

# Property Marketing, Leasing & Resident Services Case Study

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NALS Apartment Homes saves time and  
improves services with RENTCafé

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*NALS Apartment Homes uses RENTCafé to manage property websites, online applications, resident payments, maintenance requests and email communications at 48 properties. In one month alone, RENTCafé saved NALS an estimated 1,008 hours across its portfolio while improving prospect and resident services.*



## The company

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NALS Apartment Homes is a fully integrated real estate investment firm engaged in the acquisition, ownership and management of multifamily apartment communities. Headquartered in Santa Barbara, California, NALS owns and manages more than 15,000 apartment homes throughout the United States, in markets such as Atlanta, Dallas, Phoenix, Tucson, Portland and Seattle.



NALS is committed to delivering a responsive management structure and stellar living experience to its residents. It continually renovates its apartments to provide residents with the best of apartment living and adapts to market demands for improved technology policies and procedures. The NALS management team is fundamental to the company's history of excellent value, service and operating performance. NALS communities regularly exceed resident expectations and deliver top-rated residential service.



## The challenge

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Managing more than 15,000 residential units across multiple states and maintaining consistent brand standards is no small effort.

Processing applications, taking work orders and entering payments used to require significant data entry by staff at NALS properties. The hours spent on these tasks detracted from time that could be spent creating more positive customer interactions on site.

Additionally, NALS prospects and residents previously didn't have a central resource for communication and services. Property announcements were delivered door-to-door, creating significant paper waste while requiring a substantial time commitment by property staff with no way to tell if residents received and read the notice. Paying rent, submitting maintenance requests and checking account balances required residents to call or visit property offices during business hours.

### Property staff

- Logged hours doing data entry for applications, leases, renewals and payments
- Handled frequent calls from residents regarding account balances
- Spent significant time posting property-wide notices
- Had no way to tell if residents received their notices

### Prospects & residents

- Could not complete application and lease documents online
- Had no way to view account balances and submit payments
- Relied on paper property notices for news about their homes



#### Desired outcome

NALS needed a solution that offered online applicant and resident services to add convenience, decrease paper waste and reduce busy work for onsite staff.

#### Goals included:

- Reducing data entry to free up staff time for more valuable customer service interactions
- Increasing prospect and resident self-service options to add convenience and stay competitive
- Improving resident communication tools for more efficient message delivery
- Decreasing paper waste to align with corporate initiative to reduce natural resource consumption

## The solution

To support property marketing, leasing and resident services across its portfolio, NALS chose RENTCafé. Built into the Yardi Voyager property management and accounting platform, RENTCafé helps property teams attract prospects, convert leads and retain renters using innovative features that include property websites with online leasing, self-service capabilities, convenient resident portals and multiple communication tools.

"Our top priority as owners and managers is to ensure we deliver a quality living experience to our residents," shared Kayla Campbell, marketing leader at NALS. "RENTCafé is a key partner in this effort."

*"Having property websites, online applications, correspondence, payment and maintenance portals centralized in one platform helps us standardize, elevate and accelerate our marketing and operations efforts portfolio-wide."*

**Kayla Campbell**  
Marketing Leader at NALS

#### Marketing & leasing

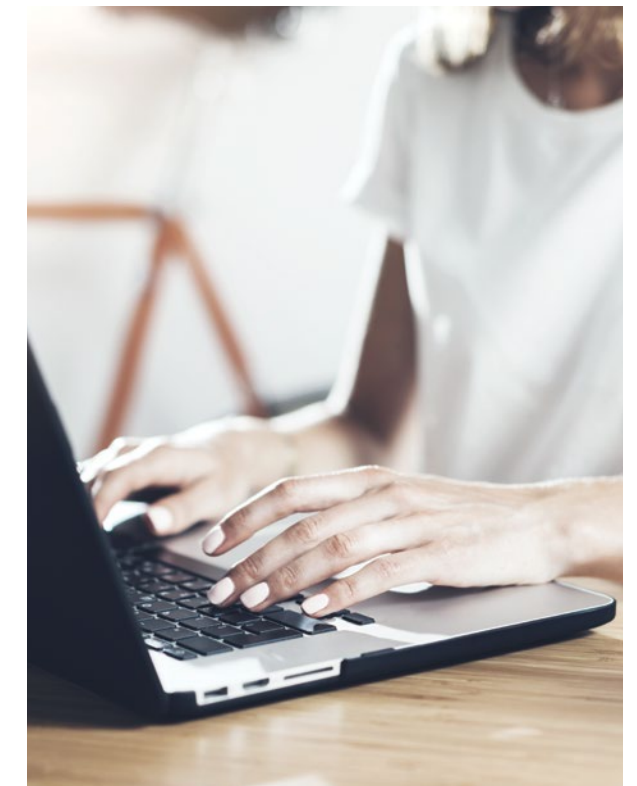
RENTCafé corporate and property marketing websites are easy to customize and designed to attract, convert and aid prospects. They have appealing, content-rich designs and easy-to-use features, including online applications and leasing.

NALS uses RENTCafé to manage all its community websites. "Because prospects are responsible for entering their own application information, RENTCafé saves time and reduces human error," shared Devan McPhie, a property manager who has worked with NALS for 26 years. "I would never want to work without it again."

#### Resident services & communication

With RENTCafé, NALS is able to provide residents with convenient and secure access to their account information, including balances and charges. RENTCafé resident portals allow residents to pay rent and submit maintenance requests from a smartphone, tablet or computer. Residents can also see community bulletin boards and announcements within the portal. Automated emails and text messages alert residents to important updates.

"I speak to other properties and they wish they had the online services that we offer," said Gina Corbin, property manager and 20-year NALS employee. "It's more convenient for both the residents and our onsite team."





# The results

Using RENTCafé to manage online marketing, leasing and resident services saves NALS hours of time across its portfolio each month. NALS leverages RENTCafé to offer electronic applications, work orders and payment processing, eliminating the data entry that comes with manual processing.

## Time savings

Based on a survey of onsite staff, the NALS team estimates time savings of more than 1,008 hours across its portfolio in April 2018.

### Online applications



18 minutes per application x  
1,023 applications =

**306.9** hours

### Online payments



4 hours per month x 48 properties =

**192** hours

### Online work orders



2 minutes per work order x  
2,330 work orders =

**77.6** hours

### Resident emails



6 hours per month x 48 properties =

**288** hours

### Craigslist posts



1 hour per month x 48 properties =

**48** hours

### ILS Listings



2 hours per month x 48 properties =

**96** hours

Total time savings in April 2018:

**1008.5** hours

## 01.

### Online applications

How much time do onsite teams spend entering application data? Campbell estimates that online applications save its leasing agents 18 minutes per application. In April of 2018, the team processed 1,023 applications, resulting in a time savings of more than 300 hours.

## 02.

### Online payments

Online payments save staff, applicants and residents time. While the time savings for prospects and residents is difficult to quantify, NALS staff save about one hour each week at every property, for a total savings of 192 hours across the portfolio in a month. "Due to our size, our input of payments used to take hours every month, so automated payments are a big time-saver for us," shared Corbin.

## 03.

### Online work orders

NALS saves an estimated two minutes per work order for each maintenance request that is submitted electronically instead of over the phone or in person. NALS received 2,330 online work orders in April 2018, saving staff almost 78 hours across its portfolio.

## 04.

### Resident emails

The ability to email residents from within RENTCafé saves NALS property managers around an hour and a half each week. "The ability to send emails to the entire property or filter down email lists based on different criteria saves us time both organizing and delivering resident communications," said McPhie.

## 05.

### Online listings

NALS also saves time using RENTCafé to post vacancies to internet listing services (ILSs) and Craigslist. ILS listings are automatically updated with real-time information from NALS' Voyager database, so price changes are instantly reflected and don't have to be done manually across multiple sites. RENTCafé Classifieds makes posting faster and reduces the potential for error using intuitive drag-and-drop widgets to define amenities, add photos and complete fields.

### Decreased paper waste

"Going paperless with RENTCafé also supports NALS' initiative to reduce our natural resource consumption," stated Campbell. With applications, leases, payments, maintenance requests and property notices now online, NALS saves time and money that it used to spend on paper use and storage.



### Faster application processing

Step-by-step online leasing is more convenient for applicants. It also eliminates redundant data entry and the potential for human error. With RENTCafé, prospects can complete leases through NALS' websites and even via Facebook, saving its staff time and paperwork. Adding Yardi products for risk management means RENTCafé delivers comprehensive price and lease term selection, self-screening capabilities and renters insurance fulfillment, making it easy and fast to go from lead to lease.

"We were able to complete the application and were informed of approval within 15 minutes of hitting submit," wrote Kerryann T., NALS resident, in a Google review. "Being able to fill out everything online made everything much easier than having to take a full day off work to visit apartments," shared another verified resident on ApartmentRatings.com.

### Happier residents

Residents use the RENTCafé resident portal to access their account information, resident services and property communications in one easy place. Renters like the online convenience; they don't have to take time out of their day to visit NALS' property management offices to pay bills or make maintenance requests.

**96%** of NALS residents are signed up for resident portals

**72%** of rent is paid electronically

*"We always get multiple compliments from our residents on how quickly we provide status updates during property emergencies."*

**Chad Hannah**  
Assistant Property Manager and  
Regional Support Specialist at NALS

"The automatic 'balance due' reminder has saved many late payments fees, resulting in happy residents," said Hannah.

### More resident interactions

The time NALS saves with RENTCafé benefits its residents in other ways as well. According to Campbell, "Now we have a lot more time to walk the properties, place follow-up calls and add other meaningful touchpoints for applicants and renters."

## The feedback

### From marketing

"My team did the calculations, and in April 2018 we saved 1,008 hours across our portfolio with RENTCafé. That's almost three full workdays we got back at each property!"

"Having websites, online applications, correspondence, payment and maintenance portals centralized in one platform helps us standardize, elevate and accelerate our marketing and operations efforts portfolio-wide."

"Now [with RENTCafé] we have a lot more time to walk the properties, place follow-up calls and add other meaningful touchpoints for applicants and renters."

**Kayla Campbell, Marketing Leader, NALS**

### From onsite staff

"Because prospects are responsible for entering their own application information, RENTCafé saves time and reduces human error. I would never want to work without it again."

**Devan McPhie, Property Manager,**  
Sky Harbor

"I speak to other properties and they wish they had the online services that we offer. It's more convenient for both the residents and our onsite team."

**Gina Corbin, Property Manager,**  
River Walk Apartments

"The RENTCafé email system is life changing for property emergencies like water outages. And for email read-receipts and communication logs."

**Chad Hannah, Assistant Manager,**  
Sonoran Terraces, and Regional Support  
Specialist for NALS

### From prospects and residents

"We were able to complete the application [online] and were informed of approval within 15 minutes of hitting submit."

**Kerryann T., NALS resident,**  
Google review

"Quick and easy application process. 10/10 services."

**Ian C., NALS resident,**  
Google review

"Being able to fill out everything online made everything much easier than having to take a full day off work to visit apartments."

**Verified NALS resident,**  
ApartmentRatings.com

"I like the online maintenance request option. Service requests can be processed anytime and response has been immediate."

**Verified NALS resident, Vintage at The Lakes,**  
ApartmentRatings.com

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