

93!
77 Ways To Fill
Your Vacancies
FAST

By
David Lindahl

www.real-estate-fortune.com

Visit my website at www.real-estate-fortune.com, or
call 781-878-7114 for a list of all my real estate investment information.
© MMVIII, RE Mentor, Inc. and David Lindahl.

Empty rentals mean empty bank accounts. There is no greater pain a landlord can endure than a vacant apartment. In order to stay in business, it's important that all vacancies get filled as fast as possible.

Filling apartments does not come naturally; it is a learned skill. Many landlords, when faced with a vacancy, have a finely tuned, Three-Step System that they can implement at a moment's notice:

Step 1: Put ad in local paper;

Step 2: Put hands together;

Step 3: Start praying.

I guess you can't blame them; that's what they see all the other landlords doing.

Though using classified ads can be an effective method of renting apartments, it's not the most effective, and it's certainly not the only technique you should employ. There are many other ways to find prospects to rent your unit.

When you do have a vacancy, you should be doing what I call "shotgun marketing". You want to blast the market with many different forms of marketing to get that vacancy filled. Using only one method increases the risk that you will go a month or more—sometimes way more—without a new tenant.

Because tenant turnover is a landlord's biggest expense, the most effective method of keeping your cash flow flowing is to treat your current residents with the respect and dignity that you expect to be treated. Always do your maintenance calls promptly. Do this and you will have long-term happy tenants, with minimal interruptions to your cash flow.

The following is a list marketing tools that you can use to fill your vacancy fast. Choose several of the tools and get them out into your marketplace working to get you a new, qualified tenant.

1. Become a member of your local landlord association. Network with the members, and let them know that you have a vacancy.
2. Ask local restaurants to allow you to put a "take one" box at their counter. If someone rents from you, you will buy a gift certificate from the restaurant and give it to someone who has never been to their restaurant.
3. Contact your local high school, and run ads in their sports programs. These ads are usually inexpensive and hit your target market.
4. Create a handout that lists all of the features and benefits of the rental. Be sure to list any extras such as kitchen appliances and garbage disposals. Also provide as much information as you can about the community and local services, bus schedules, closest schools, laundromats, shopping, etc. You are providing a service that not many other landlords will take the time to do. Therefore you are separating yourself from the pack. Give the handout to the prospects to hold and review.
5. Classified Ads – use descriptive phrases that play on the prospective tenant's imagination. (Visit: <http://www.real-estate-fortune.com/mtkit.html> for my course that has all the ads pre-done and tested.)
6. Ask for testimonials from current and past tenants. Give these testimonials to prospects to show how professional you are, and how much your current and past tenants enjoyed renting from you. No one else does this! You will separate yourself from the rest.
7. Use aromatherapy. Light some candles or bake some cookies so the place smells good!
8. Go to the human resources department of any large company in your area and post a for rent notice.
9. Go to the police station and give a discount to a police officer. Tell him he can park his cruiser out front. This will give your other tenants a greater sense of security.

Visit my website at www.real-estate-fortune.com, or
call 781-878-7114 for a list of all my real estate investment information.

© MMVIII, RE Mentor, Inc. and David Lindahl.

10. Put a sign on your rental property. If you can, put one in the window of the vacant unit. That makes it impossible for the sign to disappear, the way lawn signs sometimes do.
11. Put signs on the streets leading to your rental property. (Visit: <http://www.real-estate-fortune.com/mktkit.html> for my course that includes signs that have worked like gangbusters for me.)
12. Become a member of various community organizations. Offer the members housing in your units. If possible, obtain the club mailing list and mail them a postcard telling them of your vacancy.
13. Give your prospective tenants the most attractive directions to your rental. Have them come from the "good" side of town instead of the "bad" side of town.
14. Write to your current tenants. Let them know about the vacancy, and give them a bonus (perhaps \$50.00) if they refer a tenant that you rent to.
15. Hold an open house. Advertise in the paper, direct traffic from busy intersections with signs, and put balloons on signs to attract attention.
16. Place notices on local church bulletin boards.
17. Send flyers to neighbors. Call it the "Choose Your Neighbor" campaign. Have them refer a friend, co-worker or family member.
18. Go to your local Housing Authority and advertise in their rental book.
19. Stand outside or have someone stand outside the Housing Authority and hand out a flyer of your rentals.
20. Offer the existing tenant a bonus if they find you a tenant before they move out.
21. Create "curb appeal". Have nice mailboxes, house numbers, and exterior lighting that match. Preferably all gold or black. Gold is better.

Visit my website at www.real-estate-fortune.com, or
call 781-878-7114 for a list of all my real estate investment information.

© MMVIII, RE Mentor, Inc. and David Lindahl.

22. Wash down the front of the building. Make sure that all windows are clean.
23. Place index card flyers in local laundromats, supermarkets, libraries, and pizza shops. (Visit <http://www.real-estate-fortune.com/mktkit.html> and learn about my course that includes the actual flyers I've perfected over the years.)
24. Cut grass and trim all hedges and shrubs.
25. When talking to a prospective renter on the phone, be sure to sound positive and upbeat. They are deciding whether or not they want to rent from you, as well as rent your property.
26. Offer a free gift to anyone who rents the apartment. Don't tell them what it is until they view the apartment. The gift could be a free pizza, free use of a microwave oven...Be creative and make it something that has perceived value.
27. Make sure that someone answers your phone, or at least return your calls promptly. A renter will go to the next place on the list if they can't get hold of you in a timely manner.
28. Wear a T-shirt at a causal social function that says, "I rent houses/apartments".
29. Wear a button that states: "I rent houses/apartments".
30. Always assume that anyone that views your unit is going to rent from you. This is called the "assumed close". This positive assumption will get you more tenants.
31. When you are finished showing your rental, ask the client: "How would you like to put down your deposit—cash or money order?"
32. Always call the prospect and confirm the appointment on the morning of the showing. This will remind them, and also save you any wasted trips if they do not plan on coming.

33. Put flowers out front of the rental. If it is winter, put plastic flowers out. This adds to the curb appeal.
34. Create door hangers that advertise the features and benefits of your rental. Hang them on all of the neighbors' doors that are close to your rental. (You can create your own, or you can visit: <http://www.real-estate-fortune.com/mktkit.html> and learn about my course that includes specific door hanger text that works.)
35. Hang door hangers on rentals that are similar to yours. For instance, if you have a 12-unit building and there is another 12-unit building in another section of the town. Go over and put your door hangers on their doors. People sometimes move just for a change.
36. Create a postcard with the features and benefits of your rentals, and send them to tenants of similar properties.
37. Use a recorded message describing the features and benefits of your rental. Put this phone number on all of your advertising. This will allow you to weed out the "tire kickers" and only deal with the serious prospects.
38. Use an eye-catching headline in your classified ad to grab attention. Use one of the strongest benefits of living in the building. For example: "Next To Bus Stop...Free Rent...Better Than Owning...." (In my course at <http://www.real-estate-fortune.com/mktkit.html> I talk a lot about exactly how to construct world-class headlines that suck people into your ad.)
39. Become a guest on a local real estate radio program. Mention that you are a landlord with rentals.
40. Give each of your rentals a made-up name that adds perceived value to the property. This gives the property a cozy, resort type of feel. Base the name on the floor plan, or some unique characteristic about the rental.

41. Show the unit to as many prospects as you can at any one time. This creates competition and sense of urgency.
42. Remove any eyesores from the exterior of the building...trash, junk cars, etc.
43. Add attractive window treatments. Use blinds instead of shades. For about the same amount of money, you increase the perceived value.
44. Add a note on your business card that you "buy and rent houses/apartments". Hand out at least 10 per day. (See end of report.)
45. List your rental in the local apartment guide.
46. Ask local merchants to post your rental flyer. Offer to buy a gift certificate from the merchant and give to any referral that actually becomes a tenant.
47. Place a friendly welcome mat at the entrance of your rental.
48. Ask all of your tenants what they like best about the rental, and use these responses for your advertising.
49. Always point out the features and benefits of your rental while showing it. Even if they seem obvious. People will overlook even the most obvious detail.
50. Contact your sphere of influence—people you know who are leaders of certain community groups. Let them know about your rental. These are the movers and the shakers, and they come into contact with an unusually large number of people.
51. Pass out flyers at construction work sites. (I have actual, proven examples of great flyers in my course at:
<http://www.real-estate-fortune.com/mkkit.html>)
52. Ask anyone who viewed your unit what they didn't like about it, and then if possible, make adjustments.

53. Ask all prospective tenants how they found out about the rental, and keep doing what works.
54. Clean, clean, clean. Especially kitchens and baths. Nobody wants to rent someone else's dirt. The unit should have that just-cleaned smell. If it was cleaned a week ago and it still looks great but doesn't smell clean...use a sponge and spread some Pine Sol around.
55. When showing the unit, be pleasant and polite. They are buying you just as much as they are buying the empty unit.
56. Open all shades/blinds, and turn on all lights, to make the unit as bright as possible when showing. This will give the illusion of spaciousness, cleanliness and cheerfulness.
57. In a small unit, place mirrors in the living room to give the illusion of bigger space.
58. Review the applications of other people that are renting from you. See if there are any commonalities. For instance, where they lived before they came to you, where they are working...Direct your marketing to these areas.
59. Only show your units when cleaned and all repairs are completed.
60. Create a fact sheet that details the average costs associated with your rental, and how these costs compare with other rentals in the area. Of course, only put down the favorable numbers.
61. Be a guest speaker at a college real estate class. Make your topic relevant in some way to apartments. Let the class know of any available units you have.
62. Do a rent survey. Send it out to all of the owners in your area, and tell them you will share the results with them. This will tell you if your property is priced right.

63. Offer a bonus to anyone who is doing work on the rental. Let them know that if they refer someone who becomes a tenant, you will give them a \$50.00 bonus.
64. Offer a Guarantee. Tell any prospective tenant that you offer a 30-Day Satisfaction Guarantee. If after staying 30 days, they are not completely satisfied with the rental, you will let them out of their lease and give them back their security deposit.
65. Consider renting to two or three unrelated people in the same unit. This will increase your cash flow and you can usually get referrals from local agencies such as the Veterans Administration. Be forewarned—this arrangement is management-intensive.
66. When you find a prospect that qualifies, award them the apartment as soon as possible. Any delays may have the prospect finding another apartment.
67. Be sure to put your phone number in all of your advertisements and make sure that it stands out. It should be easy to read. Next to the headline of your ad, it should be the second-most-noticeable item on the ad.
68. Put the street address in your ads. Let prospects drive by and then call. This will save you time and weed out the “tire kickers”.
69. Advertise with a banner on the property that offers a discount on the first month's rent. It could say: “Now Renting – Discount Off 1st Month's Rent”.
70. When speaking to a prospect, you want to build as much rapport as possible. To do this, find things that you may have in common. Talk about those things, and use the prospect's name as often as possible.
71. Keep your current tenants happy. They will refer other good tenants to you.
72. Sometimes local periodicals offer free advertising. Find one that does, and run an ad continuously.

73. Consider furnishing your rental. Furnished rentals tend to rent faster. You can pick up furniture cheap from the Salvation Army or from items left behind from other tenants.
74. Join the local Tenants Association. People come to these meetings to find out about other rentals that are available.
75. Follow up with anyone who has seen your unit. See if they have found a rental yet. If not, perhaps they will reconsider yours. Find out why they didn't rent in the first place.
76. Put a "Take One" box below the "For Rent" sign on the property. List all of the features and benefits that the rental offers.
77. Use a "For Rent" sign like the ones that real estate agents use to sell houses. Attach riders to the signs that point out the benefits the property has to offer.
78. Some tenants want to get out of the lease early. Tell them that you will allow it, as long as they find you a tenant to take their place.
79. Have a yard sale with any items that previous tenants may have left behind, and ask some friends if they want to participate. Have the yard sale on the yard of the rental. Let all who stop know that there is a rental available, and be prepared to show it.
80. Ask other landlords in your area or outside of your area what successful techniques that they use to fill their rentals and share some of your good tips. Always be networking.
81. Pose as a prospective tenant, and visit other rentals. See what other methods landlords use to rent their properties. Use the good, and disregard the bad.
82. Start showing the rental prior to the current tenant moving out. Make sure that this provision is in your lease. Make it as convenient as possible for the current tenant; otherwise they may not have nice things to say about you to the new prospects.

83. If you are working in the rental, put an open-house sign out front and be prepared to show it to any “walk-ins”.
84. Put a three-legged easel in one of the rooms that says “Move In Special”, and write below it an incentive gift that you will give to the next occupant of the unit. Could be a gift certificate to a nice area restaurant or something else with a high perceived value, but that doesn't have to cost much.
85. Remind your tenants every chance you get that you are looking for referrals.
86. When showing the rental, don't focus on any negatives. Always focus on the positive. Don't make any excuses. If a tenant notices a negative such as “Oh, this bedroom is small”, simply agree and go on. Do not try to persuade them to think differently. If you do, they will not trust you and will not rent from you.
87. In high-end rentals, you may want to offer additional services at additional cost. These could be a business center, maid service, dry cleaning pick up, etc.
88. On your application, you may want to put in bold print “Our Residents Are Our Biggest Asset” to show how much you care.
89. Advertise in local companies' newsletters. Offer a discount of the first month's rent to any of their employees.
90. Each time you send out a rental invoice, include a description and address of the vacant units that you have, and remind them of the \$50.00 bonus for referring a tenant.
91. Give your service people your flyers and ask them to hand them out. Have them put their name on them so that you can give them a bonus when a tenant comes in from their flyer.
92. Look at other classified ads. Find the ones that attract you and use them as a template for your ads.

93. Always acknowledge anyone who has sent over a prospective tenant, whether you rent to them or not. Either call the person, or send them a nice note. This will reinforce them to send more.

I bet you have a few reactions to the methods I just listed:

1. "How can anyone hope to do all these techniques! There are not enough hours in the day!"
2. "Yeah, right. Some of these are just not practical—things don't work that way."
3. "I thought you said there were 77 ways, and you gave me over 90. Can't you count?"
4. "Who is this guy, Dave Lindahl, anyway?"
5. "Dave must live on Mars, because he sounds like he's never had lousy tenants. Some of mine are not my "greatest asset"...they're my "greatest pain in the butt"!"

Let me address each point:

1. "How can anyone hope to do all these techniques! There are not enough hours in the day!"

The purpose of my list is not to have you use every technique on every vacancy. The purpose of a professional's toolbox is not to have every tool used on every job. But you need to bring the full toolbox to the job! The problem is most landlords' idea of a toolbox is a single screwdriver (the classified ad). That's all they got in there, and I'm here to tell you that it ain't enough.

Therefore scan the list, and see which items jump out at you as workable for your current circumstance.

2. "Yeah, right. Some of these are just not practical—things don't work that way."

You may think that some of these ideas are not practical. Let's get something straight: Some of the ideas might be not your style, but that's a different issue; the fact is, these ideas all work, because I've used them. If you want

above-average results, you need to think out of the box, and do things that are sometimes out of your comfort zone. Of course, it's up to you. But I can assure you that the techniques all have worked in one situation or another.

3. "I thought you said there were 77 ways, and you gave me over 90. Can't you count?"

I promised 77 ways, and delivered 93. I did that for two reasons: First, because not every technique works in every situation, I wanted to give you even more ways to get that vacancy filled. Second, I wanted to over-deliver.

Surprising people with more than they expected is a great way to separate yourself from 99.5% of the pack. We're constantly being disappointed with bad service, bad products, and people falling short of expectations. If you, as a landlord, can over-deliver to tenants—even in small ways—they will talk you up to their friends, believe me!

4. "Who is this guy, Dave Lindahl, anyway?"

I went from being a broke landscaper, to being able to retire and never work again, in the space of 4 ½ years.

However, it wasn't because it was easy! (You DON'T WANT to see my investment scars.) It's because I compressed a career's worth of investing, and trial, and error, and networking, and so on into a short period.

Someone told a guy named John D. MacDonald that you got good as a writer only after you had written about 10 books. He took that to heart, and in the space of one year, MacDonald wrote 10 books! (He went on to become a best-selling author with 72 books published, by the way.)

That's how I approached real estate investing and landlording: Let's get down the road as quickly as possible with all the trial, all the error, and all the growing pains. I've succeeded, and have since bought 38 apartment complexes. I also found time to invest in or deal with over 520 properties over the same nine-year period!

5. “Dave must live on Mars, because he sounds like he’s never had lousy tenants. Some of mine are not my “greatest asset”...they’re my “greatest pain in the butt”!

Do you think I am living in “Never Never Land” when I talk about treating tenants well, and printing “Our residents are our greatest asset” on rental applications? You think that I’ve only had Cream Puff Tenants?

I have had every possible type of tenant you could imagine: great ones, OK ones, little old ladies, drug users, drug dealers, extended families, gangs, bikers, criminals, cheats...the list goes on.

But rather than lament the state of modern society, I’ve found specific methods of dealing with every kind of tenant. Part of my system is using the long list you have in your hands, to ensure that I have a healthy flow of possible tenants calling me. I’ve found an incredibly important principle:

The more demand I can create for my apartment units,
the more selective I can be in renting only to the best!

So read over my 77 ways (or 93 ways) once again, to embed them in your brain. In fact, make a habit of scanning the list every time you have a vacancy. It only takes a few minutes, and it can be the starting point for you to save untold dollars and hours of your time when filling that next vacancy.

Then create a step-by-step multi-method marketing plan that you are ready to activate as soon as you get your next notice of termination from one of your tenants. Don’t wait until you receive it to begin this planning.

Doing this will put you one step ahead of the process, and will ensure that you fill that vacancy fast!

~~~

P.S. Now you have dozens and dozens of proven techniques for filling your vacancies. Go for it! You want more information, you say? You want to know exactly how to implement these techniques, and exactly what words to say and write?

Turns out I've done all that work for you, too! I have an entire course on in-depth real estate marketing. It's called the "Real Estate Investor's Marketing Tool Kit". I leave nothing to the imagination, but cover every form, every flyer, ad, business card, and technique I've tested and used to avoid having to go out and find properties, but instead to have sellers come to me!

If you want more information on my Real Estate Investor's Marketing Tool Kit, just visit: <http://www.real-estate-fortune.com/mtkit.html>