to generate and distribute reports, such as occupancy rates, revenue summaries, and maintenance updates. It saves time and ensures consistent delivery.



Communication Tools: Automated emails, notifications, and reminders help keep owners informed about key milestones, from upcoming bookings to completed maintenance tasks.



Task Management Software: Streamline operations with tools that track maintenance requests, housekeeping schedules, and guest communications. This ensures nothing falls through the cracks as your portfolio expands.



CRM Systems: Customer relationship management tools can track owner interactions, preferences, and history. This data helps your team maintain a personalized touch at scale.



Key Takeaways and Next Steps

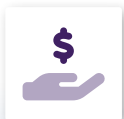
In the dynamic STR industry, delighting property owners isn't just a nice-to-have—it's essential for building trust, enhancing retention, and driving long-term success. As the foundation of your business, owners rely on you to protect their investments, maximize returns, and deliver exceptional service. Here's a recap of the key strategies for delighting owners, along with suggestions to foster continued innovation and engagement.

Key Strategies for Delighting Owners

Strong owner relationships are an outgrowth of trust and understanding and meeting their unique needs. The key strategies we've discussed to do this are:



Address Owner Needs: This is what we call “be brilliant in the basics.” Maslow’s hierarchy of needs gives us a useful analog for separating foundational needs from higher ones.



Protecting Investments: High standards for maintenance, housekeeping, and property security demonstrate your commitment to safeguarding owner assets. Proactively addressing issues and using technology to streamline these processes reassures owners that their properties are in excellent hands.



Communication and Education: Transparent and open communication is the thread that runs through all these strategies. Tools like owner portals keep them informed and confident in your management. Tailored communication ensures they receive the right level of detail without feeling overwhelmed.



Maximizing ROI: Owners want to see concrete results. Regular updates on key metrics like occupancy rates, forecasted revenue, and market benchmarks are a must. Paired with revenue-optimization strategies such as dynamic pricing and policy tweaks highlight your value and expertise.



Building Processes That Can Scale: We've all seen businesses become victims of their own success when service slips. Technology and automation make it easier than ever to deliver personalized owner communication and engagement that can scale with you.

By combining these strategies with a deep understanding of your owners' goals, you'll foster loyalty and long-term partnerships that benefit all parties.

The journey doesn't stop here. For those eager to refine their approach to owner relations, we invite you to explore [additional Track resources](#) and join us for future [webinars](#) on this topic. We'll help you delve deeper into best practices, technology trends, and strategies for driving growth while delighting owners.

Let's [continue the conversation](#) and work together to shape the future of the STR industry—because when owners succeed, we all succeed. Together, we'll help you discover the innovations, best practices, and technology that will help you level up.