

BROKEN WINDOWS THEORY – NOT JUST A THEORY

By

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In life, oftentimes it's the little things that make all the difference: bringing a card home for your significant other; calling your mother just to say hello; or even a sincere thank you to someone for helping you. All three of these 'little things' keep relationships new and provide a strong bond, which is very difficult to break. Now, think of the alternative: never bringing a card home for your significant other; never calling your mother; and failing to thank people for the simplest of reasons. The result here is a poor relationship with a weak bond, which is very easy to break.

You might be wondering: “What the heck is this guy talking about relationships for? Doesn't this guy work for a security company? This is way too warm and fuzzy for me!

Well, I do work for a security company and 'Broken Windows Theory' is perhaps one of most popular criminology theories ever created. Sadly, this theory is also rarely discussed in areas where it actually works, such as small communities that are managed by property management companies. First, let me discuss the theory as a concept and then I'll explain why it works in some places and fails miserably in others. *(Keep reading cause it works for almost 99% of those of you who are reading this)!*

The basic concept of 'Broken Windows Theory' is that for a community to thrive in a safe environment, it is the responsibility of the community to maintain that safe environment. Sounds simple enough, right? It actually is ... read on.

If your community has a lot of graffiti, broken windows, broken lights, cars parked in 'no parking' zones, and an otherwise 'crime area' appearance, two things will happen: 1) the people who you want living in your community will leave, and 2) the people who you don't want living in your community will stay. What is worse is that the people who have stayed will call all their friends and you will end up with ONLY the people who you don't want living in your community.

So, how can understanding the 'Broken Windows Theory' help your community?

It's simple really! By using a Security Officer who works directly with property management, all of the minor things that lead to the breakdown of a community can be corrected. Everything from a burnt out light out in the parking area to suspicious people on property can be acted on and resolved. The reality is many folks who are not involved in the security industry believe that having the guard on property acts as a deterrent to the criminal element. While that is true to a certain extent, it really is a myth. After all, if a deterrent was the only thing that kept the criminal element out, then all property managers should buy a pickup truck, put some lights on the top and park it somewhere. Essentially, what is required to keep a community strong and safe is an active Security Officer who patrols and reports. When a community does not tolerate broken glass in the street/parking lot, burnt out lights and graffiti on walls, the criminal element realizes this quickly and moves on to a different property.

So, where does 'Broken Windows Theory' not work?

Just as simple. If law enforcement tries to apply 'Broken Windows' principles to large metropolitan areas, it fails nearly every time. The one exception might be former Mayor Giuliani of New York City who successfully revitalized the downtown area of New York City. However, even the success brought new problems in neighboring areas, which acquired the criminal element through displacement. 'Broken Windows Theory' was attempted in South Central Los Angeles, Philadelphia and countless other large areas. All these areas failed and the theories did not hold. However, as I have pointed out in this article 'Broken Windows Theories' are successful in small communities like the ones we have in the Las Vegas Valley. This is good news for all of you who manage these properties. In a word: "having security officers on property is effective – just not in the way we all originally thought."

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