

Get Real Podcast Episode: 067 Find Tenants and Never Lose Money Again

Host: Ron Phillips

Welcome to the get real podcast. Your high octane, boosted in the trenches, tell it like it is, reality therapy for personal, business, and real estate investing success with your host entrepreneurs, Angela Thomas and Ron Phillips. It's time to get real.

Ron: Hello, everybody. Welcome back to the Get Real podcast. I'm Ron Phillips here with Heather Marchant. And I don't know if you guys haven't if you guys haven't already, please subscribe. Leave us to leave us a review. I mean, we'd prefer it be 5-Star and we prefer it be glowing and everything. You're gonna do it. So do that. We've got a got a topic that actually, Heather, I mean, somebody requested this, right. So for all of you out there who are like, yeah, I'd send something but they probably aren't going to listen to me anyway. Actually, we do. We went through six of them this morning and we decided to do this one. And we're probably gonna do all six of them. We just chose this one for today. And I think it's a great one. I didn't actually think about this. I probably would have never thought of this as a topic. But, Heather, it's a good one. It is. I think it was one of your clients, right? That requested this? Yeah.

Heather: Client on several properties. Owns vacation rentals, too. He wanted us to talk about how to decrease your vacancies in your properties, how to work with your property manager as well to help decrease your vacancies. So this is something I think we never think of it, Ron, because this is stuff we kind of go through all the time and don't realize that we have this additional tips and tricks is really what it comes down to. When we wrote this list together, I'm like, man, these are can be really powerful. And for us, it's kind of second nature because they've been doing it for so long.

Ron: Yeah. And I think there's again, going back to what we said earlier, I think there's a lot of stuff like that too, that if you're sitting out there and you're going, man, I really wish that they didn't skip over this piece. That seems you know, I don't understand it. It may to us, it may seem some simple and we skipped over without thinking, but we could do an episode on it if you guys want to. So just make sure you're e-mailing stuff in to us or making comments on the shows or, you know, however you want to get a hold of us. On Youtube or Facebook. Yeah. So just make sure you do that because we do look at them and we and we this is this shows for you guys. This is not for me. It's not for Heather. It's not for anybody else we have on here. It's for you guys. So if you need, if you want to learn something, you need to know, learn something, then just let us know. So let's dive in.

Heather: Ron, so tell us how you can prevent your tenant from moving out. First, let's start there.

Ron: So the way is easiest way to prevent anything with tenants is just not have them.

Heather: Not have tenants. Sorry, that was deep but it's a great starting point.

Ron: I mean, one of the things that's kind of depends on what your property management company is doing or what they're willing to do. But if you know your lease is coming due in two or three months, it's worth it to call your management company and have them reach out to the tenant for two reasons. Number one, if they are going to move out for whatever reason, it's better to know three months out than it is to know when they move out for sure, because you can plan for it because, you know, there's a couple of things you can do. So if they're going to move out and there's nothing you can do about it, let's just hit that one real quick. If they are, then it would be good to go in there and assess the situation a few weeks before you have to line up your crews so that you know what crews you have the lineup for the turn. Now, if you're going to clean the carpet and just do a general cleaning, that's one thing. But if the paint the entire place and replace the carpet, it's best to get that stuff done because you can have that stuff done in a week instead of two or three weeks if you're proactive about it.

Heather: Yeah, yeah. Everybody is scheduled to go in, you know. So yeah.

Ron: Just know. Plus you can already start marketing it. There's no reason why you can't market it. You may be all the least the thing up and have people waiting on you to get it done rather than, you know, let's wait three weeks to get all the work done and then we'll put it on the market. And then after we put it on the market, then we'll wait another two or three weeks. Now you're a month, month and a half in where you could have had this thing done, turned, rented and everything all proactively. Yeah. Right. Because the property management company has pictures from before when they listed it. They can use the pictures from before. Because if you're going to make it look just like that, there's no reason why they can't do that. Right. I've even had them sometimes ask if we had somebody who's really qualified for the property if they could come see it. I think that's a bad idea because a lot of times the property's not very good shape, but a lot of times they can run it right off the pictures from last time. And so get with your tenants early, because the other thing you can do is you can try and figure out a way to keep them there.

Heather: Yes. Learn why I want to move. Maybe there's some repair that's driving them crazy that maybe the property manager didn't get done. And they just don't even, they're not even aware.

Ron: So, yeah, it could be something so simple that is just driving them nuts. Maybe not a repair maybe it's something else. Maybe it's that. Maybe it's that. The management company, they tried to reach the wrong way and they and they didn't get through. Or whatever, it could be something so dumb. Yeah. And in addition to that, a lot of times the tenants a lot of times tenants aren't great with finances and they don't understand how much it's gonna cost to move. Yeah, that's so true. And a lot of times if you're if you're property management company is good, they can go in and help them understand that not only are they moving to another place because they think it may be nicer and increasing their rent on a monthly basis, but that it's going to cost them probably a thousand to fifteen hundred dollars to move. Yeah. Plus they're gonna have to put the deposit down plus they're gonna do it. So they got all this stuff they're gonna have to do to move and maybe there's something that you can do creative to keep them in there. And why would you want to do that.

Heather: Oh my gosh. The math. I did the math on this when I first started working with you, Ron. I remember when I got this, like the light bulb of like, wait a minute. Having them move out, having it vacant for. Even if it's two weeks waiting for a tenant, that's half a month's rent.

Ron: You know, plus the turn cost, plus the lease fee. You know, it it gets expensive that you do not want tenant turns if you can avoid them. So this is actually a really good question that this client ask. And there's some other things you can do. But this is the when you're contemplating anything with this. This is math. You have to take your emotions out of this. So emotionally, I could think to myself, I should be raising my rent. I shouldn't be negotiating crap with these people. Right. But let's just take the emotion out of it for a second. Mm hmm. And let's think through what the math tells us. So if you have a thousand dollar a month rent, okay, these people are gonna move out and you're gonna have a 30 day vacancy. That's a thousand bucks. You could give them twenty-five dollars off a month in rent if they stay. And you are so far money ahead. It's not even I mean, it's ridiculous.

Heather: Four hundred dollars is what that would cost you. Versus a thousand plus you have to pay the lease up fee, which is typically to half the first month's rent. So that's five hundred dollars.

Ron: And that's if you get a rented within 30 days. Because sometimes what happens is you take two weeks to get the place the repairs done because nobody checked early enough. So we didn't know people were moving out. So now we finally line up the people and you know, if it's a market like we just we were just in where there's almost no workers, it could be two, three weeks before you get everything done. Then they list it. Then you finally get somebody who wants to rent it, but they can't move in until the

following month. So now you've got two months worth of vacancies in addition to two months where the vacancy you got the lease up fee plus you had the turn costs that could easily eat up three thousand thirty-five hundred bucks, maybe more. Yeah, right. All because you wanted to raise the rent or not. You know what I mean, so you got it. You gotta think through the math on this whole thing.

Heather: For sure and the same thing goes when you're leasing up a property and say it's been vacant for 30 days and you have no interest lowering the rent. Twenty-five dollars is gonna yield you such better return than it will be waiting 60 days to get it rented. So losing a whole other month's rent. So don't be afraid to drop rent at the recommendation of your property manager. They know the market. They know they know their level of interest. And how many properties at this price point are on the market. They know all that stuff.

Ron: And you know, case in point, we had a property, we had a house that wasn't renting. And I asked the manager management company, like, should we drop the rent? And they go, it isn't a rent thing. Lowering the rents, not going to change it. We just had we had the showings that we had. The showings were good. For whatever reason, we had a rash of showings that didn't qualify for this house. Right. Everybody wanted it. Everybody was willing to pay the price. It wasn't a money thing. We just didn't get the right person to come through there. Yep. And it and it ultimately did rent. Right. But that's where the trust comes in with them. They do understand what's going on on the ground. So they will tell you if you're not if they think you're unwilling to be reasonable, they may not tell you because they don't want to. They don't want to hear it from you. Right. But if you're reasonable they'll tell you. Just ask them like is my rent too high? Yeah. And they might say, yes, today it is, because for whatever reason, there's 10 properties all around yours and they're all at the same price as yours. It's going to take a little bit longer to rent. If you drop the rent twenty-five bucks, you're going to be under everybody else and it should rent quickly. You should listen to that advice. Yes. You should ask for it and you should listen to it.

Heather: Yeah. They are the expert. You're hiring them for their expertise. So take advantage of the information that they have for sure. So what about if you have a vacancy in the winter months? Ron, we were talking about this earlier. What are some things you can do with. Because after Thanksgiving, typically people aren't moving very often, you know.

Ron: So it depends on the market because it's the opposite of that in Florida. You know, because all the snowbirds come down there in the wintertime, that's when it's. But yes, in most of the country, soon as soon as the tree goes up, nobody's moving unless they're forced out. And then generally speaking, you don't want them. If they

were forced out. So the best way to avoid having a vacancy in the winter is to not have a vacancy in the winter, which again is a brilliant statement. But look, if you rented your property and somehow it rents in November, you need to tell your management company you don't ever want any of your leases coming up in the winter. Yes. Which means if they rented it in November, that you need to do a 14 month lease or 15 month lease. And it is worth giving a little bit of a concession to get them to sign into the spring, because then if it does turn, you're not going to sit for as long vacant. Again, it's a math. It's a math equation. Right. So it's worth having that conversation because property management companies get in the routine of just doing a one year lease. Right. So property management company, the ownership and the leadership of that company probably knows what I'm saying. Trickle that all the way down to the leasing agent. Leasing agent is getting in your lease. That's what they do, right? They're just going out, getting year leases all the time. Unless somebody actually tells them, hey, on this person, we want you to offer them twenty-five dollars less a month. If they'll sign a 15 month lease or 16 monthly's whatever pushes you into spring. Yeah, and it's just a little hack, but it'll save you a lot of money because if they did move out. That's the prime leasing season. Well, depending on where you are, you don't want to wherever your property is, you want to land in the prime leasing season and you don't want to land in the off season where not very many people are shopping. Yes, most of the country. That's winter.

Heather: That's right. So I love that trick because it's really simple. I've had it work before where you can do a short-term lease if there's circumstantial or short-term lease and you get more rent. But definitely the longer-term lease is better going that way.

Ron: And if you're vacant in the winter, make sure you tell your property management company that you are willing to take short term leases. Yeah, sometimes there are burnout victims and people like that in the winter that will need a six month lease or an eight month lease, which will be perfect for you. And they're willing to pay premium for it because the insurance company is the one paying.

Heather: Yeah, we have one property in inventory right now that we just got that the tenant is paying. It's the insurance company paying and they're paying. I believe it's five hundred dollars over the rent range. I mean it's crazy, crazy high. So those can be worth it if you time it right.

Ron: And those people generally take pretty good care of the property because they get burned out of their home. Usually if homeowners usually take better care of properties than your average tenant does. And so those are a pretty good bet and you're getting extra money. So if they did do any damage, then, you know, you should

be able to fix it. It should be not a whole lot of money out of pocket. So always be open to those. And if you've got a, I just said this another video. But if you have an Airbnb or something like that and you're caught kind of, you know, flat footed for this this whole, you know, travel ban thing. Make sure you make sure you've got your thing opened up for a little bit longer term than one week or weekends or nightly or whatever. Make sure that you're advertising in places where the professionals are looking. The nurses, the people who actually are out there still needing this stuff. And property management companies that could put burnout up victims in your property place. Things like that. Yeah, it's great.

Heather: Great tip. Another one that I thought of, too, is pets. I have a lot of clients that really are scared of pets in the house, which I don't have any pets in my house. I'm not a real, I'm a cold hearted.

Ron: I wish I didn't have any in my house.

Heather: Yes. Ron affectionately talks to his dog regularly.

Ron: I love animals, but I'm sick of having them in my house. Yeah, I'm just straight up sick of having them in my house. Yeah. I don't want to leave your dog and I will love your cat and whatever else you have. I love animals just to one of them. My house anymore.

Heather: Yes. So a lot of my clients, when they first buy their first property or first few properties, they want to tell their property managers no pets whatsoever. And I actually discourage that.

Ron: Yeah, big mistake. Yeah, big, big, big mistake. And the reason why is because about 50 percent of the population, if not more, have pets. Yeah. So you have just chopped your rental pool in half if you do that. Now and if you think about it, there's only certain people who are going to qualify for your property anyway. So you've already shrunk it down. If you're having decent credit, people move into your place and then if you take pets out, you shrink it even further down. That's going to prolong your, you know, your vacancies. I promise there is not going to be much traffic.

Heather: Yeah, there's a few things you can do to help mitigate the risk with having pets. Obviously, the most obvious is there's gonna be a pet deposit, right? You're going to have money often and they pay a little higher rent every month and they have a deposit for that. So, and it's nonrefundable. So and then when the tenants move out, you use that money to clean carpets or if they scratch the wall or something like that. And also in mine, I limit the size of the pets. So under I think mine, all my management

agreements I put under 25 pounds. I think is kind of a threshold. So I don't have large dogs. You have a large dog, don't you?

Ron: My dog is large. Yes, sixty pound dog.

Heather: Yeah. So the small little ones. Right. The yappy ones.

Ron: But they're small, they get small little yappy ones. Do a lot of. I mean they can do just as much damage as the big ones. So you know but and they're annoying.

Heather: Do you put bigger pets, and you're right. Do you allow for larger?

Ron: So I don't really care. The only thing I care about is the you know, the insurance. Pets. So anyone anyone that the insurance company doesn't allow? I don't allow. But usually the management companies don't allow those anyway because it messes with their insurance. So. OK. But no, I really don't care. I've found that little dogs do just as much damage as big dogs and cats can do more damage than dogs. And I mean, just doesn't it doesn't make any if they're going to do damage, you're going to do damage. That's why you have that pet deposit and that's why you have the the premium on the rent is. And that's why you check references. That's why you check references, because the references will tell you if their dog tore the house apart.

Heather: And you can also request your property managers check on the property. I ask my property manager to go and sign the renewal of my tenant, but go on site. I said I don't want the tenant to come into your office. I want you to go on site to the property. Make sure there's no crazy damage or extra people living there. Extra pets living there. Go to the house and earn that renewal bonus. Yeah. And they were fine with it. There was no pushback whatsoever. So a few other hacks, Ron, talk about neighborly. This is pretty cool. A way to reduce your tenants security deposit. They have to pay up front.

Ron: There's a few companies that do this, but there's companies out there that will that's it's basically insurance for it's like deposit insurance. And it's typically less expensive than a full deposit. And your tenant can buy it. And instead of putting a deposit down. So it lowers their entry fee, but it protects you because anything they tear up is covered by the insurance policy that they bought.

Heather: Yeah. I mean, the security deposits a lot for people to come up with this deposit and first month's rent. When we were renting in Hawaii, I remember oh my gosh. Because we are paying rent on our place back here in Salt Lake and we paid 15 hundred dollars deposit and 15 hundred dollars rent plus we were paying it back here.

And I was like, I we are going to be broke. And we were when we got home, we were broke.

Ron: Expenses. Yeah. And that's exactly what I was talking about. That you need to tell your tenants because if they're going to move across town, just to move across town. If you need to understand what Heather just said. Yeah. That's a lot of money. Yeah. Fertile.

Heather: Awesome. So that's a really good hack. And then Ron had a great story about TV incentive for getting new tenants. And I love this.

Ron: Yes. And I've only done this once. But be creative. I mean, I used to tell my when we used to have a property management company back in the day when I was insane. And I'm sorry to all you property managers out there. But that is. I can't stand that business. I'm grateful for you, but I hate the business. Anyway. We used to tell our leasing agents that nobody leaves if they're interested in the property. They don't leave without putting a deposit down. Like what? What is it going to take? This is a sales. You like the place. OK. Then let's put a deposit on it because you want to take them off the market. You want them out there looking at other properties. You want to take their money and then they'll stop looking. Right. Yeah.

Heather: And so in that, Ron, you would tell your property manager, right. You'd say this is how much money I'm willing to do for some.

Ron: Nobody leaves if you've got it. Nobody leaves if they like the property without, you know, like don't shoot all the bullets in one shot. But let's make sure that we, you know, use them strategically. And in this situation, we had it was a new subdivision. We had quite a few in there that needed to be rented. And we told them, like, look, this is the amount of money. I think it was like 50 percent of one month's rent or something like that. But I think the rents were, you know, fourteen hundred fifteen bucks. It was a lot of money. And, you know, we told them, don't anybody leave if they're interested in the unit. Figure out what's going to make a deal today. Like what is it that's gonna get it? Yeah. And I think there's one couple said jokingly, well, we want a TV then. Because they didn't have for whatever reason, their TV broke or whatever they wanted to TV in the deal. And they called us up and we're like, they want a TV. And I'm like, fine, we'll buy them a seven hundred TV, which is a pretty decent TV nowadays. I mean. Back in nineteen ninety, whatever, it would've been a piece of crap, but today you get a decent TV for seven bucks. I'm sorry. And then once they realized that they actually offered that to people as an incentive and it worked. People in that area liked it. It probably won't work everywhere. Right.

Ron: But get creative and tell your management companies that you are open like. What's it gonna take to get people in? Because, again, it's a math problem. If I can get somebody in today and I don't have 30 days worth of vacancy and I give them half a month's rent to give in that get in there, which equates to whatever TV or whatever the case may be. Right. Or I lower the deposit down by using neighborly or some other, you know, insurance company like that. What happens is you give your leasing agents bullets so they can shoot because they want they get paid leasing. Just you don't know leasing agents get paid like salespeople on commission. They want to lease the place. That's how they get paid. You know, if you give them additional tools, they'll use them to lease your place. And then it comes back to a math problem. You know, if you lose 30, if you lose 30 days of a fourteen hundred dollar rent, you've lost fourteen hundred dollars. Yeah, right. But if you can move somebody in by giving up something. Right then move them in.

Heather: Yeah. I had a client do Amazon gift cards for an apartment building. Yeah.

Ron: Be creative and have them be creative like tell them to be creative with this money. You do whatever you need to do with this money. This is what I'm willing to spend. Just tell me what it is. I'm open to suggestions. Or is there an idea that you have that I haven't thought of? Yeah. And then be open to what they say. Yeah. Be flexible a little bit.

Heather: Because they know their tenant pool. They know the people that are typically going to rent the properties and what they might want. So again, your property manager is the expert. So and then I have asking questions of your property manager when it's vacant. You can ask things like, hey, is a sign in the yard where have you listed the property? Is it listed on Facebook marketplace? Do you have it on one of our markets? It's a 55 plus community. And so it's do you have it in the newspaper or are you advertising in assisted living places or, you know, things like that? Know your tenants and advertise in the right places and then showing the units versus using a lockbox code. And what works best for you, that tenant, that market and that tenant pool that you're working with.

Ron: Right. And it's also OK to have a weekly call or weekly email that reports. What happened? Like, you know, how many hits did we get on the online? How did that translate into showings? And then how many of the showings turned into apps? And did we have any approved apps?

Heather: A lot of them will even tell you comments that they made to you.

Ron: But all that stuff is important for you to know because then you can direct them. Like if everybody that came in said that. I don't know about it. I don't really know.

Heather: But if everybody had the same, they came in and said, it's dirty. I've had that just recently.

Ron: Yeah. And then you go, well what the hell are you. Very nicely said. What the hell are you doing? Clean the freaking house. Yeah. And then you can say I mean you billed me to clean it. Let's make sure it's clean. Yeah. Right. It's okay to ask those questions. That's right. And anyway, Heather.

Heather: A great property manager is gonna be all over it. Right. They're gonna have all the answers. So you'll have red flags if they don't know or if there's no sign in the yard and they tell you it's not important, don't ask them every day.

Ron: Don't be an annoying jerk. But it's perfectly it's perfectly acceptable every week to go. Here's what happened this week because from the from the data, you can extrapolate what's happening if you're getting no showings. That's a problem. If you get a lot of clicks. No showings, then you probably are overpriced. Yes. Your pictures suck or something is happening, right? You can if you know what the numbers are. Then you can isolate where the problem is. If you're getting clicks to the to the ads and to the site and then nothing is happening. Then something's wrong with the ad or something's wrong with the price or something's wrong with the offering. Yeah. Great. You're getting them into the house and you're getting no apps. Then there's something wrong with the house or the house with the pricing or the offering or something is wrong at the house. Something's wrong there. Right. Either if it's a lockbox thing, maybe it's that there's nobody there to close them. Yeah. We've had we've had that happen too. Right. And if you're getting apps and nobody's getting qualified, are we advertising in the right place. Because if we can't get anybody approved, we got the wrong bodies coming through our funnel. Yes. Right. So all of that data tells you things and you should pay attention to the data.

Heather: Yeah, I agree. One more thing I was going to mention is don't deviate from your principles. I had a property go vacant, and I think I've just after Thanksgiving in that no man land time. And I had I I declined two tenants, but it was because they had so many pets. I had just put in new carpeting using the security deposit from the previous tenant because they had a dog. And they, I put in all new carpet in a small little house and I had tenants, I had two tenants. One had four pets and the other one had three cats. And I was like, I'm out. So even if it means vacancy and you know that it could I mean, carpet replacement is pretty expensive. It was worth it to me to wait two more weeks. And I got a great tenant in the first part of January. I sat vacant in December, but I was happy I didn't allow so many pets. Right. So, know what you're willing to accept and don't deviate from it out of being desperate.

Ron: Yes, I think that's fine. That's great advice. And hopefully this was hopefully this is what you asked for. So if it wasn't, then write us back. Hopefully we didn't totally missed you a lot. Hopefully that's what you wanted. But man, if you if you sometimes guys like you know, we've had several times when over the last fifteen years where we've got up, there's five identical properties in a subdivision kind of all spread around. They're exactly the same. Four of them lease. No problem. Yeah. Fifth one just sits there and there's like no one can figure out what the hell is wrong with this house. Nothing. Like same price, same everything. Same everything. Literally everything. Not on a busy street. There's no negatives to it. It just sitting there. And sometimes you just have to.

Ron: You just have to grease the wheel a little bit to make it work. And you can't get anxiety over the fact that why? Why does my house end up being the, you know, the redheaded stepchild over there? Right. Why is that? Well, it doesn't really make any difference. It just happened to be that way. Next time around, it probably won't be yours, it'll probably be somebody else's. Sometimes that happens and there's nothing you can do about it other than just grease the wheel a little bit and get the thing filled. Yeah, it's true. It's true. I don't know why. I wish I knew why.

Heather: Yeah, I know. We'd be a lot more lucrative, I guess, if we knew. But I think the last point I'll mention too is showing gratitude like don't be a jerk. I know we talk about this all the time, but be kind to your property manager. You know that this was last time when that one I mentioned actually that was rented in January. I sent him a box of cookies. They raised my rent 100 hundred bucks a month. And I mean, I made out like a bandit on that deal. And I sent them a box of cookies and said, thank you so much for all of your work. And I got emails and text messages thanking me from several members of their staff. Right. They don't get thank you's often enough. So say thank you. When it gets leased.

Ron: It's a true statement. It is the other than maybe the IRS, an IRS agent. I mean, I'm trying to think of people who get abused more. I would think maybe an IRS agent would get abused more than property management company. Be nice. Be nice as much as you can be direct and you can be assertive. Just don't be a jerk. Yeah, 100 percent. I agree. I think that everybody knows. So if you liked the episode, then it takes literally no effort. Just click the little like button. That's fantastic. If you really like it or have liked some of the other ones, then you know it takes a little more effort. But write us a review. We would love that. Send in your questions as you can very clearly see. We do read them. You can find us a GetRealEstateSuccess.com. Share us with all of your friends and even your enemies. We don't care.

Heather: Share with everybody and or with your property manager.

Ron: There you go. Share with the property manager. They'll be like these guys told me how to do my job. Share with you every manager anyway. Maybe it'll maybe it'll help them have some ideas. And you know what? Maybe they will email you back other ideas that you can send to us, which would be even better maybe. Maybe your property manager knows so much more than we do about how to eliminate vacancies. They can educate us and that would be fantastic. We'll do a whole other show on it. As matter of fact, if your property manager happens to be listening to this right now and you have brilliant ideas that you want to submit to us, we will not only do another show on this or a segment of a show, but we will pimp out your company on the show and tell her about how awesome you are because you came up with things that we didn't come up with.

Heather: So, yeah, that's a good idea. I mean, one thing we mentioned, Ron, on the last episode I just remembered is when the tenant can't pay rent as a way to prevent vacancy, that they help them qualify for unemployment or things like that so they can stay in the house. We mentioned that.

Ron: So especially right now, right now, because as of this recording, we are still in the Corona crisis. Yes. So. All right. People appreciate you. We will see you on the next show. See you in a week. All right, thanks.