



Smother Service,
Happier Households:
Maintenance Communication that Works!



hello

Welcome & Introductions

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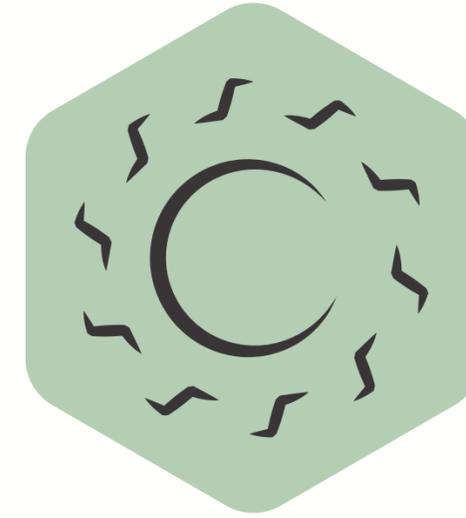


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Who We Are

Cambridge's culture is built around a passion for real estate at its core.

We know that owning or managing a property is more than collecting rent and leasing up units.

To build wealth through real estate over time requires an understanding of how to invest wisely, safeguard assets, and manage debt.

Specializations :

Residential Property Management

Property Repositioning

REO Management

Acquisition and disposition of residential properties

Maintenance / Construction Operations

Liability and Risk Management

Leadership/Management Training



Show of hands – how many of you have had days where you weren't managing maintenance so much as just surviving it?



Those days aren't a personal failure – they're a sign that emergencies are hijacking the system instead of the system running the emergencies. That's the difference between reactive work and proactive work.



A hand holding a paint roller against a white wall. The roller is covered in white paint. A red banner is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Today's Focus

- 01 Communication Overview
- 02 Communication Lifecycle
- 03 Tone, Transparency, & Trust
- 04 Systems Beat Intentions
- 05 Time to Level Up
- 06 Key Takeaways
- 07 Contact



Maintenance is a communication issue first.
The repair is just the final step.





Communication Overview



Emotional moments drive perception

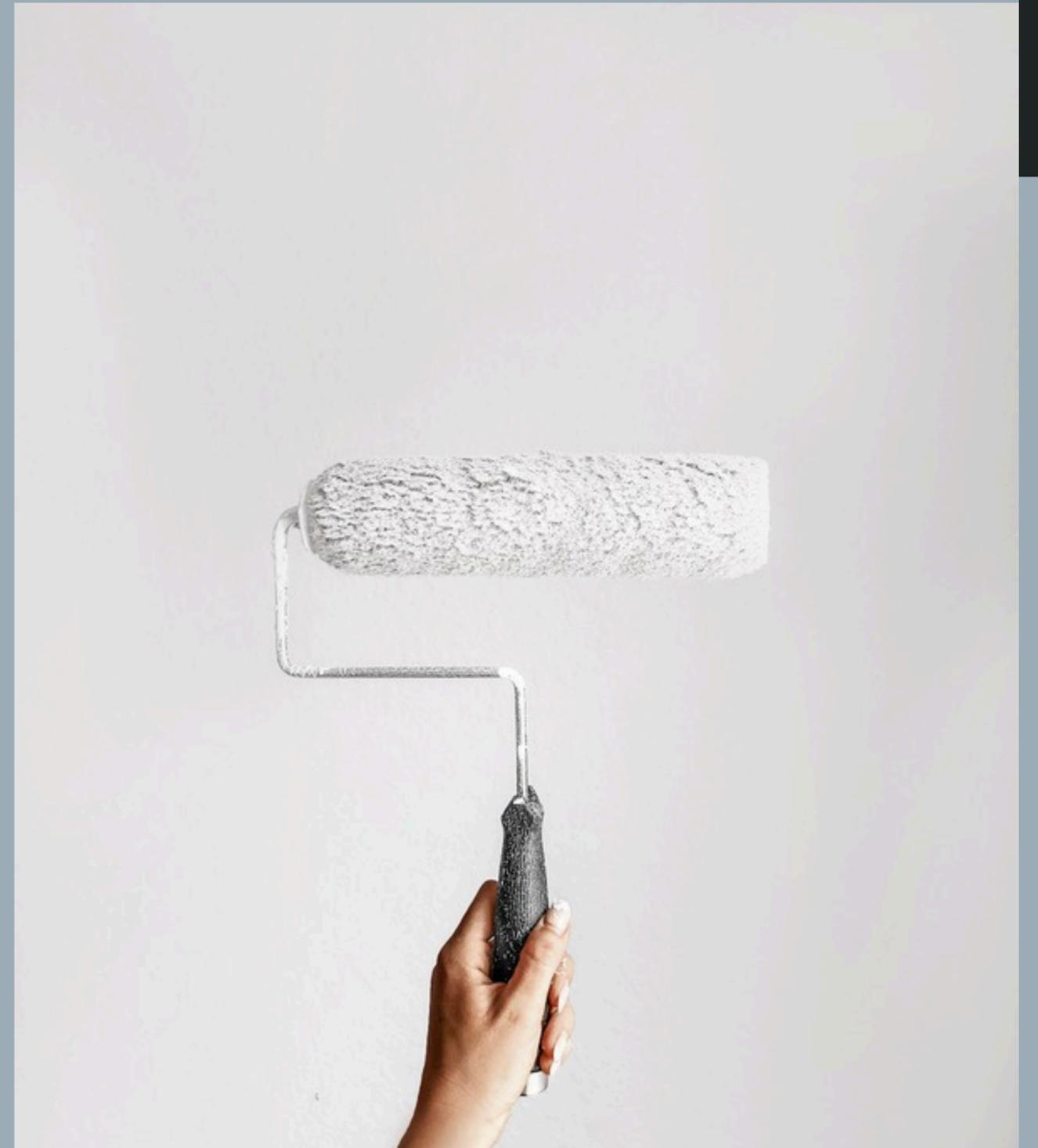


Why does it matter

Top driver of resident satisfaction and renewals

Most complaints come from silence, not repairs

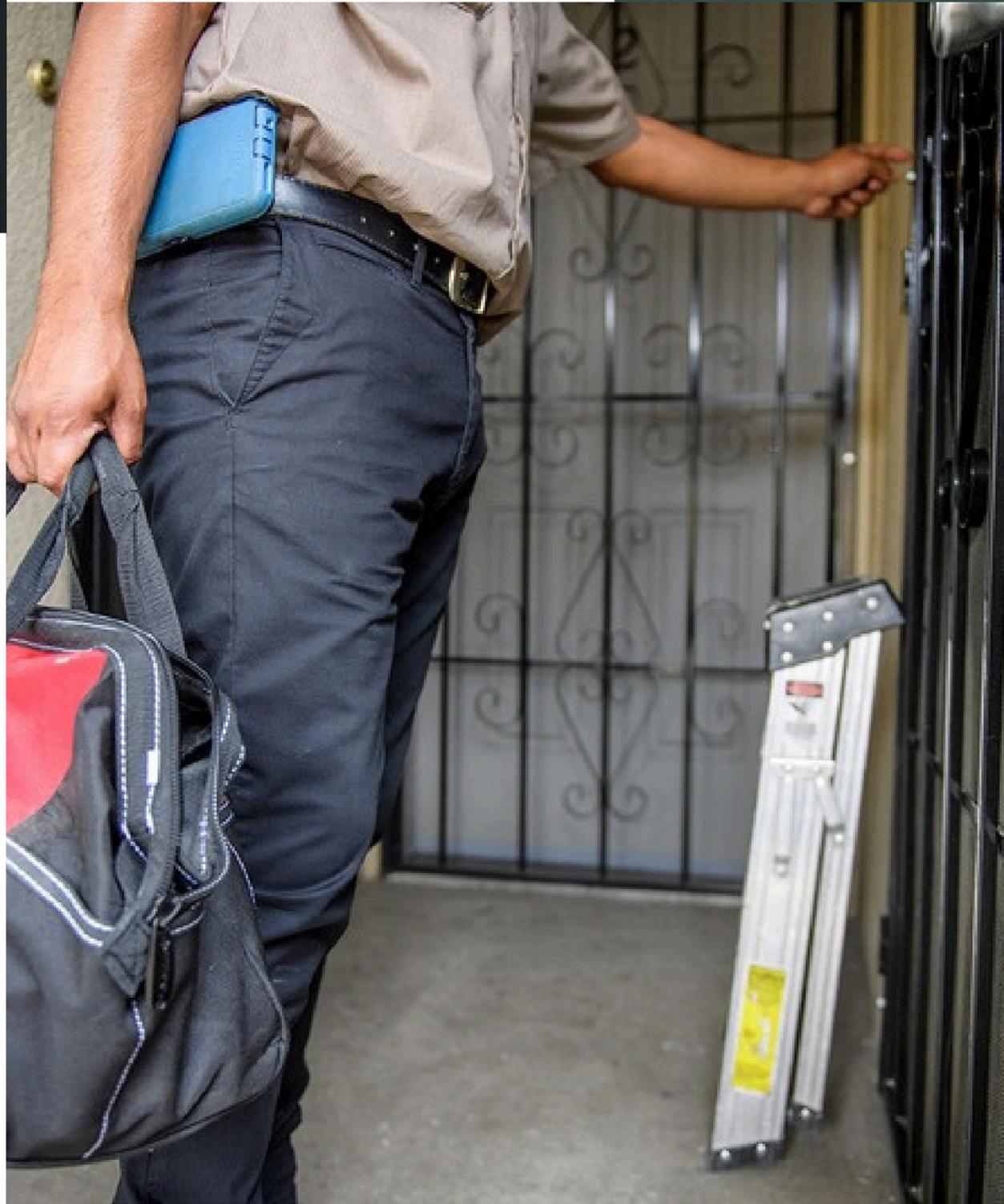
Strong communication reduces stress and legal risk



Maintenance is where trust is built and lost.

Control your narrative.





Communication Lifecycle



Think of maintenance as a relay race. If one handoff fails, the whole thing falls apart.
Even if the repair itself was perfect.



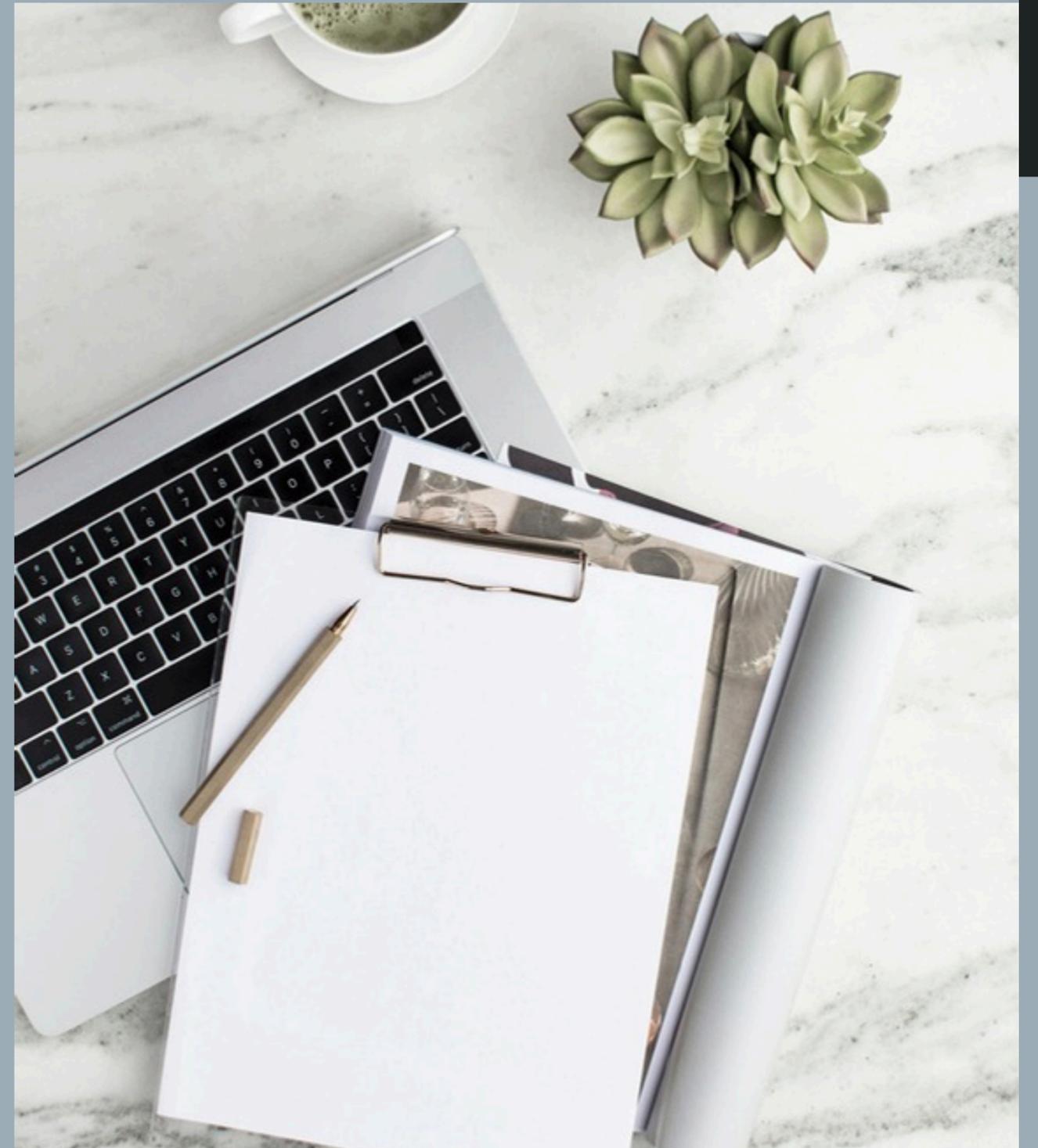
1. Request Received

Make reporting easy and consistent

Limit intake methods

Collect photos and entry permission

Define emergencies clearly



Speed matters more than solutions at this
stage



2. Acknowledge & Set Expectations

Respond quickly

Confirm receipt

Explain next steps

Set update timelines



A delayed repair with clear timelines feels better than a fast repair with no communication.

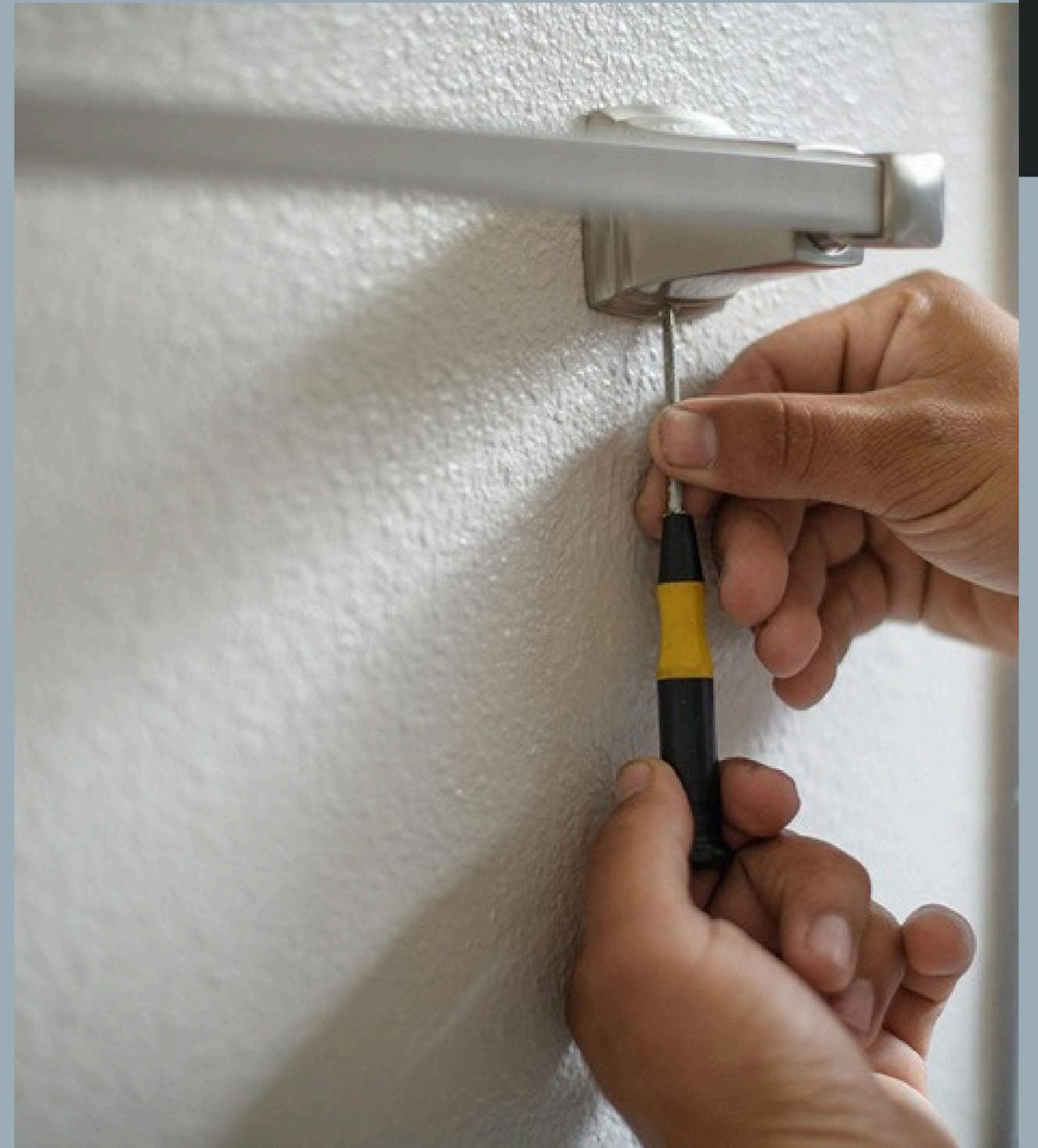


3. Scheduling & Updates

Communicate who, when, and what

Notify residents of delays early

Send reminders and updates



Residents don't care who said it – they care
that it was said.

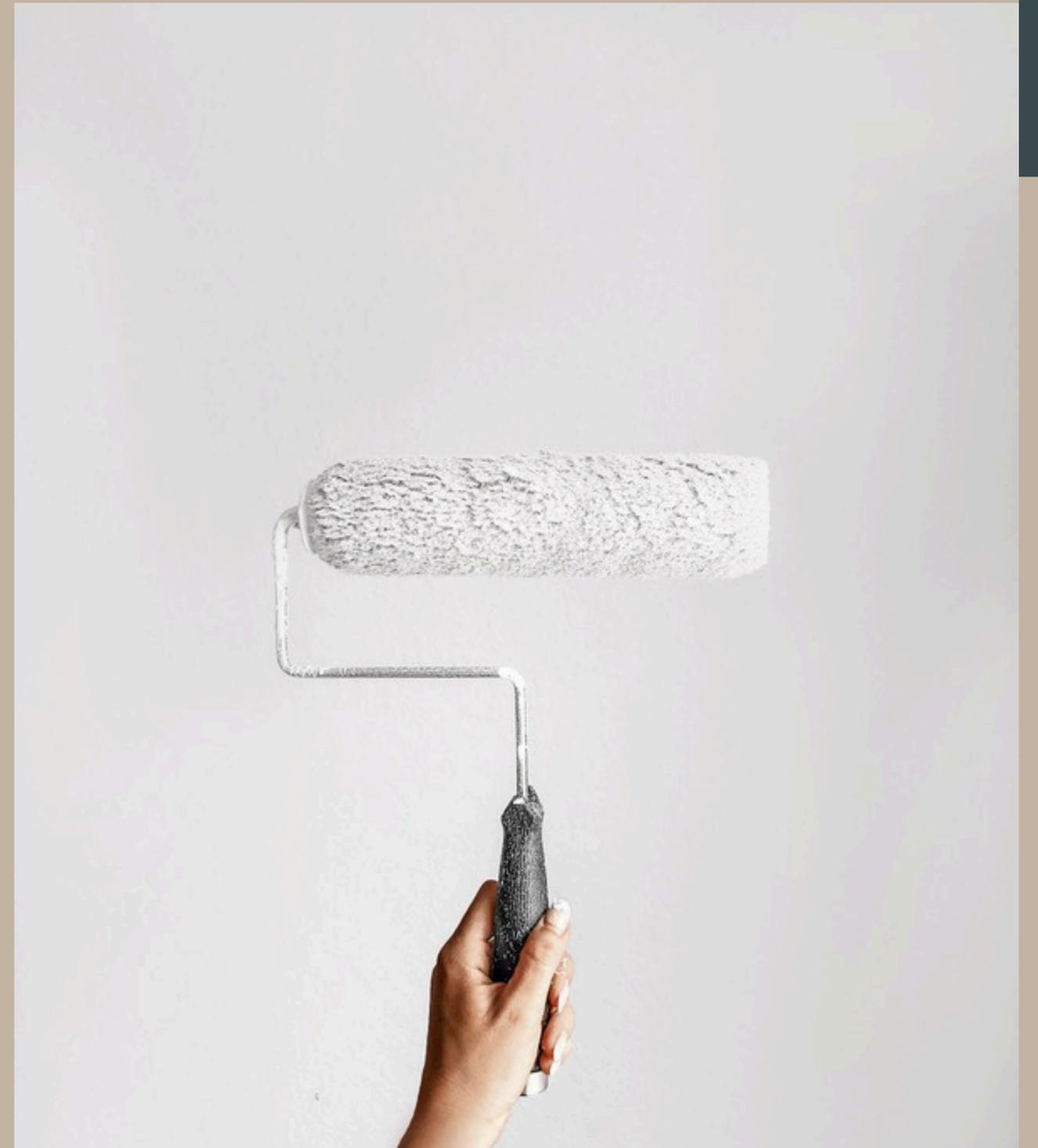


4. Completion Confirmation

Never assume residents know work is done

Always close the loop

Invite feedback



If you don't say it's done, it's not done.



5. Follow up & Documentation

Confirm tenant satisfaction

Document work completed and costs

Track repeat issues

Store photos, invoices, and notes



Everyone should work as if they'll need to explain today's decisions six months from now. Clear notes, photos, and details should tell the full story without anyone having to rely on memory.



When communication breaks down, it's rarely a people problem. It's usually a system that isn't built to hold up under real-world conditions.



Common Communication Breakdowns

No acknowledgment of requests, mixed messages

Best practices

- Acknowledge every request quickly. Use auto-replies if necessary
- Align internal and external messaging. Document what residents were told.

Unclear timelines, or delays

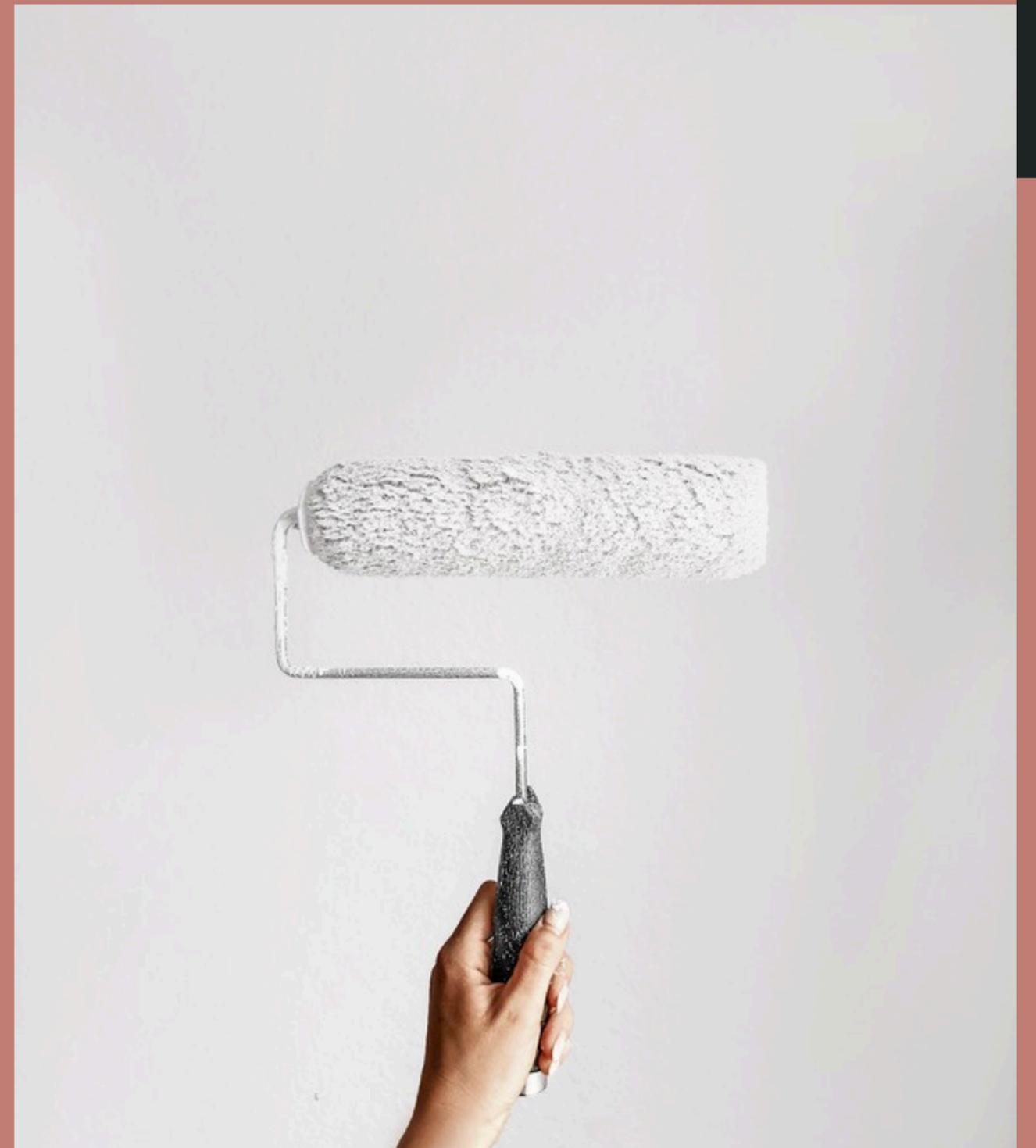
Best practices

- Always share some timeframe
- If unsure, say when the next update will come
- Update before residents ask

No follow-up after repairs, or surprise charges

Best practices

- Always send a completion message. Close the loop every time
- Invite feedback within a defined window
- Pre-communicate possible charges



Less Obvious Breakdowns

The Gap Between “We Know” and “They Know”

Best practices

- *Turn internal explanations into resident-friendly language (control the narrative)*
- *Assume first-time understanding every time*

The Handoff Between People or Vendors (and back again)

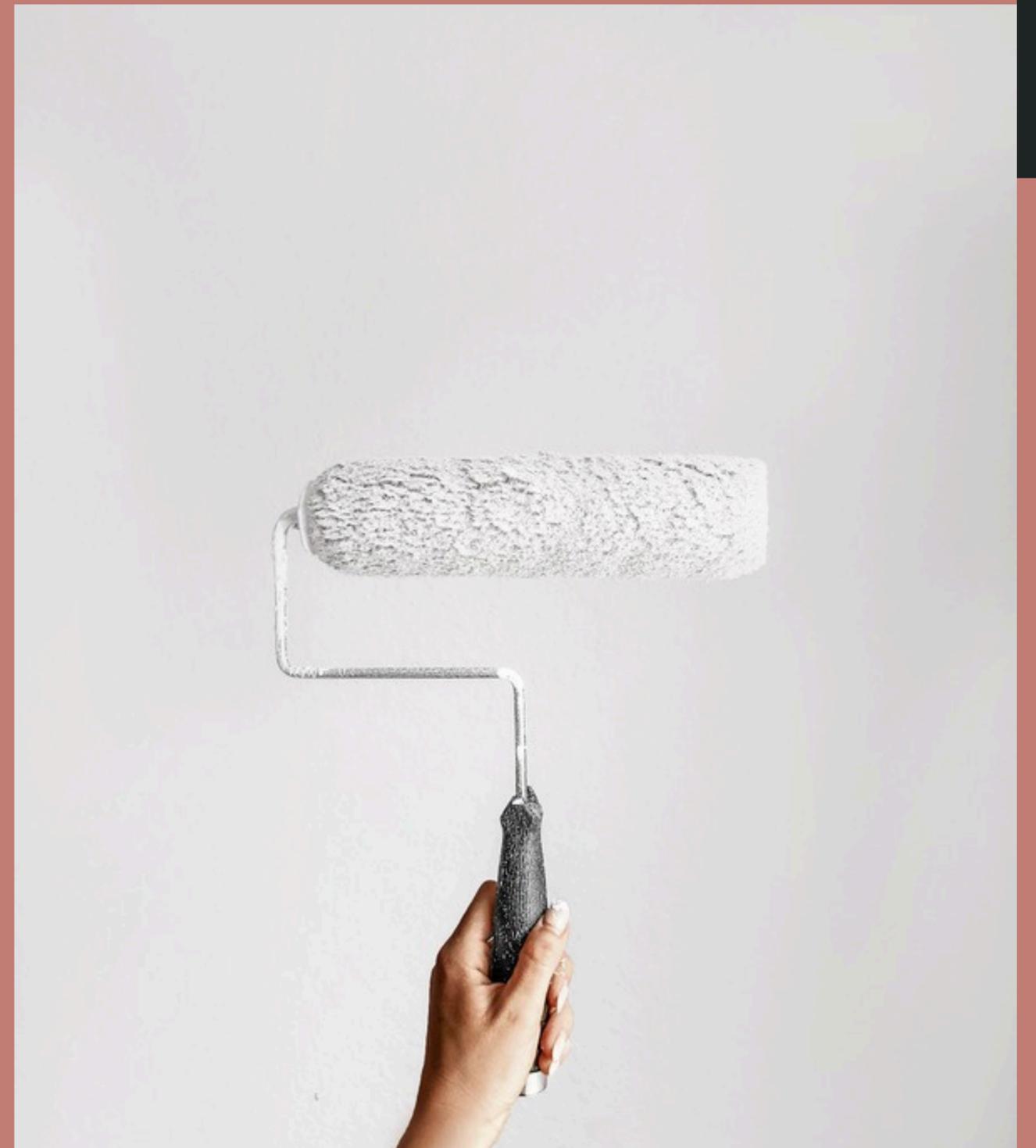
Best practices

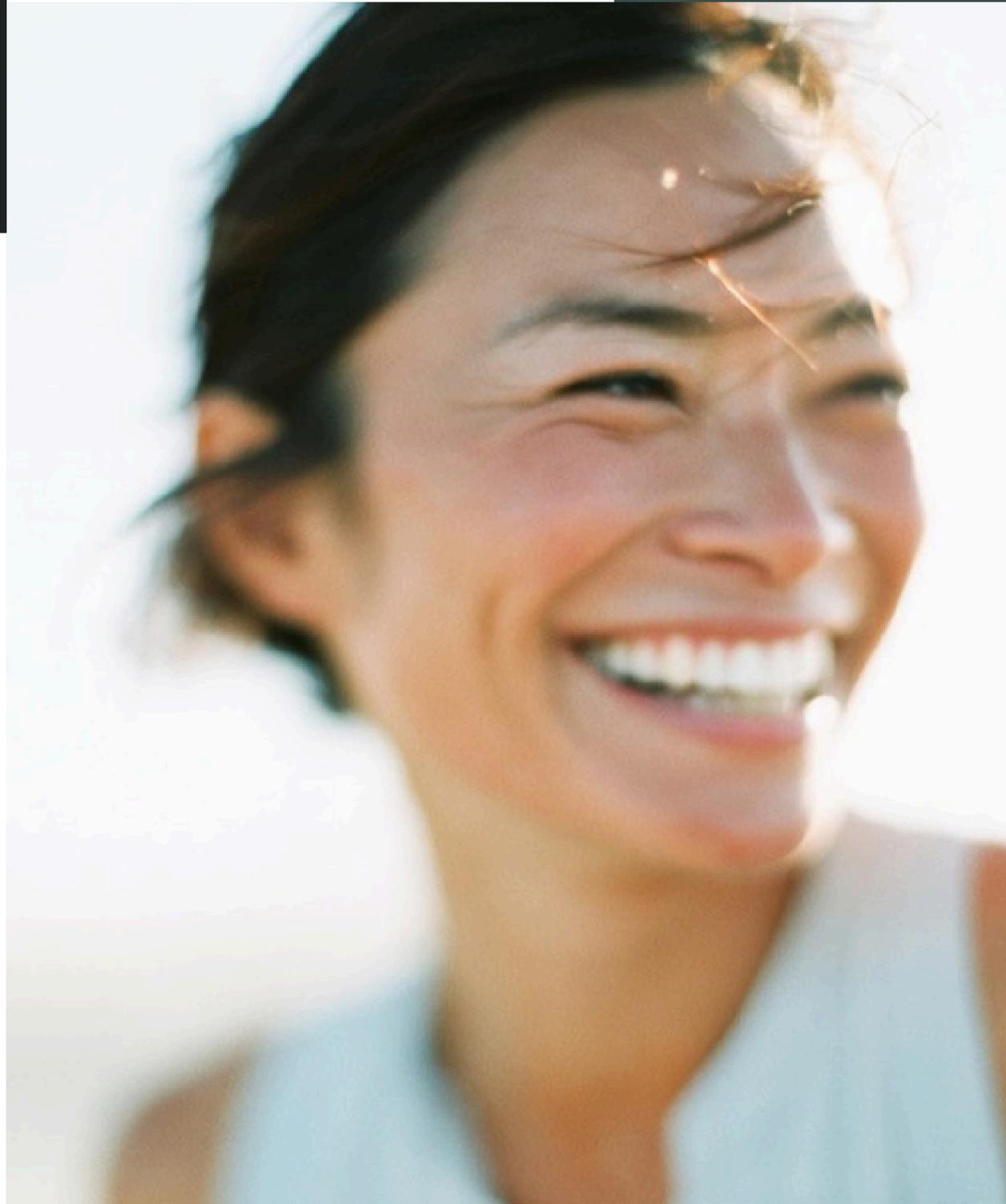
- *Assign one communication owner*
- *Document what was told and when*
- *Never assume someone else communicated. Verify.*

The Manager’s Intent vs Resident’s Impact

Best practices

- *Read messages from the resident’s perspective*
- *Ask: How could this be interpreted under stress?*





Tone, Transparency, & Trust



Tone can de-escalate or inflame – even
when the message stays the same.



Tone

Tone upgrades (simple swaps)

Instead of → Try this

- “That’s not an emergency” → “This isn’t considered an emergency, but we can schedule it as soon as possible”
- “Per your lease” → “According to our policy”
- “You’ll be charged” → “There may be a charge, and here’s why”

Best practices for tone

- Be calm, neutral, and respectful
- Assume the resident is frustrated, not difficult
- Avoid language that sounds:
 - Defensive
 - Dismissive
 - Blaming



Transparency doesn't mean over-sharing –
it means explaining decisions clearly.
Control your narrative.



Transparency

What transparency looks like

- Explaining delays before residents ask
- Sharing next steps even when the answer is “we’re waiting”
- Naming constraints:
 - Parts backorders
 - Vendor availability
 - Weather or city delays

Best practices for transparency

- “We’re waiting on a part that’s currently backordered”
- “The vendor had to prioritize emergency calls today due to weather”
- “City approval is required before we can move forward”



Trust isn't built by speed alone — it's built by
consistency.



Trust

Trust-building behaviors

- *Doing what you said you would do*
- *Following up when you promised*
- *Admitting mistakes early*

Best practices for trust

- *Acknowledge it*
- *Apologize once (without over-apologizing)*
- *Explain the fix*

Example

"We missed the update we promised yesterday – that's on us. Here's where things stand now, and here's what happens next."



The fastest way to lose trust is to be technically correct and emotionally careless.



Pause Before You Send Checklist

Before hitting send, ask yourself:

- Is my tone calm, neutral, and respectful?
- Have I clearly acknowledged the issue?
- Did I explain why, not just what?
- Is the next step and timing clear?
- Does this move the conversation forward?
- Did I avoid blame or defensiveness?
- Does this language protect us from liability or unnecessary risk?
- Would I be comfortable reading this in six months?





Systems Beat Intentions



Systems exist so you don't have to rely on
memory or heroics.



Systems Beat Intentions

Intentions Fail Under Stress – Systems Don't

Good intentions disappear when:

- Volume increases
- Staff is short
- Emergencies happen
- People are tired

What a "System" Actually Means (This Is Important)

- *Templates*
- *Checklists*
- *Required fields*
- *Status triggers*
- *Calendar reminders*
- *Default messages*



Systems Beat Intentions

Systems protect you from one-off problems becoming repeat problems.

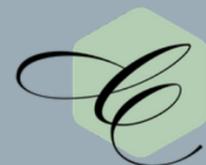
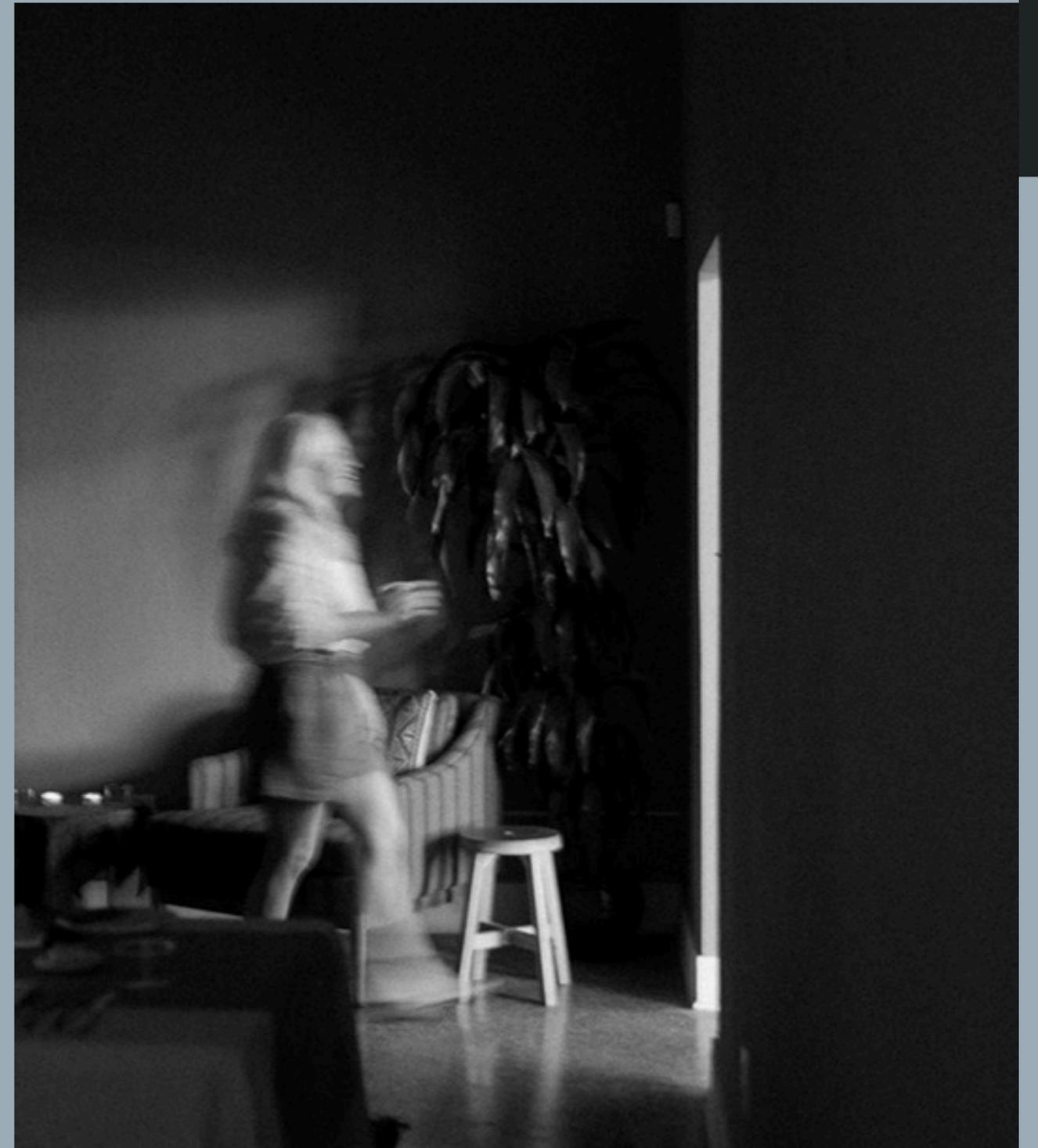
The first time issue might be unexpected. But the second time, it should be handled by a system

The Best Systems Are Boring (That's a Good Thing)

- *No heroics*
- *No scrambling*
- *No fire drills*
- *Just follow-through*

Systems Create Consistency – Not Coldness

- *Templates ensure calm tone even under stress*
- *Systems reduce rushed, emotional responses*
- *Consistency builds trust*



High Impact Systems (that actually work)



Request Acknowledgment System

Auto-acknowledgment or required first response step



Communication & Update Trigger System

Rule: "Every open request gets an update every X days"



Completion & Close-Out System

Required completion message before closing



Charge & Delay Communication System

Standard language used before work begins

Uncomfortable conversations get easier when the wording is already written.



If the best employee wasn't there tomorrow,
would this (task) still happen?

If the answer is no – it's not a system yet.



Systems don't replace good people – they
make good people consistent.





Leveling Up: Practical Ideas That Work



This is where good operators become great operators.



Offer Choices without losing control of the process.

Morning vs afternoon service

Text vs email updates

Entry preferences



Giving residents choices leads to better
cooperation.



Evidence Protects Everyone

Before-and-after photos. Clear notes with what was done

Take photos of the entire room where techs working to combat theft disputes

Use checklists to document the basics - booties, entry instructions, pets, etc.



Photos and comprehensive notes answer the question: was this actually fixed? And they offer that added layer of liability coverage.



High-Impact Maintenance Communication

A branded, recognizable maintenance communication style

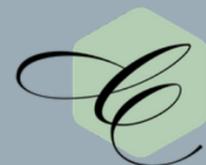
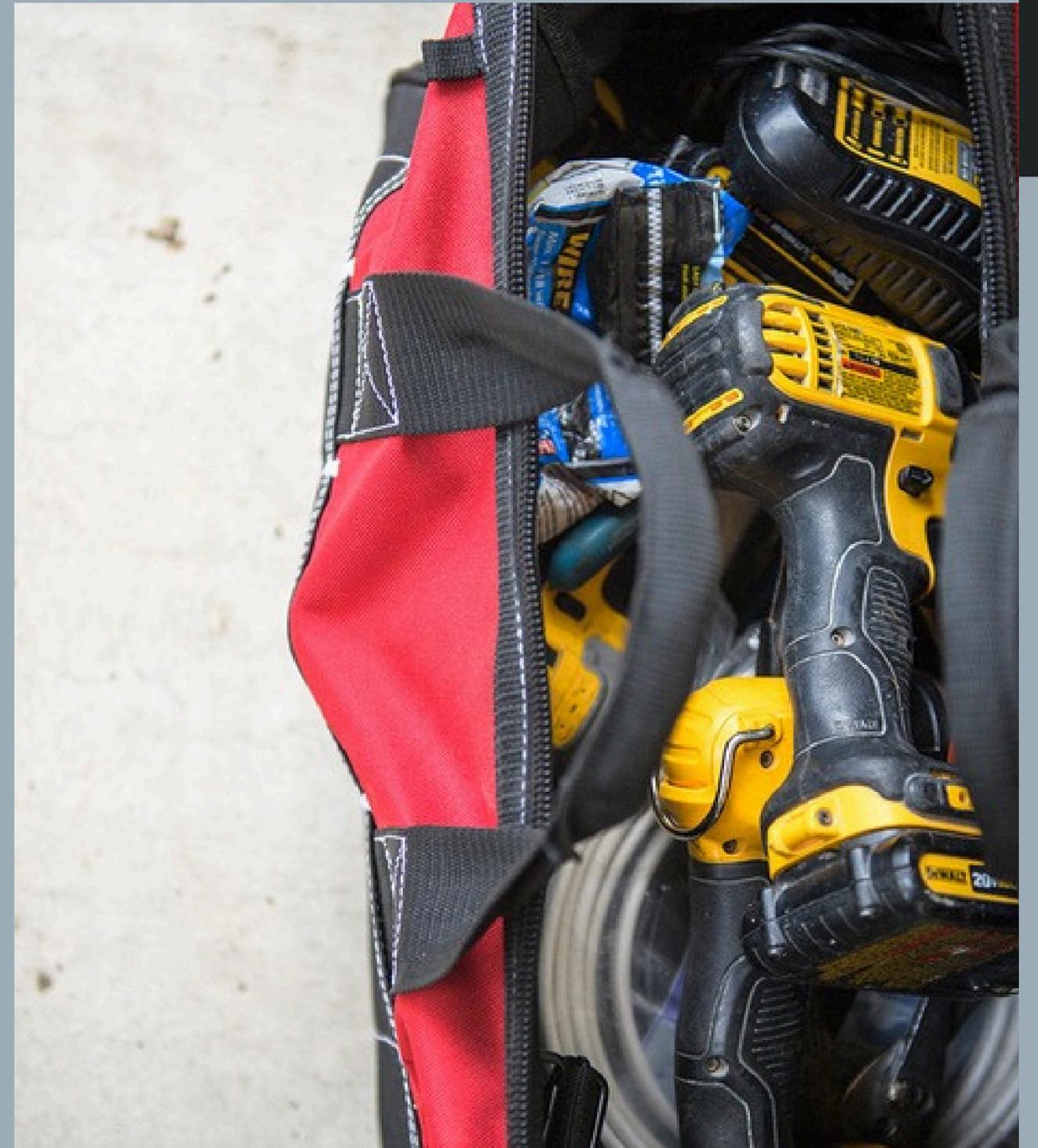
→Residents can instantly tell a message is from your team – consistent tone, structure, and clarity across every touchpoint.

Maintenance as a guided experience

→Every request automatically walks residents through what to expect, step by step, without them having to ask.

Name uncertainty out loud instead of hiding it

→ Saying “We don’t know yet, but here’s when we’ll know more” builds more confidence than vague optimism.



Acknowledge Early and Clearly

Respond within 1 business hour—even if it's just acknowledgment

→ "We've received your request and are reviewing it now."

Use the resident's name and the specific issue in the first reply

→ "Thanks for reporting the kitchen sink leak, Alex."

Include a promised update time in the first message

→ "You'll hear from us again by 3pm tomorrow."



Once residents know someone is paying attention, their stress drops.



Status Updates That Matter

Send updates even when nothing changed

→ “Still waiting on the part—no action needed from you.”

Real-time, plain-language status visibility

→ Residents can see progress at any point without needing to ask or follow up.

Use a simple progress phrase in every update

→ “Here’s where we are today...”



Even waiting on a part is better than no
update at all.



Get Ahead of the Problem

Send seasonal expectation-setting messages

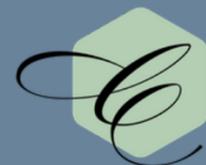
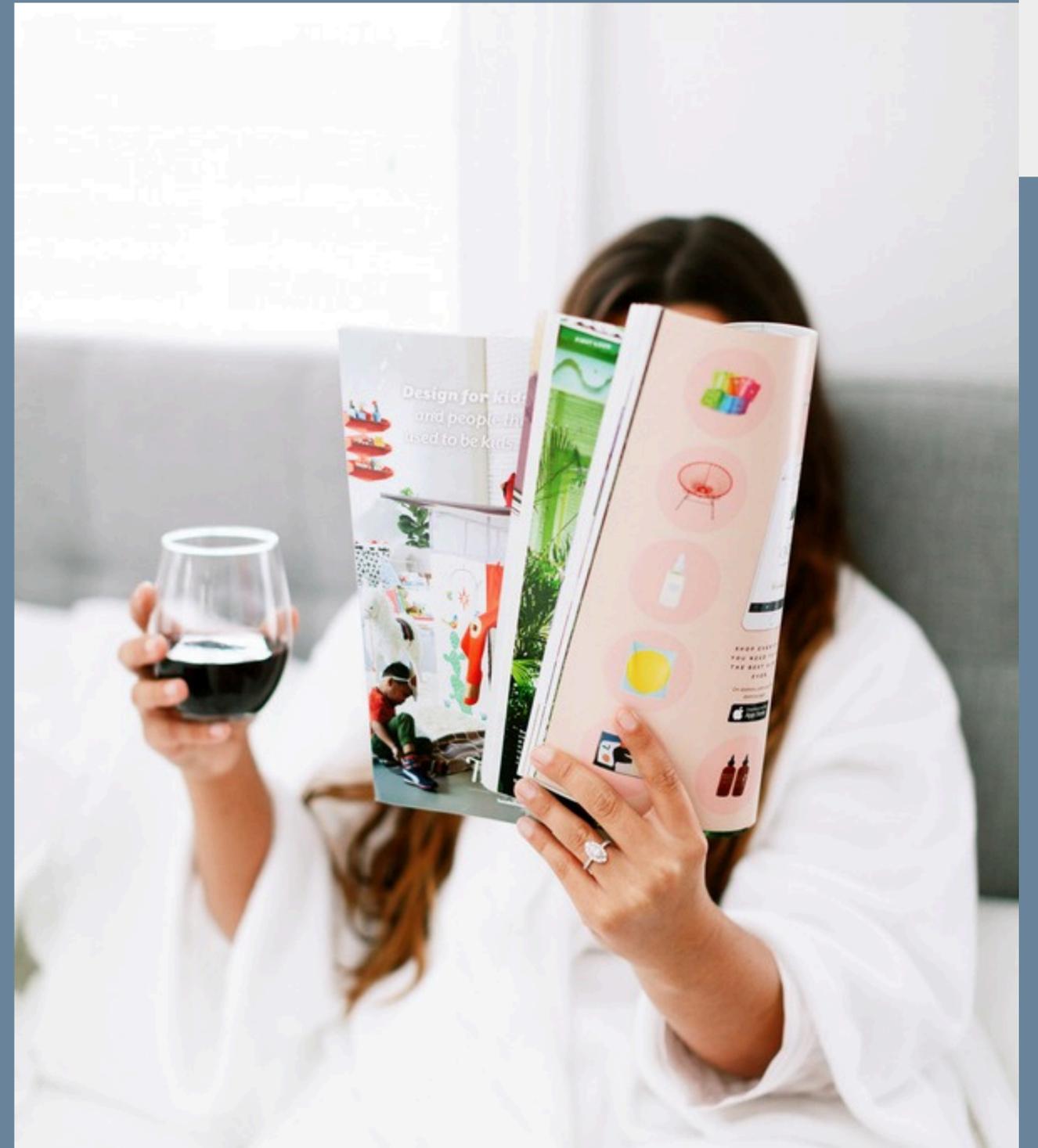
→ “AC requests may take 3-5 days during peak summer.”

Proactive expectation-setting built into the calendar

→ Seasonal, weather-driven, and volume-based messages go out automatically before issues spike.

“Here’s what might happen” messaging as standard practice

→ Residents are never surprised by delays, access needs, or timelines.



If you know delays are coming, say it before
residents feel it.



Communicate as One Team

A shared communication voice across the entire organization

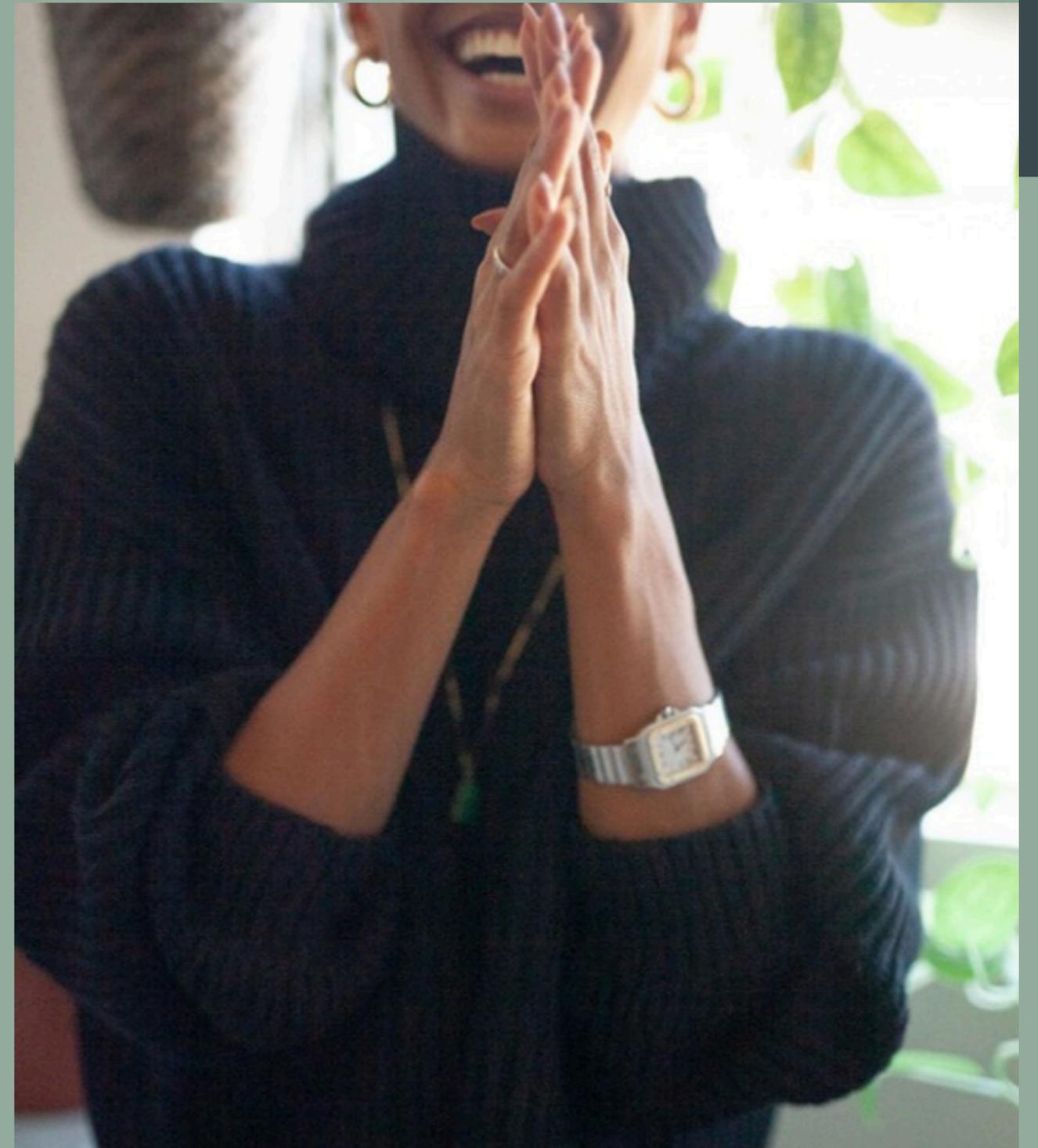
→ Every team member sounds aligned – calm, respectful, and human – regardless of role or stress level.

Emotion-aware messaging

→ Messages intentionally acknowledge inconvenience and disruption, not just logistics.

Get out of silos

→ Make sure you operate inside of shared software or email accounts to ensure consistency in response times.



Professional doesn't mean robotic.



Intentional Follow-Up

Send a 1-sentence check-in after completion

→ “Quick check—everything working as expected?”

Repair confirmation as a moment of care, not a checkbox

→ Follow-ups feel intentional and resident-focused, not transactional.

Feedback loops that actually inform future improvements

→ Patterns from follow-ups guide training, vendors, and preventive maintenance.



One short follow-up can prevent multiple
future requests.



Resident Education Matters

Maintenance communication doubles as ongoing education

→ Every interaction subtly improves how residents report, maintain, and care for their home.

Residents understand the “why” behind systems and policies

→ Rules feel fair because they’re explained, not enforced silently.

Reinforce good behavior

→ “Thanks for including pictures—that helped.”



Every message is a chance to train residents
for better outcomes.



Celebrate Completion

Completion feels like resolution, not disappearance

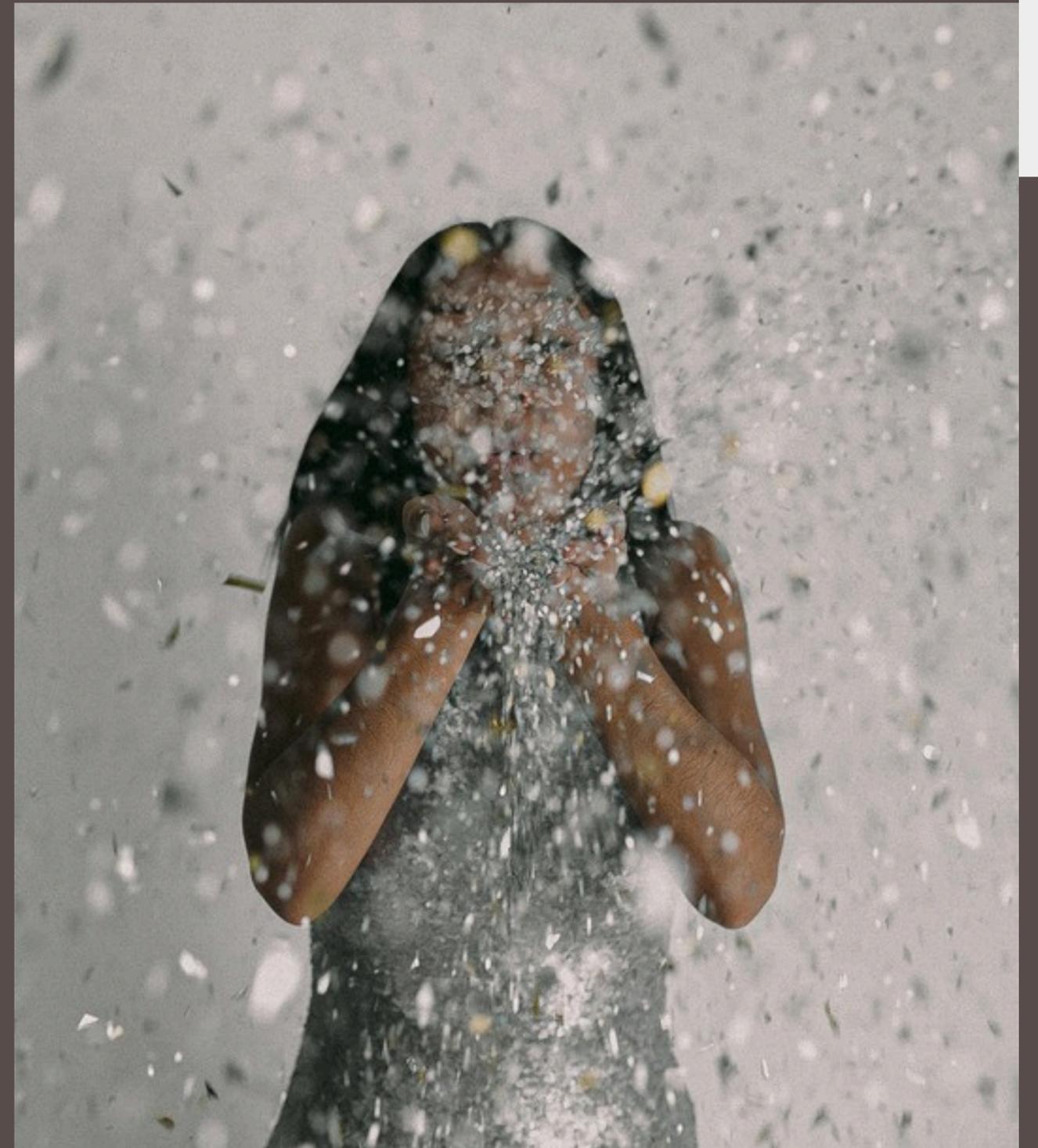
→ Residents clearly know the issue is done and feel confident moving forward.

Maintenance closure reinforces confidence and care

→ The final message clearly confirms resolution, summarizes what was done, and leaves the resident feeling secure rather than wondering what comes next.

Maintenance leaves a better impression than it started with

→ Even inconvenient repairs end with reassurance and clarity.





Key Takeaways



1. Maintenance Is a Communication Experience, Not a Repair Task

The repair fixes the problem – communication determines how the resident feels about it. Most escalations come from silence, uncertainty, or unmet expectations, not bad work.

2. Acknowledgment and Clarity Matter More Than Speed

Residents don't need instant fixes – they need to know they've been heard, what's happening next, and when they'll hear from you again. Silence creates more frustration than delays.

3. Systems Beat Good Intentions Every Time

If communication depends on memory, it will fail under pressure. Templates, triggers, and standard steps create consistency, reduce stress, and protect trust.



4. Visibility Prevents Escalation

Status updates, pre-emptive messaging, and transparent delay explanations keep residents informed and calm. When people can see progress, they stop chasing answers.

5. Tone and Transparency Build (or Break) Trust

How you say something matters as much as what you say. Calm, human language and honest explanations – especially during delays or charges – preserve trust even when outcomes aren't ideal.

6. How Maintenance Ends Matters Most

Completion confirmation, micro follow-ups, and clear closure leave a lasting impression. Maintenance should end with confidence and reassurance, not uncertainty or disappearance.



Clear communication is the most powerful
maintenance tool you have.





Contact Us

Questions about today's presentation or for a copy of the slide deck

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