The Joys of RealPage® Training (Yes, Really)

The word "training" doesn't generally elicit feelings of exhilaration. In fact, it's quite the opposite for most. But for Todd Warren of Eighteen Capital Group, training has been a source of happiness for over a decade.

"I know it's a little weird," he says, "but RealPage solutions are so intuitive and I know them so well that it really does make me happy to turn others on to all the cool things they can do that they aren't aware of. I love my job."

Warren says his satisfaction is especially great when training those who have been at other companies where they've been using software from RealPage competitors. "I'll show them where something that took several steps before can be done with a single click, and they're thrilled. Then training goes from being something they dread to actually being exciting. They begin to see how much more efficient they will be at their jobs."

Warren has had a unique opportunity to witness the transformation from the most primitive property management techniques to the most sophisticated. His first job in the business was managing a weekly rental property that didn't even have a computer. "They were actually using typewriters and doing manual ledgers," he recalls. "They would take everything to the corporate office each Friday and make copies."

When the property finally decided to invest in technology, it was left to Warren to first learn how to use RealPage software, then to teach everyone else.

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"I had never used property management software of any kind before, so it's a good thing that, even back then, RealPage solutions were easy to learn and use," he says. "Since then, I've trained everyone from people who had moved up from housekeeper positions to very highly educated people, and they all get it."

After a year and a half at that first property, Warren took his new knowledge of RealPage software to another company, where he became, first, a trainer for one region of a state, and ultimately, head trainer for the whole company. He joined Eighteen Capital Group five and a half years ago as director of training. "Knowing this software has changed my life," he says. "It actually created my whole career, one that I greatly enjoy."

A MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH TO TRAINING

Warren says he leverages multiple ways of training, including videos, self-paced online training, WebEx sessions and hands-on, one-on-one sessions. Each has its place, he says. "RealPage offers an array of training options so clients can tailor them to their own wants and needs," Warren says. "There are videos that you simply watch to learn, but there are also interactive online classes where they practice the skills to really absorb them. If a team wants a WebEx, I'll do one for them. And then, of course, I do one-on-one training, particularly when a new manager is appointed at one of our over 30 properties.

"I visit the site and teach them about RealPage, our company policies and procedures, and how to use

the software they'll be working with, day to day. I make sure they're proficient before I leave so we can be sure they're able to fully leverage the software in order to be effective at their work."

With RealPage now ubiquitous in property management, Warren says the new managers often have some experience with its software. But he finds there are typically new things he can show them that they weren't aware of. He gives an example: "You'll have someone going to each individual resident account to print delinquency notices, one by one, and I'll show them how to process them in bulk in a fraction of the time."

Warren says he's now so familiar with the software that he can even help people while driving in his car. "I can see the screens in my mind, so I'll say, 'Move your cursor to the Navigation Menu in the upper left, click Administration, then go here or there."

BUILDING CONFIDENCE
According to Warren, it's important to have trainees do things for themselves rather than just watch the trainer do them. "I get some people who aren't very comfortable with computers," he says. "I'll be sitting right next to them saying 'You click the mouse – I don't want to do it for you. And they start moving around and getting into it, and realize they can't break the software. Nothing disastrous can happen, so they gain the confidence to explore and learn.

" There's almost always more than one way to do things, and by experimenting a bit you can usually find a way to do what you're trying to do even if you haven't been formally taught. This being said, I can often show people a more efficient way of doing something they've developed their own way of doing."

ADAPTING TO CHANGE
One thing about RealPage is that they never stand still," says Warren. "There are two main reasons for this. First, it's a competitive business, so their

software designers want to stay ahead of technological improvements and respond to both internal and client demands for new functionality. But another reason is that when RealPage sees a company with a solution they like, they tend to acquire it and integrate it into the family of solutions. I have to always be ready to learn new software, modify my training packet and get our people up to speed as quickly as possible on new or modified software."

Warren praises RealPage's current initiatives to create a new, unified "look and feel" for its solutions, along with a single sign-on that will replace separate log-ins for different RealPage products.

"REALPAGE HAS MY BACK"
" As the person responsible for making sure our people are enjoying a smooth experience with the software, it's always good to know that I have backup a phone call away at RealPage," says Warren. "If there's something I can't help them with, they can put in a support ticket and 98 out of 100 times the issue is solved very quickly.

" When I myself have to call support, I might have to work through a few levels to get what I need, but RealPage always comes through. If the person I'm talking to can't solve my problem, they will find someone who can, rather than send me on a goose chase. In the rare event it's necessary, I have a very good rep who is great at getting things escalated if I need her to."

Warren's long history, using RealPage software gives him a unique perspective on his career. "In a sense, I feel as connected to our software vendor as I do to our company," he explains. "As I said earlier, my entire career has been built around one company's software, something I would never have expected many years ago when I was tasked with learning it to lift a property out of the Stone Age. It has served me and the companies I've worked for awfully well since then."