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Aspen National Collections

Buzz Waloch: [Buzz@AspenNational.com](mailto:Buzz@AspenNational.com);

(888) 855-5333, (760) 840-9678

David Combs: [DCombs@AspenNational.com](mailto:DCombs@AspenNational.com);

(800) 283-2797 Ext 6209, (970) 250-5692

**Tips for Better Portfolio Management**

**From Aspen National Collections**

**Bulletin #1**

Collection professionals Buzz Waloch and David Combs of Aspen National Collections, the timeshare/shared ownership industry’s premier collection agency, have offered to share advice and tips to help timeshare resort operators protect their portfolio of installment receivables and/or annual maintenance fees.

***Question***: What would you say are the most common mistakes resort operators tend to make when managing receivables?

***Waloch***: I’d say there is a temptation to make too many exceptions to their owners’ payment schedules. David and I recommend settling on a routine policy and documenting it whenever possible in your owner communication pieces.

***Combs***: Yes. We’ve seen resorts present the wording of their collection policy in a variety of ways. Admittedly, there are some resorts which write their policy in a way that sounds almost like a warden listing rules for prisoners. I think there’s a fine line between being firm and sounding dictatorial. So I’d urge resort operators to hold in mind that they are talking about a vacation ownership interest, not a piece of federal legislation.

***Question***: What advice do you commonly provide to resort operators about how to keep their portfolios as healthy as possible over the long-term?

***Combs***: Well, in keeping with what Buzz said earlier about setting a routine collection policy and communicating that to their owners, resort operators will be more successful at this when they are consistent year after year. And don’t be afraid to forewarn owners that there may one day be the need for and examples of why the need for a special assessment, if that is a likely eventuality. Additionally have some “communication vehicle” in place that allows you to contact that delinquent owner who has not used over multiple billing periods.

***Waloch***: I’d add that in addition to maintaining a consistent billing and collections policy and communicating that to their owners, resorts need to be communicating regularly with owners. Make them aware of the postcard companies. Give them the name and phone number of a knowledgeable person at your property they can call if they have concerns or questions. And, like David said, let them know of any special assessment or maintenance fee increases as early as possible to avoid anger and surprise when they receive their maintenance fee invoice.

***Question***: When is the ideal time to bring in a third party collection agency, such as Aspen National Collections, to recover delinquent maintenance fee amounts?

Waloch: We have seen the best results from resorts that send over their accounts that are in default no later than 180 days past-due. It’s particularly important to get owners to pay early enough before they may wish to book their vacation and certainly prior to receiving the next bill.

***Combs***: We like to see accounts after the resort has made what can be termed “customer service attempts/contacts”, without success. These contacts allows for the elimination of any customer service issue the owner may have experienced during their previous stay at the resort. In some instances an owner may withhold payments simply because of a negative occurrence they believe was not addressed during their stay. By withholding payment they believe it will get the attention of resort personnel. Also these “contacts/attempts” can be used to reiterate the collection policy, thus if the owner continues to fail to pay, the call from the third party agency is not a “surprise”. At that point, having a collection agency call underlines the serious nature of the debt. If we receive the account early enough, we can often retain an owner who is trying to walk away from their obligation. We can suggest ways to rent or exchange their week, which they may not have considered.

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Subscribe to our series of bulletins to tap into Buzz and David’s 20-plus-year knowledge about the management of timeshare resort loan and maintenance receivables by visiting the website [AspenNational.com](http://aspennational.com/collections/).

**About Aspen National Collections**

Aspen National Collections is a national agency with specialized expertise in consumer debt collections for companies involved in timeshare or vacation ownership resorts. Professional collectors are carefully trained in reminding owners/members of the value of their vacation purchase. They are skilled at performing their work in a firm, assertive manner, while adhering to Aspen National’s commitment to high ethical standards. Aspen customizes collection programs to fit the resort’s needs and prides itself on working every account to the fullest. For more information, contact Buzz Waloch at 1-888-855-5333, (760) 840-9678, [buzz@aspennational.com](mailto:buzz@aspennational.com) or David Combs at 1-800-283-2797, 1-970-434-9810, [dcombs@aspennational.com](mailto:dcombs@aspennational.com). Visit [AspenNational.com](http://aspennational.com/collections/) for more information or to subscribe to the series, “Aspen Tips for Better Portfolio Management.”