STREET.CO.UK

An estate agent's guide to:

Exceeding modern customer expectations.

Why does customer experience matter for estate agents?

In all industries, customer experience is incredibly important.

According to PwC, 32% of consumers will walk away from a brand they love after just one bad experience.

Combine this with the fact that, as an industry, estate agency is only becoming more competitive, and providing a great customer experience becomes a non-negotiable for agents looking to survive.

> A recent survey found the percentage of agents competing with 10+ or 20+ competitors for instructions in their geographical patch.
>
> Competing with **10 or more** agents   **52%**
>
> **20 or more**   **20%**

So, put yourself in a vendor or landlord's shoes: who would you choose? The estate agent that comes highly recommended by a friend? Or the agency that looks the part, but that someone they know had a terrible experience with?

Realistically, your branding can be on point, your marketing can be targeted, and your agents can be local experts – but if your vendors have a negative customer experience, they're more likely to shout about it. 95% more likely, in fact, say customer service experts Dixa.

Put simply:

> If your customer experience is lacking, you could lose instructions, and repeat business, to your competitors.

But what about the benefits of a positive client experience?

The obvious benefits are well-known: delivering an exceptional experience leads to more repeat business, and generates valuable word-of-mouth referrals from satisfied vendors, buyers, tenants and landlords.

However, the advantages go even further. By prioritising a smooth, efficient customer experience, estate agents can achieve faster transactions, and therefore unlock revenue more quickly.

The concept of 'good customer experience' is continually evolving as consumers become accustomed to the seamless, personalised experiences provided by other industries. Property clients — whether they are vendors, buyers, landlords, or tenants — now expect the same high standard of service in their property transactions.

This guide will explore what a 'good' customer experience looks like in 2024, and offer practical strategies to help you exceed these modern expectations, ensuring your clients are delighted at every stage.

"…Street has definitely improved our relationship with consumers…

"…in the fact that they are having a more positive relationship with us, and a more positive experience, particularly with having the app and having access 24 hours a day.

We're finding that being able to put viewing feedback and things like that on the app, [consumers] can just pick it up when they are ready and it gives them a more positive journey. It does allow us, as a company, to read our clients better and respond better to them, which does eventually give us a better sale in the end, which is what we're all here for at the end of the day."

— Alan Batt Estate Agents

The customer experience status quo

and why smart agents are evolving.

The current standard for estate agent customer experience can leave much to be desired, often relying on outdated manual processes that lag behind other industries.

Take booking a property viewing, for example. Traditionally, this involves significant back-and-forth between agents, applicants, and homeowners, with them needing to take phone calls during work hours, or chase for an email response.

The traditional process - takes hours/days
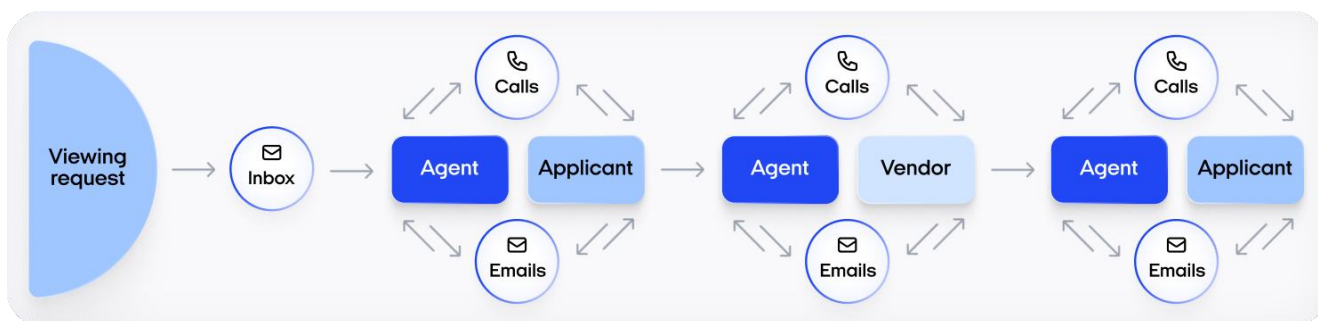
Compare this with booking a property on Airbnb – done in seconds from an app – and the gap in customer experience for homemovers feels even more jarring.

Again, put yourself in a vendor's shoes. When choosing between competing estate agents, both experts in their local area, which one would you choose? An agent that offers a convenient, smooth experience, or one that still uses outdated manual processes?

Of course, delivering exceptional customer service can be easier said than done. For smaller estate agencies with limited resources, giving customers a modern, efficient experience can be difficult, if you don't have access to the right tools.

That's why forward-thinking estate agents are evolving their customer experience offering, by partnering with technology providers that provide customer-friendly, time-saving alternatives to manual processes.

The Street.co.uk process - done in an instant
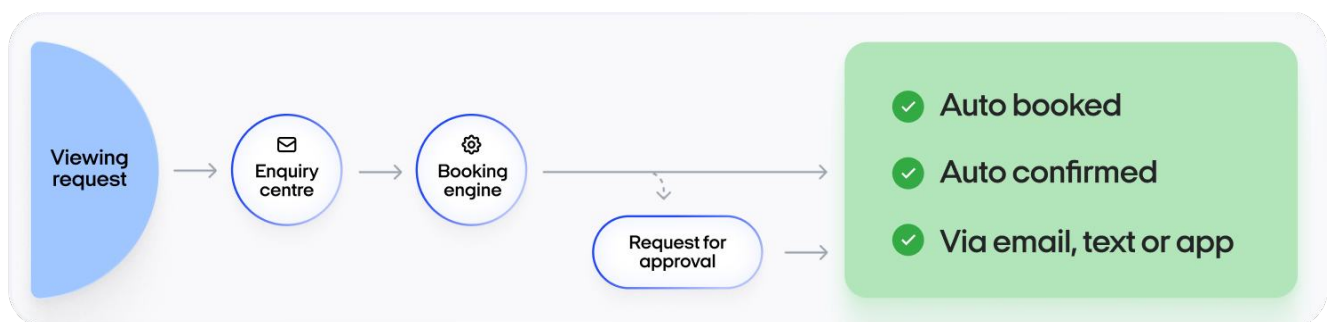
For instance, Street.co.uk offers an easy-to-use online consumer platform, where buyers, sellers, renters and landlords can track and manage their transaction – whenever, or wherever, it suits them.

These features are also available via mobile apps, giving consumers the modern, convenient experience they've come to expect from other service providers.

Now, here's a big question: what does a "good" customer experience look like?

From our research, we've found that it hinges on three key factors: **availability**, **convenience**, and **transparency**.

In this next section, we'll look in more depth at the current state of customer experience for Sales and Lettings, and how agents can exceed customer expectations.

For Sales.

You'll learn about:

- ✓ Availability and responsiveness
- ✓ Convenience
- ✓ Transparency

Availability and responsiveness.

In an industry where first impressions can make or break a deal, the ability to quickly respond to enquiries and be readily available for vendors is essential. With property transactions often involving significant financial and emotional investments, clients expect prompt communication and reliable support throughout the process.

Key touch points include booking a property viewing, valuations, and, more generally, how efficiently an agent communicates with a vendor or buyer. In this section, we'll cover a few ways these areas have traditionally been managed, and how agents can exceed customer expectations.

Based on Street data, one of the most popular times to book viewings was **6pm**, with significant demand until as late as **10pm**.

Bookings by Time
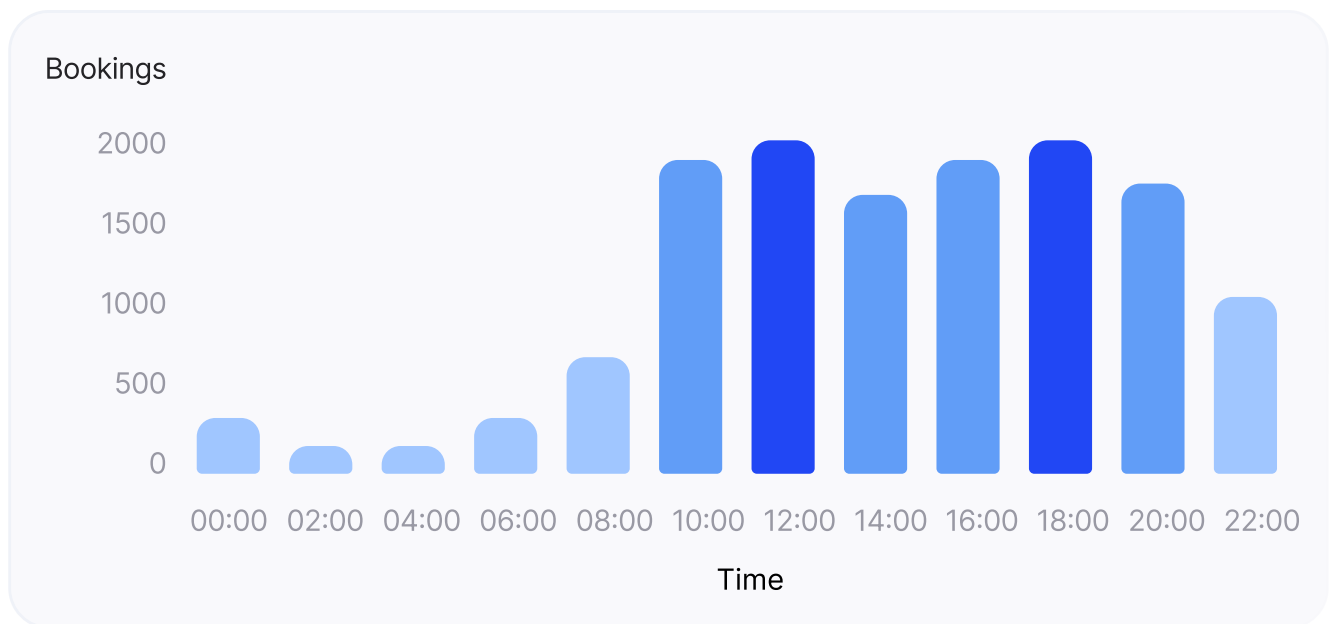
⧗ How it's traditionally been done:

Estate agents' primary method of communication for responding to viewing applications, or other enquiries, is most commonly via phone, or email.

This can cause disjointed, inefficient communication between parties, and lacks the 'on-demand' feel customers have come to expect from sectors like retail.
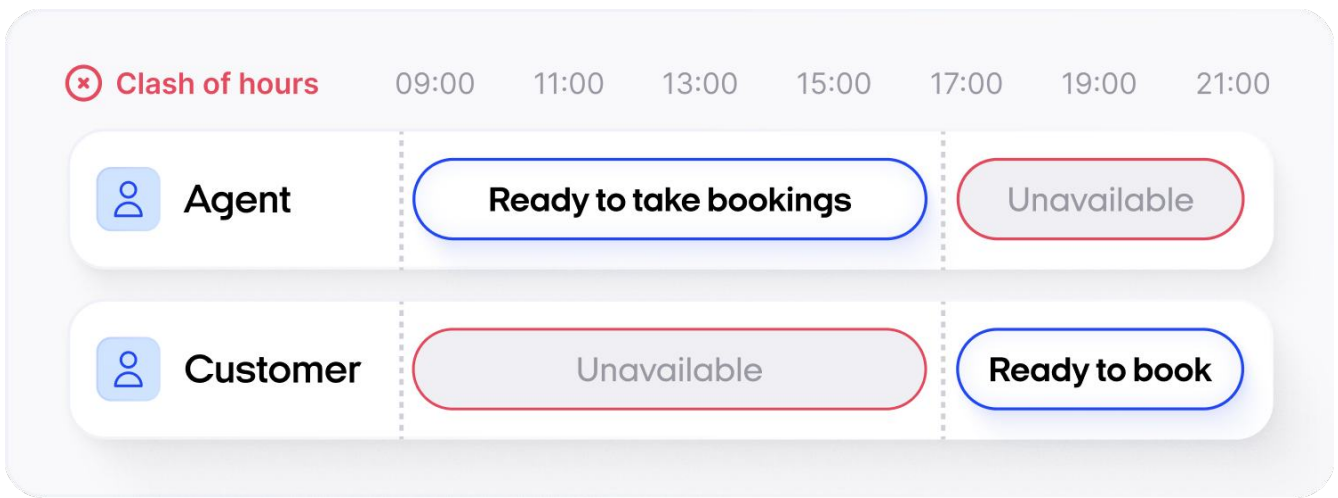
For example, an applicant might want to request to book a viewing at 6pm, when they're statistically most likely to be searching, but your agency is out-of-hours. You then have to email or call the vendor when you're next free to check the appointment, and hope they can get back to you quickly and that they haven't booked through a competitor who did offer instant booking. This can be frustrating for everyone involved, and mean agents miss key opportunities.

🏆 How you can exceed customer expectations:

The easiest way to elevate customer experience in this area is to meet vendors when, and where, they are.

Providing a self-serve, online model for property viewings means a vendor can approve, or decline a booking instantly, at their leisure, without having to repeatedly check their email or call back their agent.

Street.co.uk's online bookings tool allows applicants to request a viewing and vendors can accept, or decline these on-the-go, without interrupting their day to call or email.

> ## 90% of homemovers said they use WhatsApp to communicate.
>
> — **Voice of the Agent, We Are Unchained**

Another way you can tailor your communication to meet customer needs is via WhatsApp. With the majority of homemovers using the platform to communicate, giving them the option of seamlessly reviewing and approving viewing requests on a familiar, convenient platform makes for a smoother customer experience for the vendor, and less admin for you.

CRM WhatsApp integrations like Street.co.uk's even take this one step further by automatically informing the applicant, vendor and agent of any appointment requests, confirmations and cancellations, so you don't have to.

Of course, there are times when a vendor will want to speak to a human, but if your agents are busy – or you're simply a smaller agency – it can be difficult to have someone available to cover the phones at all times.

Or rather than leave potential customers or clients frustrated, why not consider a call handling service? Property industry-specific providers, like **Moneypenny**, can offer a 24/7 telephone or live chat service, so you can provide an elevated customer experience (and make sure you don't miss out on any leads).
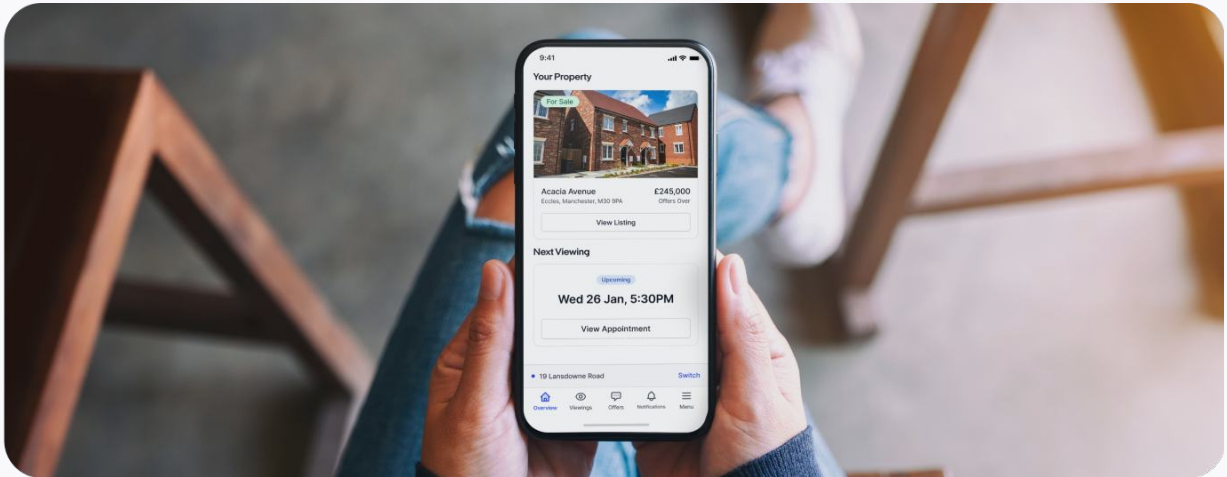
94% of people say they would find an app for property useful, and **80%** said they would be more likely to instruct an agent if they offered an app or similar online service.

— Street.co.uk

Convenience.

57% of Brits vote moving home as the most stressful (and time-pressured) event of their lives, so it's not surprising that today's home movers prioritise convenient, timely communication, to reduce this stress, when choosing their estate agent.

One study found that home movers are "embracing digital channels of communication, driven by the need for convenience, with only 17% preferring face to face contact with their estate agents."

In this section, we'll touch on some of the ways you can provide this convenience for vendors and set your agency apart from the competition.

⏳ How it's traditionally been done:

With most vendors wanting to get their home sold as quickly as possible, any delays in the process can reflect negatively on their overall experience, and on your agency in general.

Typically, inconvenience comes from having to chase agents via email or phone, the admin of providing compliance details like Material Information, or awaiting valuation reports from already busy agents.

For example, when a vendor requests a valuation, this can be a lengthy process, delayed by agents needing to make their home visit, then return to the office to type up a valuation report.

Another example of friction in this process may be agents having to chase vendors for property information ahead of getting their listing live, which can involve significant back-and-forth via email and be frustrating for all parties.

🏆 How you can exceed customer expectations:

As we've touched on before, you can delight homemovers in this area by automating time-consuming processes and meeting vendors when, and where, they are.

We've already discussed how property is going mobile, following other slower-moving industries like banking and legal – with larger national agents even producing their own native apps.

Even if you don't have the resources to produce your own app, working with a CRM that offers a vendor app means you can still provide your vendors with unrivalled convenience across the whole home-moving process.

For example, Street.co.uk's Vendor App allows homemovers to:

✓ Carry out cumbersome compliance tasks, like AML verification, KYC and Property Information Questionnaires, from the comfort of their own home – removing the need to visit your agency in person, or send sensitive information over email.

✓ Inform vendors of viewings, hands-free through push notifications, so they can view, accept, or reject bookings, all in one tap.

✓ Instantly answer any questions that come up during a viewing, all from the mobile app.

[Street.co.uk's Agent App](#) also means that valuations can be quick, comprehensive, and brand-consistent, by allowing agents to input key details while still at the property. Street.co.uk will then create a fully-branded valuation report for you to send to the vendor – so you can avoid any unnecessary delays, and give your client a refreshingly smooth experience.
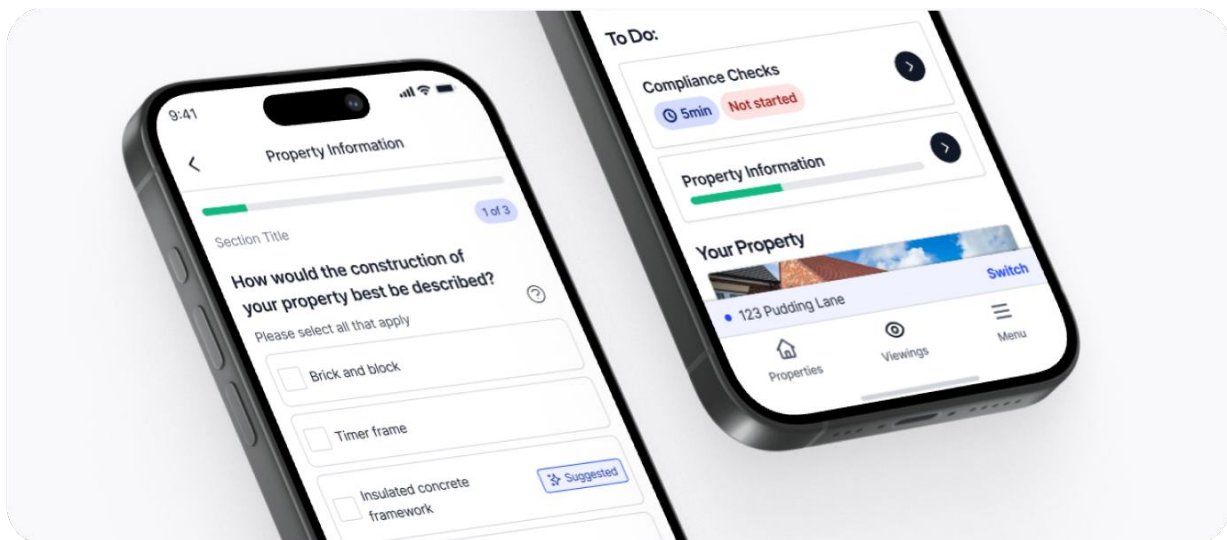
"One of the things that works really well is after a valuation, we can go on the app, put in what we value the property at, fees etc. Agents can save this and set it to send at a later time or date.

Rather than wait till I get to the office to do the follow up, I tend to just do it in the car. The owner then gets an email at seven o'clock that night saying "your valuation report is ready" and it looks like you're working really hard.."

— **Normie Estate Agents**

Transparency.

Trust of estate agents is famously low – recent research shows that as few as 5% of home-movers said they 'completely trusted' their estate agent.

This distrust, coupled with the fact that buying or selling a home is often the biggest transaction in a person's life, means a positive customer experience is more important in the property industry than in most.

Poor customer experience in this area carries the risk of withdrawals, and poor brand reputation. The best way to counteract this is to keep vendors in the loop throughout the process, and be transparent about the efforts you're going to to get their property sold faster.

⧗ How it's traditionally been done:

Listing performance, or customer care reporting, is the most common way of keeping vendors informed on your marketing efforts and feedback from viewings, as well as providing expert recommendations on how to sell their property faster.

When done manually, creating a listing performance report is time-consuming and can mean pain-stakingly gathering data from portals, your own system, and even from telephone conversations. This can leave vendors with less useful information that's not backed up by real data.

For this reason, many agents either don't produce listing performance reports altogether, or resort to calling a vendor with viewing feedback instead – which has its own drawbacks.

🏆 How you can exceed customer expectations:

Vendors want to know what's happening in the process – especially when their property is taking longer than average to sell – so it's crucial they don't feel left in the dark.

CRMs like Street.co.uk can **significantly streamline** the process of creating listing performance reports, meaning you can be proactive, over-communicate and show you're as invested in their sale as they are.

Street.co.uk can gather valuable portal data, collate viewing and pricing feedback, and use AI to create professional email copy – so all you have to do is provide your own expert recommendation, and hit send. By automating the process, providing a first-class customer experience no longer needs to take hours of your agency's time.

Another way to give vendors the transparent experience they crave is via an **online consumer platform**. For example, Street.co.uk's **Seller Account** gives vendors total oversight with:

✓ Valuation details, and the ability to instruct an agent in just a click.

✓ The option to preview and approve property listings before they go live.

✓ A platform to confirm, rearrange or cancel viewing requests.

✓ Feedback from agents and applicants.

✓ The ability to review their property offers.

✓ Real-time, trackable details on their sale progression.

Forward-thinking CRMs even offer a similar platform for **buyers**, so all parties can benefit from refreshing transparency.

"Communicating with clients is no longer something we have to remember to do, now they're with us all the way along. They've got full access to the portal so they can see everything that's happening - which helps them feel part of the process.

The Street.co.uk booking system empowers the owner to be part of the process. It's a level of involvement that's great for building relationships and sharing what we do as agents."
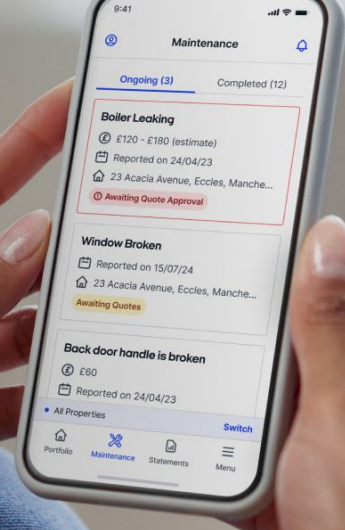
— **Grayson Florence**

For Lettings.

You'll learn about:

- ✓ Availability and responsiveness
- ✓ Convenience
- ✓ Transparency

— For Lettings

Availability and responsiveness.

The Property Ombudsman reported 2,619 Repairs & Maintenance complaints from tenants in 2023.

With this in mind, it's more important than ever for letting agents to provide prompt, helpful responses to queries from tenants and landlords.

This not only enhances the overall customer experience, but also positively contributes to your agency's reputation, leading to stronger relationships, repeat business, and positive referrals in a competitive market.

How it's traditionally been done:

Responding to tenant queries, maintenance requests, and landlord questions may be managed via a mixture of email, phone calls, or external maintenance platforms. Unsurprisingly, this can lead to missed requests, delayed responses, and inbox overload.

Often, due to limited resources and busy agents, tenants may only receive responses to maintenance requests during office hours – which, understandably, can sour your relationship with them from the offset, and dent your agency's reputation.

🏆 How you can exceed customer expectations:

Letting agents can enhance their responsiveness to tenants by using tools like Street.co.uk's <u>Tenant App</u>, which allows tenants to easily submit detailed maintenance requests, including photos and videos, at any time.

Offering an app to tenants means your agency can provide instant support with AI-powered advice for common issues, reducing the need for frequent queries, and meaning tenants are never left frustrated.

This self-serve model can reduce inbound maintenance requests by up to 20%, giving you time to get back to queries that need a human response.

Using an app would also mean your letting agency can offer 24/7 availability and automatic status updates, keeping tenants informed without the need for phone calls, ultimately leading to faster issue resolution and a more efficient management process.

And here's an even bigger benefit: the happier their tenants, the more long-term, hands-off tenancies for your landlords (and more repeat business for your agency).

> When asked why they switched letting agents, 38% of landlords cited "dissatisfaction with the time taken to respond to requests".
>
> — **National Residential Landlord Association (NRLA)**

Convenience.

In a recent study of over **2,000** landlords, **63%** cited "no longer having to deal with repairs" as their main reason for instructing a lettings agency, while **32%** of landlords surveyed by the National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA) listed "providing tradespeople" as one of letting agents' most important services.

Providing an effective platform for tenants to keep track of their tenancy and report any issues allows you to provide unparalleled convenience for your landlords, and let them enjoy the hands-off investment they're looking for.

You can also significantly reduce the regulatory burden for landlords here by automating compliance processes like Property Information Questionnaires, and making sure all the necessary documents and certificates are up-to-date.

⧗ How it's traditionally been done:

Like in many other areas of lettings management, the process of dealing with landlords, handling their queries, and arranging property viewings has traditionally involved back-and-forth over email and phone calls.

This can very quickly become a nuisance to both landlords and prospective tenants, especially when you consider that the majority of tenants will be unavailable to respond to emails or phone calls during the working day – when your agents are most likely to get in touch.

🏆 How you can exceed customer expectations:

There's a huge opportunity to exceed customer expectations here, and provide a better customer experience than your competitors.

Many forward-thinking letting agents are already offering a self-serve experience for landlords and applicants with <u>native apps</u>, or an <u>online platform</u>.

By providing these self-serve options, you can cut out inefficient email messaging, and allow landlords (and tenants) more control over the rental process.

For landlords, this means easy confirmation of viewings, reviewing of rental applications, and access to feedback from agents and applicants.

For renters, this means they can book, cancel and rearrange bookings online, ask landlords any further property questions, and monitor their rental application in real-time.

Plus, by offering a dedicated <u>Landlord App</u> like Street.co.uk's, your landlords can submit compliance information like Property Information Questionnaires or EPC certificates from their mobile device, at their convenience. This means they don't need to provide official documents via email (which can be risky), or by coming into your agency (which can be inconvenient).

> "After 25 years in the industry, I can confidently say that Street.co.uk is a game-changer in property management. The platform's technology is nothing short of fantastic—especially the property viewing system, where applicants can self-serve and book viewings online. The automation features are top-notch, notifying landlords, tenants, and staff of appointments seamlessly."
>
> — Harvey W James

Transparency.

We've touched on how distrust for estate agents is a key sticking point for homemovers – and landlords are no different.

With many landlords uncertain about agency and property management fees, transparency is crucial; not only so landlords can see the value in the admin work you're taking off their plate, but to foster trust.

Here are a few ways you can give landlords a positive customer experience by managing their properties, while allowing them to maintain full oversight of their properties.

⧗ How it's traditionally been done:

When surveyed by The Property Academy, landlords listed "knowledge, listening and responding to questions," as key qualities they look for in a letting agent.

Traditionally, a landlord may have had to contact their letting agent for information about a tenancy, their rental income, service levels, or fees for each property. This all means an influx in inbound phone calls, or emails, for your agency that can be hard to answer quickly. This can leave your landlords feeling uninformed, and mean that they're less likely to recommend you, or give you repeat business should their portfolio grow.

🏆 How you can exceed customer expectations:

Without sounding like a broken record, the only real answer here is to give landlords transparent, __on-demand access__ to this information.

One way to deliver this transparency is with a self-serve __landlord app__ like Street.co.uk's.

A mobile app can offer landlords full portfolio visibility at their fingertips, so they don't have to wait around for answers to important questions.

Plus, by storing and organising a landlord's important documents (like Gas Safety certificates or Rental Agreements) in their own secure personal app, you can help them safely navigate increasingly complex red tape and regulations without having to dig through their emails first – something they'll certainly thank you for.

> "The onboarding process for landlords is exceptional, ensuring all necessary information is covered for advertising, and the AI-driven property write-ups are a real time-saver. Managing letting applications, tenancy renewals, and move-outs has never been easier, with unlimited template creation and communication tools directly integrated into the CRM.
>
> Their best feature, the AI-driven maintenance app, has revolutionised how we handle repairs."
>
> — Harvey W James

Summary.

It's no secret that customer experience matters, and it's only set to become more important in coming years.

In fact, research shows that <u>75% of home movers</u> will rely on reviews when selecting an estate agent by 2025, and 90% of agents think online reputation will be the primary driver of new business within the next 5 years.

So how can your agency stay ahead of the competition and offer a customer experience that makes you the obvious choice for homemovers?

Agents should take advantage of automation, but make sure customers can reach a human when one is needed. In turn, make sure to choose automated solutions that continue to <u>"learn"</u> from human interactions, so those experiences also improve.

The shift to more efficient, self-serve customer experiences will also allow agents to be more engaged when a 'human touch' is needed – and provide the real value that comes from their local and industry expertise.
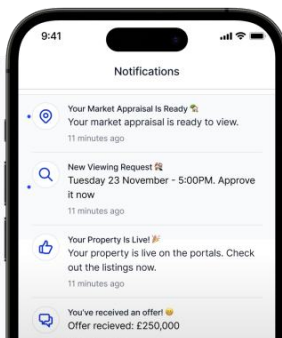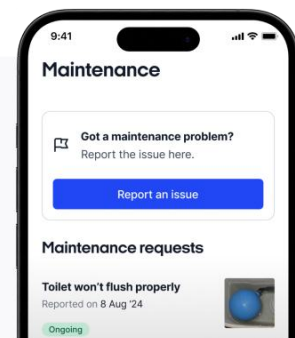
Level up with Street.co.uk.
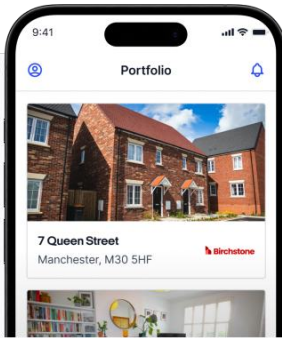
A world-class **Landlord App**, for full oversight over their property portfolios, and more repeat business for your agency.

A dedicated **Tenant App**, for refreshingly efficient property maintenance, and 20% fewer inbound requests to your inbox.

An easy-to-use **Vendor App**, to make selling a home a smoother experience – and help you win more instructions.

A flexible, convenient **Buyer App**, for greater control and involvement for them, and less chasing for information for you.
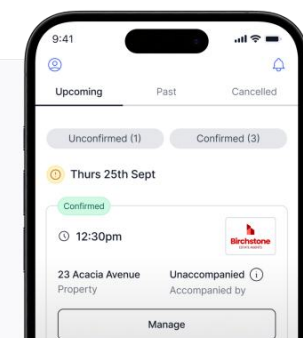
Providing a best-in-class customer experience doesn't have to take hours of your time, or mean increasing overheads by hiring extra staff. Street.co.uk is packed with features to make your (and your clients') lives easier.

What's more, Street.co.uk's Consumer Platform for vendors, buyers, landlords and tenants lets all parties manage their transactions, all in one place – giving them the self-serve, on-demand experience they expect.

Want to see how Street CRM can offer 24/7 availability, convenience and total transparency to your clients?

Book your free, no-obligation demo today, and start making customer experience an instruction-winning USP for your agency.

Book a demo