



Living made easy
CHANGING THE GAME
IN MULTI-RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY
MANAGEMENT



VERTICA

RESIDENT SERVICES

GWL Realty Advisors Launches Resident Services Division *by Randy Threndyle*



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Vertica Resident Services, a new multi-residential property management company launched in January 2007, has a vision, “*Living made easy*” for its customers.

While Vertica is based on a property management business model, the company intends to change the game by focusing on resident services rather than simply being a custodian for its property owners. The company’s goal is to provide residents with a superior living experience that will help make their lives more convenient and comfortable.

A wholly-owned subsidiary of GWL Realty Advisors, Vertica is currently managing 3,270 suites located in Toronto, Brampton, Burlington and Oakville.

Evan Kirsh, GWL Realty Advisors’ Senior Vice-President, Multi-Residential says the company made the decision to enter into the multi-residential property management business as it recognized an opportunity to reshape the residential property management industry in Canada by being more customer-centric. “Vertica has allowed us to get closer to our customers, so that we can better control service delivery and the overall customer experience,” says Kirsh. “We launched Vertica Resident Services because we felt we could be industry leaders by delivering superior service to our residents and enhance returns to our investors by being customer-centric and through key pillars like staff professionalism and technology.”

These pillars, which allow Vertica to differentiate itself from other multi-residential property managers, include:

1. **People and Training** - champions of *Living made easy*;
2. **Leveraging Technology** - to enhance the customer experience; and
3. **Customer-centric Approach** - to ensure the customer is always the central focus.

People and Training

Wayne Tuck, Vice-President, Multi-Residential Property Management for Vertica Resident Services, says “Our focus is on the resident experience. We really don’t see Vertica as property management, but rather resident services. Our goal is to provide superior service to help make living easy, convenient and comfortable for our residents. And achieving this goal would not be possible without our staff.”

Leveraging Technology

The company is applying an added level of sophistication to traditional operations to enhance the customer experience and realize better returns for investors. By leveraging technology, Vertica aims to improve service levels and save time for residents and staff. One example is the soon-to-be launched online resident portal to make online maintenance requests. Residents can access the portal anytime with the click of a mouse, from the comfort of their home, or the convenience of their office.

This online tool will allow Vertica staff to better service the residents through improved communication and the efficient use of technology. Once an in-suite maintenance request is completed, the resident is immediately advised via e-mail and provided with an online survey which allows for instant feedback on how the service request was carried out. “Not only does this make the entire process more convenient for our residents, but if we find there are any gaps along the way, we can address them right away,” says Tuck. “Plus, as part of our ongoing efforts to

“Our customer events are an excellent opportunity for us to meet our residents”

In order to help create positive word of mouth advertising and further build customer loyalty, Vertica has organized customer events like concerts, summer barbeques and charity drives. These events allow staff to meet residents face-to-face in an informal setting and allow residents to become part of the Vertica community.

Concerts in the Courtyard, co-sponsored with GWL Realty Advisors at Commerce Court in Toronto, were held in July and August and were open to all residents, along with their families and friends. In addition to the concerts, Vertica hosted a barbeque at each of the buildings that it manages. Earlier in the year, all Vertica buildings and customers participated in the Annual Spring HOPE (Housing Owner & People Everywhere) Food Drive. The company is hoping to sponsor another initiative to coincide with the December holiday season.

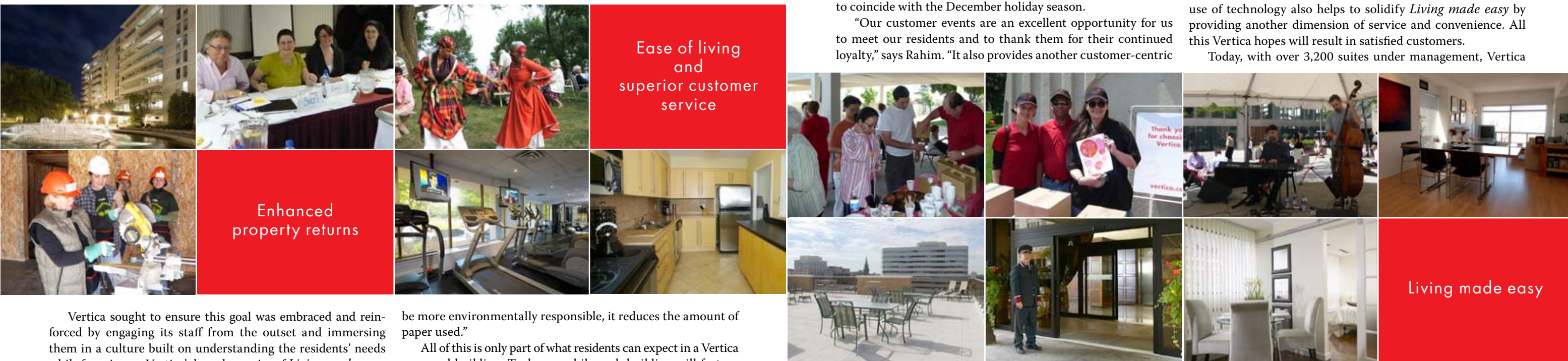
“Our customer events are an excellent opportunity for us to meet our residents and to thank them for their continued loyalty,” says Rahim. “It also provides another customer-centric

“In May, we sent out a letter to all our customers thanking them for participating in the annual JD Power survey,” says Rahim. “In the letter, we reported our successes and areas that needed improvement. We also included our action plan and timing to make those improvements. This goes right to the heart of being customer-centric and working towards *Living made easy*.”

The Vertica Experience

Focusing on the customer experience by being customer-centric is the basis of Vertica’s goal of *Living made easy*. This includes Vertica’s commitment to its people and providing them with the right tools and training to achieve alignment with the brand experience and the brand promise. For customers this means convenience, comfort and superior service. The effective use of technology also helps to solidify *Living made easy* by providing another dimension of service and convenience. All this Vertica hopes will result in satisfied customers.

Today, with over 3,200 suites under management, Vertica



Vertica sought to ensure this goal was embraced and reinforced by engaging its staff from the outset and immersing them in a culture built on understanding the residents’ needs while focusing on Vertica’s brand promise of *Living made easy*. In addition, a dedicated Customer Experience Manager was put in place to represent the voice of the customer and plan for any process or staff improvements to increase overall customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Other examples of staff training include:

- **Everyday coaching** that takes place between the company’s property managers and the rest of the staff;
- **Specialized training courses** for Leasing Consultants with top hospitality industry experts on a benefits-driven sales approach; and
- **Future hands-on training** on new technology designed to ensure that each member of the Vertica team has the tools and skill sets required to deliver on the commitment to service.

be more environmentally responsible, it reduces the amount of paper used.”

All of this is only part of what residents can expect in a Vertica managed building. Tuck says while each building will feature services and amenities geared toward resident needs, the company intends to concentrate on maintaining a high level of service for even routine day-to-day tasks.

Customer-centric Approach

To maintain Vertica’s focus on customers, the company has recently launched a number of exciting initiatives to ensure the customer always remains front and center. Amin Rahim, Director, Marketing and Leasing for Vertica Resident Services says “The biggest challenge for Vertica is ensuring the connection between the brand promise of *Living made easy* and the actual brand experience for customers at their property. That is why we are committed to our people and to training. Ultimately, we would like to create positive word of mouth so people will want to live in a Vertica managed building.

touchpoint where Vertica employees get the chance to interact and build rapport with customers. For residents, it offers the opportunity to meet their neighbours and others living within the community.”

To further integrate staff into the community and aid in building a socially responsible organization, Vertica staff participated in GWL Realty Advisors’ Build Days, supporting Habitat for Humanity. In May, these staff worked with Habitat to build an energy-efficient green home that was being constructed to Energy Star specifications.

Besides being active at the buildings, Vertica is also proactive by initiating in-house surveys and participating in the annual JD Power Resident Survey. Results are used to obtain insights and take action, as required, to strive to ensure the brand promise and customer experience are aligned.

believes there is plenty of opportunity for future growth by partnering with other institutional and private owners that have similar business objectives to Vertica.

“For our customers, our promise of *Living made easy* means we will continually strive to provide them with the comfort, convenience and service that they expect from Vertica,” says Kirsh. “Life is complicated; home life should be simple. Our brand promise will resonate with residents who appreciate our attention to their specific needs, and the little things we do to help make life easier for them. When our residents are happy, we believe our owners will enjoy better returns through reduced turnover and lower vacancy, resulting in higher rental income and lower operating costs.” **CAM**

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

When GWL Realty Advisors made the decision to launch a new multi-residential property management subsidiary they recognized they wanted a distinct name. Since the goal was to reshape multi-residential property management, GWL Realty Advisors wanted a name that would not only reflect this vision, but be able to effectively communicate it to residents, prospects and future investors through its brand signature.



VERTICA RESIDENT SERVICES

They chose the name Vertica Resident Services for several reasons. “Vertica is a play on the word vertical,” says Amin Rahim, Director, Marketing and Leasing for Vertica Resident Services.

“It represents both the vertical orientation of a building and, more importantly, the notion of aspiring to something higher. It also reinforces the promise of taking rental living to new heights and raising the bar on customer service.”

Choosing the name Vertica Resident Services rather than Vertica Property Management represents an emphasis on a cus-

tomers-centric focus, says Rahim. It is also intended to distinguish Vertica in the marketplace. “*Resident* is a warmer, more personal word than *tenant* and *services* is more customer-oriented than the industry term *property management*.”

The new company is a wholly-owned subsidiary of GWL Realty Advisors. Launched in January 2007, Vertica has 3,270 units under management. Vertica hopes to expand its business over the next few years in collaboration with institutional and private owners with similar business objectives.

WHAT VERTICA BRINGS

To Customers:

Ease of living and superior customer service.

To Clients:

Enhanced property returns

To GWL Realty Advisors:

An industry leading multi-residential property management company

Living made easy
vertica.ca