

Wilson, Blanchard Management Inc. – *Condominium Management with Experience and Integrity*

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The WB Condo Connection highlights Ontario condominium related articles and educational items that may be of interest to Boards of Directors and condo owners. It is published online and available on our website (www.wilsonblanchard.com) as well as in hard copy format to each of the members of our Boards of Directors.

We hope you enjoy this edition and we welcome your comments, suggestions, or article topic requests by email to newsletter.editor@wilsonblanchard.com or by mail to:

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Front Desk and Front Line

An interview with Samantha Mills, Receptionist for Wilson, Blanchard Management Inc., Main St West, Hamilton, by Sarah Farr, Administrator, Hamilton

As a prospective employee of Wilson, Blanchard Management Inc., I remember asking for tips from a current employee of the company in preparation for my upcoming interview. The response received was that I should be especially nice to Sam the receptionist.

“She’s at the front desk and has been with W.B. a long time,” I was told. “If she likes you, your chances are good.”

Upon arrival at the Wilson Blanchard Hamilton headquarters on Main Street West, I was met by a bubbly champagne glass of a welcome from Sam Mills, whose tenure with the company has now surpassed the 25-year mark, and whose devotion to the company was immediately apparent.

As I waited to be called in for my official interview, I was astounded by the number of phone calls coming in; our conversation consistently permeated by the ring of the phone and the subsequent greetings and questions offered by Sam as she decided how best to direct the caller.

As the first point of contact for all calls coming through to Wilson Blanchard, her role is best described as ‘Front Desk and Front Line’. For this edition, we take a walk down memory lane with the vivacious Sam Mills to learn how times have changed in the world of Property Management, and since my ‘pre-interview’ interview went well (I was awarded the position), I began by asking her to describe the interview that had originally landed her a job in the world of property management.



Samantha Mills at the front desk of the W.B. Hamilton office.

“It was my second time being interviewed for the position, I had applied in the fall but had not been offered the job at that point. In the winter it came up again; I applied, was interviewed, and got the job. My interview was actually with David Blanchard himself, to this day he says I’m ‘the only person he has ever personally hired!’”

Sam's first official day at work was April 6th 1990 in the James Street South, Hamilton, offices of what was then Lounsbury Management Services, where Ray Wilson held the position of Vice President of Residential and David Blanchard, Vice President of Commercial.

"I had no experience when I started, I didn't even know what a condo was!" she laughs. She was thrown in at the deep end with her reception responsibilities when two weeks after being hired the company merged with another, doubling her workload.

The main differences between then and now, she says, is technology.

"With the introduction of cell phones and email, we have immediate access to information and to the people that need it. Back then everything was handwritten - there were no cell phones, we didn't even have voicemail! We had to take personal notes for each call and pass them on to the right people."

Sam also relates how there was no 'On call' or 'After hours' service to deal with emergency situations at buildings, with all evening and weekend calls being relayed to a messaging service who in turn, would pass messages along via a faxed list the next business day. "The fax machine was different too, it had a huge roll of paper and you had to tear off the faxes and cut them up to give to the individual managers."

Postal mailings are a big part of the communication side in the Property Management systems today, and even those systems have seen a big change. "Mailing was more of a mechanical system, and the way payments are made has changed significantly too now that people are able to set up direct payments," Sam says.

Explaining a little of how the Wilson Blanchard properties have changed since those days, she says the biggest increase in growth seems to be in the Halton (Burlington/Oakville) region. "Our list of Wentworth properties used to surpass the Halton list, now it's the other way round," she explains, also noting that W.B. were responsible for more rental properties back then.

When I ask what it is that has kept her here so long, she explains that the Wilson Blanchard team have become more like family than work colleagues, and have always supported her through times of need. She relates to me

when she and husband, Cam, had been trying to start a family, and she had received a call with news of a positive result from her doctor. "I couldn't get hold of Cam as we didn't have cell phones, so I ran in and told Ray!" she tells me excitedly, referring to Ray Wilson himself, President of W.B.

Wilson Blanchard has always shown support for family time, and provided further support to Sam through the countless appointments required when her son, David, was diagnosed with autism.

"They have always been flexible with allowing time for family issues. I've had the support I need in order to do these things and I am grateful for that."

That same support was extended to her once more when she lost her father two years ago; an estimated 80% of the office showed up at the funeral home to provide emotional comfort.

Samantha has also given back emotionally. Her many years with the company has seen her develop strong friendships and emotional bonds with owners, trades, and delivery staff alike.

"Some days can be hard," she explains. "Just today an owner I've known for years called to tell me her husband has passed away. I've been crying all morning."

It is true that Sam has a big heart. She always does her best to help, but has also borne the brunt of anger and frustration from callers and visitors to the office. Still, her attitude always remains positive, and she would rather work on ways to solve problems than get stuck on past negativity. When I ask her what advice she might give to Property Managers and others in the industry, she explains the importance of making all staff aware of any emergency situations that may arise.

"If there are any major issues occurring at a building, it is always best to let the reception team know so we can be prepared with information for any owners who may call with questions. And always be honest - to me - honesty is always the best policy."

She concludes with one last recommendation, "Always be nice to the receptionist."

Dampen Your Water Bill!

By: Harry Nielsen, Property Manager, PSCC 888 - Stonebrook

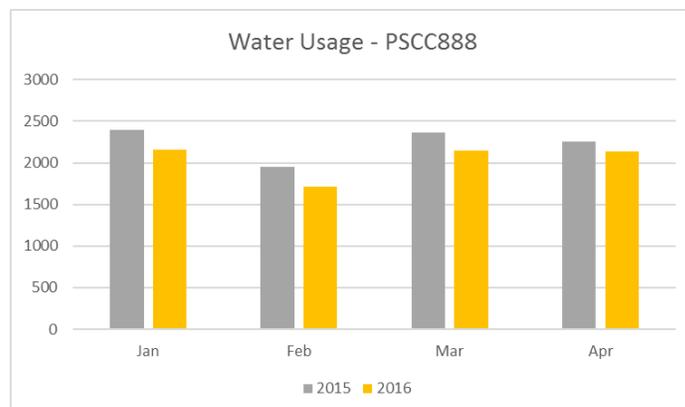
Boards and property managers are always looking for opportunities to manage costs. Utilities are one area where we have little, if any, influence on rates and must look to consumption reduction as our leverage. LED lighting, low-flow toilets, gas contracts, and high efficiency booster pumps are just some of the recent success stories.

I would like to familiarize you with an opportunity PSCC 888 (aka Stonebrook) recently introduced at our building in Mississauga. Like all liquids, water aerates or 'absorbs' air when rushed through pipes at high speed. The water entering our buildings from the city's water main is no exception. In fact, the turbulence causes the water meter to interpret this mixture of water and air as a chargeable commodity. What if you could minimize this air and pay just for the water?

Encompass Group markets a flow management device (FMD) called H2minusO which can do just that. As the name suggests, the device acts to minimize the air that would otherwise travel through your water meter and inflate the volume of water you ultimately pay for. Turns out that air represents 8% of the volume! The FMD is installed on the building side of the water meter and literally dampens the turbulence of the water without affecting the building's water pressure. Depending on current water consumption and the size of the water main, return on investment can range from 6 months to 3 years.

At Stonebrook, Encompass performed a free, no obligation water-use analysis and determined that our residents are water "misers" compared to most buildings. With pride, we asked how that would affect our return. Encompass determined that we would have a 2 year return on investment which they were prepared to guarantee. The Board felt this was a smart investment with little risk. Installation took only a few hours to complete and did not even involve an interruption in service as the building is equipped with a bypass system.

During the first 4 months of 2016 we have experienced a 9% reduction in water consumption (see graph).



We feel the project has been a success. A few recommendations for those considering installation include:

1. Gathering 24 months of historical water consumption data.
2. Finding a 4 month period of stable water use for analysis and performance comparison. The filling of swimming pools & cooling towers, garage washing, pipe leaks, and landscape irrigation, are all factors which can confuse the results.
3. Get a guarantee on the savings.

For more information or to arrange your free, no obligation cost savings proposal, contact Gavin Herman at Encompass Group – (416) 822-4680.

Insurance Evaluations – No Longer a Luxury

By: Mary Morden, Property Manager, Waterloo Region

The *Condominium Act, 1998*, Section 99 (1), states: "The Corporation shall obtain and maintain insurance, on its own behalf and on behalf of the owners, for damage to the units and common elements that is caused by major perils or the other perils that the declaration or the bylaws specify."

But how much insurance coverage is enough? Enter the Insurance Evaluation; this handy device takes the guess work out of the hands of Board of Directors and places it where it belongs, in the hands of the appraisal experts.

When contact is made with the selected appraisal company they may require site plans and inspections to ensure the accuracy of their report.

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Once the report is issued by your appraiser it should be forwarded to your insurance adjuster who will review and determine if you have adequate coverage or if the policy needs to be increased to allow for the new appraisal amounts. One such case at a Guelph condominium recently led to a decrease in the policy premium of almost \$5,000.00 per year. The savings alone paid for the appraisal three times over, and depending on the appraisal company you select, many offer free updates for the next several years, making this program even more attractive to Board members.

An accurate appraisal of Corporation assets is no longer a luxury, it is an essential step in ensuring that you are adequately insured in case of disaster. As a Board member, you have a duty to the Ownership to ensure you acquire adequate coverage for the Corporation.

The time to think of your insurance coverage is now, not after a disaster.

Welcome!

Wilson, Blanchard would like to welcome our newest managed properties:

W.C.C. #119

W.C.E.C.C. #533

W.C.E.C.C. #534

W.S.C.C. #188

Y.R.S.C.C. #1201

We Want To Hear From You!

The Wilson, Blanchard Executive invites you to visit our website to complete our Performance Evaluation Form and let us know how we are doing. The Performance Evaluation, drafted specifically for our Board members only, provides a confidential forum for you to let us know how each department of our company is meeting your expectations and to provide us with your input regarding how we can improve our service levels. The results will be used by our Executive Officers to gain a better understanding of your corporation's needs and/or expectations and how we can better meet them.

We encourage you to contact your manager's immediate supervisor for a password then visit our webpage, www.wilsonblanchard.com, and under the Tools heading click on the Performance Evaluation drop down box. The confidential survey is very user friendly and will require very little time to complete.

We look forward to hearing from you!



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