

RCM MINI-PROFILES in their Own Words

■ **Name: Robin Szekeres**

Current employer: Inspirah Property Management

Year entered the profession: 2001

Year RCM obtained: 2005

Other education: Honours Bachelor of Arts, University of Guelph

Mentor(s) in the industry: I would say that if I had to pick a mentor it would have to be Debbie Wilson. She was the first teacher that I had when

I was taking my certification courses. She taught Condominium Law and she was passionate about it. She instilled that same passion in me.

How do you perceive ACMO's impact on the industry? The accreditation process that ACMO has introduced has brought dignity and respect to the field of property management. I have often likened property management to being a doctor and I see calling yourself a property manager without the credentials, or without the intention to obtain the credentials, is like a doctor practicing without a license – it's a dangerous undertaking for everyone involved. When you are managing a condominium corporation the owners are entrusting you with their most precious investment, their home, and you owe it to them to do it in the most professional manner possible with their best interests in mind. ACMO, through the RCM program and through continuous education via seminars and courses, makes sure that property managers are educated in legislation and other facets of the industry that are pertinent, thereby ensuring that owners are getting the best management possible.



Robin Szekeres, RCM

A personal success story on the job: Rather than coming up with a specific story I would say that my greatest success on the job is being able to last ten years in this business. In July of this year I started my 10th year and for all but one of the condominium corporations in my portfolio, I have been the only property manager my owners have ever had. I know where all the bodies are buried, so to speak. As board members change and owners move in and out, I am the constant. I know the history so that I am able to provide the background story behind every issue so that my boards are able to make informed decisions. And with this continuity I have had the good fortune to develop friendships with my board members and owners. I have been invited to their weddings and have visited them in the hospital when their babies have been born. I am welcomed into their homes, and to me that is success.

What's your biggest challenge as a manager? The biggest challenge I face as a manager is recognizing that all corporations and properties are different and adjusting accordingly. I often think of the corporations within my portfolio as my children. First there are the newborns, the newly registered condominiums that require a lot of attention in the first year as you open all bank accounts, get to know your owners, set up all contracts and arrange for performance audits and comprehensive reserve fund studies. Like a baby,

a new corporation requires constant attention. And then there are my toddlers and teenagers, condominiums that are three to ten years old that are going through their growing pains. And then there are older children, mature and starting to need major repairs and replacements. Like your children, you have to recognize that each of your condominiums is unique with its own set of needs and concerns and you have to mold them, guide them, and help them to realize their potential.

What's your favourite part of the job? My favourite part of the job is juggling all the hats that you wear as a property manager. It adds variety and excitement to every day and ensures that there is never a dull moment!! To your owners and your boards you are expected to be and must be many different things: accountant, financial advisor, lawyer, engineer, psychiatrist, writer, contract negotiator and "Indian chief". Don't get me wrong, I am by no means saying that having a registered property manager means

you don't have to rely on the advice of other experts, far from it. What I mean is that as a manager you are the first professional that the board turns to for advice. You are the first line of defense. It is usually based on your recommendation that the board then decides to bring in the "big guns." My boards count on me and the expertise I bring to the table. It is one of the most challenging and yet rewarding parts of the job. I know lots of other property managers find "hat changing" to be one of the most difficult parts of their job but to me variety is the spice of life!

Best business advice you ever received: To quote a much overused catch phrase "Get a life"! Property management is a very time consuming occupation and if you let it, your job can and will take over your entire life. In the early years as Inspirah Property Management was growing, I was putting in long days, often working 60-70 hours per week or more. I was eating and sleeping my sites at the expense of time with my family and especially my young daughter. I remember sitting at my computer one night in the middle of the online chat for the condominium law course hoping that the Little Mermaid would run just long enough to hold my daughter's attention and get me to the end of the class. Balance is the key. I must admit I have not had a lot of balance in the first ten years of my life as a property manager but I am hoping that it is a skill that will develop as I start the second decade.

How does having your RCM help you focus on your own career objectives, and how does it help in your relationships with your client-boards: Having my RCM is so much a part of who I am now that I wear it like a second skin. It's always there. It allows me to interpret the *Condominium Act* and the documents of each of my respective corporations and guide them with confidence. I don't need to second-guess myself because experience has taught me the course to follow. I don't think that many of my board members really think in terms of how having an RCM at the helm helps them out. They take it for granted and they

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should. Being a board member and being accountable to all owners is a huge responsibility and these gracious volunteers don't need the added burden of having to worry about whether their property manager is indeed qualified to assist them with their noble duty. Having my RCM allows me and my boards to be able to focus on the task at hand, which is running their corporations to the benefit of all.

■ Name: Roxana Niculescu

Current employer: Mica Consulting & Services – President

Year entered the profession: 1999

Year RCM obtained: 2003

Other education: Mohawk College – 2 years property management courses, Institute of Housing Management Diploma, Business Administration courses, real estate courses

Mentor(s) in the industry: Two people were very important to my professional development: first, Ray Wilson, who was my teacher at Mohawk College. I always appreciated his supportive attitude and “hands on” approach. And

second, Tania Haluk, who gave me my first opportunity to enter the condominium management industry. She spent long hours helping me, supporting me, giving me the trust and confidence I needed. Tania continued to advise me throughout the years, even after she moved to other companies.

How do you perceive ACMO's impact on the industry? ACMO has had a tremendous influence in professionalizing the industry, by setting high standards for management companies and property managers. It is informative, educational and supportive for companies and individuals serving the industry.

A personal success story on the job: I believe it is of utmost importance to create a good professional relationship not only with your board of directors but with all owners of a community. Taking the time to educate your board of directors is very rewarding. I had many corporations with split boards and I am proud to say that I was able to change that by just taking the time to explain in detail our



Roxana Niculescu, RCM

role in the community.

In my career, I have been able to turn angry, irate owners into happy customers. I am proud that I have my own successful company in this industry that I do not have to advertise; all my business growth is based on referrals from my boards of di-

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rectors or from unit owners.

What's your biggest challenge as a manager? What's your favourite part of the job? The biggest challenge is to keep the challenges in perspective: every situation has a good solution when you are willing to find one.

My favourite part of the job is when the harmony of a community is achieved and maintained.

Best business advice you ever received: Several good pieces of advice come to mind, but the one I always followed was being proactive. There is nothing more rewarding than sitting in a meeting presenting the manager's report, in which you make

your recommendations and receive confirmation from your board of directors that your proactive actions have reduced the list of problems or even eliminated it.

How does having your RCM help you focus on your own career objectives, and how does it help in your relationships with your client-boards: While there is no substitute for experience, when you add the RCM credential your board of directors' feeling of trust and protection is greatly enhanced. Mutual trust is an important key element in managing a property and the RCM designation is a credible independent endorsement. ■

Recent Project — Robin Szekeres



Chillico Estates, a 46-unit townhouse property in Guelph, boasts a successful landscaping project that Robin and the Board recently completed.

Where: Chillico Estates, WSCC No. 140, Guelph, ON

What: Landscaping, Forestell Designed Landscapes

Challenge/Solution: Chillico Estates, a 42-unit townhouse complex, was built in 2006.

To address the privacy concerns raised by unit owners as well as foot traffic throughout the property, landscaping options were explored to provide a natural, "green" solution. The completed design that includes a central raised berm successfully addressed the privacy concerns. The board of directors, together with the property manager, worked with the landscape company and converted their vision into reality.