PCIpal®

BACKGROUND

AvalonBay is a large real estate investment trust (REIT) headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, USA. It has an established track record of developing, redeveloping, acquiring and managing distinctive apartment homes in some of the best US markets, and delivering outsized, risk-adjusted returns to shareholders. It currently owns and operates around 300 high-end rental properties across the country, predominantly in coastal regions.

Although AvalonBay is headquartered in Arlington, VA, their shared services center/contact center is located in Virginia Beach, VA. It is there that between 200 and 250 associates are based to handle customer interactions and inquiries.

THE COMPLIANCE CHALLENGE

While a majority of payments are handled via AvalonBay's internet portal, around 20 percent of payments are transacted over the phone. With the anticipation of a costly upgrade of a 'Pause and Resume' PCI compliance solution upgrade, Steve Fabian, Senior Vice President of AvalonBay, initiated a project to identify an alternative payment security solution. The goal was to find one that would better suit the organization's current and future needs. Explains Steve,

"We record all of our telephone calls for training and quality assurance purposes, so in order to comply with PCI DSS rules we had always used a Pause and Resume system. It would automatically pause call recordings at the point customers provide their payment card information, ensuring no sensitive payment data would be captured on the recording. It was, however, a legacy system. With a costly upgrade imminent, I began to research alternative options."

THE SOLUTION

Having researched the market, Steve considered three providers. The one that stood out was PCI Pal, as the use of Dual Tone Multi Frequency technology meant that customers would be able to anonymously input card data on their telephone keypad while remaining in full conversational contact with the agent.

Continues Steve,

"Having identified PCI Pal's Agent Assist, it was clear there were a number of benefits – a major one being that our agents could continue the conversation with customers while payment information was being input and transacted. This would enable us to enhance our personalized service and customer experience. It also integrates with our existing unified call management system, CRM and two payment systems.

So, from a technology standpoint, it would mean a consistent experience for our agents and no major overhaul of existing processes. It was important to make the overall agent experience as seamless as possible."

After implementing the solution, it was clear the agent experience wasn't the only seamless part of the process.

"We had a very positive integration. With technology you always encounter something along the way, however we had no issues with our call management system, and it was seamless from PCI Pal's front. We were able to quickly address a few adjustments with the CRM integration and go live within the original timescales that we had set at the start of the project."

RESULTS

Since launching Agent Assist within its contact center, Steve is happy to report on the progress made,

"From an agent and manager point of view, the feedback I receive is very positive. Using the system has reduced the overall call time, as there are fewer steps in the process for our agents to take when handling transactions. This make the whole call go more quickly.

"We are about to embark on a survey in the next couple of months to understand resident feedback, as we're eager to receive views from our residents on how easy the system is to use. Anecdotally, our agents have said they enjoy talking people through the process – it feels more friendly and approachable."

One of the most significant benefits of the new solution has been the ability for AvalonBay's agents to be able to work remotely and continue to take secure, compliant payments.

"While we were setting agents up to be able to work remotely, one thing we couldn't have foreseen was COVID. Agent Assist has enabled our agents to work remotely seamlessly. The fact that we've been able to continue remotely proves that Agent Assist is a powerful product – and we've completed roll-out amid the pandemic and received awesome service throughout the process."

Steve Fabian
Senior Vice President, AvalonBay

When asking Steve what has changed from his working day now that Agent Assist is in place, he is quick to mention the removal of some administrative tasks:

"Before PCI Pal, we had several gateways and windows to manage. Now it has been simplified. Also, when we were using the Pause and Resume solution, sometimes the automated triggers were difficult to configure and would need to be redone. This was a task that landed with me, however now we just don't have that issue. It's been

a very solid implementation. There is no question that the product is very powerful, and I have also appreciated the support of the team; Daniel in tech is awesome, Adam is fantastic – they are very on their game and committed to getting it right. This isn't always the case with tech providers; however, I have really appreciated the flexibility and customizations the team have been able to achieve to meet our specific needs. Together, we have really made the system fly, and I am delighted with the outcome."

OUR ACCREDITATIONS

GET IN TOUCH

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