

Multifamily Hot Takes: The Year in Review and the Road Ahead

Speakers



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Senior Vice President,
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Housing Council



Zlatko Bogoevski

Founder and CEO,
BetterBot



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VP of Marketing
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Multifamily executives and owner-operators have faced numerous headwinds in the past year, including lead quality, cost control, staffing issues and effective management of multiple properties. But there is also much room for growth on the horizon.

In a recent BetterBot-sponsored Multifamily Dive webcast titled Multifamily Hot Takes: The Year in Review and the Road Ahead, a panel of multifamily industry experts examined the economic state of the industry and how multifamily leaders overcame some of the challenges they faced in 2024. The panel also looked ahead to 2025 and examined how technology can help multifamily leaders get ahead of a rapidly evolving market. The discussion covered:

- Key takeaways from 2024
- The evolution of AI in the multifamily industry
- Looking ahead to 2025



Key takeaways from 2024

The panelists opened the webinar by discussing key takeaways from 2024, including challenges and how they impacted the industry's economic status. The challenges were many, including:

- The ability to absorb the incoming supply of units under construction
- Mounting regulations
- Rising costs for insurance, labor and taxes, as well as high interest rates
- Poor lead quality
- Staffing issues

The panelists agreed that some of these headwinds may ease in 2025, particularly with the increased adoption of AI to help overcome staffing shortages and manage rising costs. Elise Rudy, VP of Marketing and Communications at KETTLER, noted that they lean on AI and partners such as BetterBot to be the cog in the wheel, conducting routine business tasks so staffers can spend more time nurturing and converting quality leads.

The discussion then moved to how rapidly changing technology is impacting business. Because of this rapid pace of change and “roll-out” fatigue, many multifamily players struggle to deploy, leverage and accurately calculate AI's return on investment. BetterBot Founder and CEO Zlatko Bogoevski says that to overcome these challenges, technology companies need to provide more education and training for using the technology and discerning between superior and subpar AI offerings. Rudy agreed that gaining owner buy-in and demonstrating ROI is key. The stakes are high in deploying AI successfully, so it's vital to implement internal policies for AI and data use.



The evolution of AI in the multifamily industry

Next, panelists dived a bit deeper into technology by discussing the evolution of AI in the multifamily industry. There's been a significant improvement in how AI can do heavy lifting for multifamily organizations. The biggest evolution has been in tools based on large language models (LLMs) that are specifically tailored to multifamily and fully integrated into property management systems. Bogoevski said that AI is still in its infancy, but continued improvement will allow companies to automate more and operate even leaner without sacrificing renter experience and services.

The panelists then discussed how technology is freeing many employees from menial, repetitive tasks while providing more accurate and expedient answers to residents and prospective tenants. Caitlin Sugrue Walter, Senior Vice President at the National Multifamily Housing Council, noted that people realize that AI isn't here to steal their jobs and that it actually opens up space for the nuanced, human element of conducting business. AI also reduces human error, further improving efficiency.

The conversation then looked at AI from the multifamily marketer perspective and the juxtaposition between what AI promises to offer and the reality of how it's being used daily. "AI has helped to overcome staffing and cost shortages," Rudy said. "Year to date, KETTLER has saved 904 hours per asset (53K+ in total) thanks to AI lead generation and nurturing through BetterBot, which we calculate to be equivalent to \$1,058,220 worth of work and a 9x ROI."

AI is also making KETTLER's marketing more effective by better handling the volume of leads, allowing the company to market in more places, and empowering leaders to focus on human capabilities and employee happiness. "We've focused on making our sales team the master of the in-person experience that can provide top-notch customer service," Rudy noted. "Job satisfaction has increased significantly, which has been extremely impactful for our organization."

"You're not going to lose your job to AI — you're going to lose your job to someone that uses AI — and property managers are going to lose to another property manager that knows how to leverage AI."

— Zlatko Bogoevski, BetterBot Founder and CEO

Bogoevski shared his insight into the positive ROI customers are realizing due to increased lead conversions, time savings and employee retention. He added that ROI will only expand as the operations side of multifamily automates.



Looking ahead to 2025

To wrap up the webinar, the panelists discussed what AI will look like in the coming year and the changes it will bring. Panelists agreed that:

- Interest will turn into adoption.
- Prospect and resident satisfaction rates will increase.
- Organizations will realize high ROI.
- Mass rollouts of AI by Apple, Google and Microsoft will quickly change the landscape.

Finally, they discussed how the multifamily industry's economic outlook may change in 2025. Sugrue Walter believes the election provided more clarity for 2025 regarding positive economic trends. Improvements will include lower interest rates, increased transactions and higher completions. Continuing challenges will be lagging market rent growth, high insurance rates and the ongoing affordability crisis. Ultimately, the economic fundamentals are positive, but multifamily owners and marketers must remain cautious.

For more insights from the hourlong discussion, including best practices and an engaging Q&A session, access the full webinar from Multifamily Dive's resource library.



Watch the webinar ►