



THE QUESTIONS EVERY PROVIDER MUST ASK THEMSELVES

# Six Ways to Make Your Assisted Living Services Stand Out



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**A SeniorVu® White Paper**

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## Executive Summary

*Tick, tick, tick...*

A baby boomer turns 65 every nine seconds -- the time it takes to tie a shoe. Or for the world's fastest man to run 100 meters.

As boomers race toward the day where they need help with daily tasks, assisted living is racing toward a golden opportunity.

Women 85 and older, the group most likely to use assisted living, is also America's fastest-growing demographic.

But senior housing construction is also sprinting ahead. In late 2016, about 45 assisted living units went online every day. Occupancy over that period hit a 6-year low.<sup>1</sup>

To compete, assisted living care providers must stand out with services that a coming wave of residents and their families want.

Those who don't risk being left behind.

"Assisted living is now 25 years old, so it's already not the way pioneers built it," Argentum COO Maribeth Bersani said. "As the resident changes, the communities will change, as well."<sup>2</sup>

Patient-centered programs, technology, and housing that feels like home will help drive move-in decisions.

"They're going to have to start going to the market with a little bit stronger message about what they can do for people to stand out in the crowd," said Travis Palmquist of PointClickCare.<sup>3</sup> "It's going to be very competitive."

In trying to expand services, providers can be tied by costs and government regulations. But creative thinking can help even the most cash-strapped or regulated community break new ground.

So it's time to ask your organization: *Are we doing enough?*



<sup>1</sup> Mary Kate Nelson, "NIC: Assisted Living Occupancy Falls to 6-year Low." Senior Housing News.com, Jan. 9, 2017

<sup>2</sup> Cindy Sanders, "Sustainable Solutions for Long-Term Care." Medical News Inc.com, April 7, 2016

<sup>3</sup> Mary Kate Nelson, "Three Senior Living Trends for 2017 and Beyond." Senior Housing News.com, Nov. 16, 2016



## QUESTION ONE

# Are you considering a focus on affinity group communities?

Some providers have carved out a niche by offering services to people with common cultural backgrounds or interests.

These are known as affinity groups, and they're no longer just about veteran's homes or people of specific religions.

Assisted living complexes for LGBTQ, Chinese-American, Indian-American and Spanish-speaking communities are already successful concepts.

Robert G. Kramer of the National Investment Center for Seniors Housing and Care thinks more are coming.

"We're such a polyglot culture," he said.<sup>4</sup>

A community could appeal to vegans or people with specific dietary needs. It could cater to artists, gardeners or environmentalists. It can target alumni or retirees from a nearby college or university. It's easy to envision University of Alabama faithful wanting to live under one roof to cheer for the Tide -- and root against Auburn.

Andrew Carle, the founding director of the Program for Assisted Living/Senior Housing Administration at George Mason University, believes affinity group housing will explode in the next decade.<sup>5</sup>

He said he expects every major metropolitan area will have at least one senior LGBTQ affinity community.

Carle said one company approached him with the idea of a travel-based assisted living care center on a working cruise ship.

Homogenous interests make programming easier and more cost-effective. And people are generally happier and less isolated when they can forge bonds with those who have similar passions.

California's Aegis Gardens offers assisted living care for Chinese-American people. It hires native Chinese staff members who speak the languages and dialects.

<sup>4</sup>Paula Span, "A New Spin on Senior Living." New York Times.com, March 25, 2016

<sup>5</sup>Sally Abrahms, "Finding Your Niche Housing in Retirement -- or Before!" AARP.org, March 7, 2011

# types of interest-driven affinity group communities



EQUESTRIANS   MILITARY VETS   ARTISTS   VEGANS   CLASSIC CARS  
 MOVIES   GARDNERS   PET LOVERS   HISTORY LOVERS   MUSIC  
 KNITTING & CRAFTS   UNIVERSITY ALUMNI

Its cultural activities include tai chi, calligraphy and mahjong. Feng-shui provides the basis for its design and interiors.<sup>6</sup> Chinese New Year is a big deal.

This narrow target hasn't hurt Aegis Gardens at all. The community has maintained close to 100 percent occupancy since it opened in 2001, the company's chief executive said.<sup>7</sup>



## QUESTION TWO

### *Are you offering home-based service options?*

Even top facilities swim upstream against a common current: About 80 percent of older adults still live in their own homes<sup>8</sup> and the vast majority of them want to stay there. The National Aging in Place council found more than 90 percent of older adults surveyed would choose aging in place over senior housing.<sup>9</sup>

It makes sense. Home is familiar. Comfortable. It may be paid-off.

And life expectancy is rising -- a third of males and half of females now in their 50s can expect to reach 90.<sup>10</sup> Most older adults lack the savings to fund long senior housing stays, so they want to make that money go as far as they can.

It's why the average age of people entering assisted living is now in the mid 80s. Median stays have dropped to just 22 months.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Aegis Living.com. Website.

<sup>7</sup> Paula Span, "A New Spin on Senior Living." New York Times.com, March 25, 2016

<sup>8</sup> Laurie M. Orlov, "Aging In Place Technology Watch." Age In Place Tech.com, March 15, 2017 p. 3

<sup>9</sup> Michele Lerner, "New online services targets aging-in-place residents." Washington Post.com, January 19, 2016

<sup>10</sup> Society of Actuaries, Age Wise Infographic Series. SOA.org. 2016

<sup>11</sup> "Facts and Figures," National Center for Assisted Living, AHCANCAL.org. Web.

These numbers are both a problem and an opportunity for the assisted living industry. Stay-at-home seniors won't fix today's occupancy rate, but smart providers can still work with them to build long-term relationships and new revenue streams.

"Senior living providers will move to provide services that will be delivered outside their communities, such as home health services. While this may seem counter-intuitive, it is designed to address the desire to age in place," said Craig Fukushima, a partner at The Fox Group, a health care consulting firm.

Home-based therapy and home nurse visits are common, but new tools will offer a greater list of possibilities.

"Providers will start to leverage some of the new technology in ways that maybe weren't possible before," Palmquist said.<sup>12</sup>

Assisted living providers can offer stay-at-home seniors regular video check-ins with doctors or nurses. They can issue wearable technology to help track sleep, exercise and blood pressure. They can rent seniors mobile devices with medication reminders and apps to boost brain power and creativity.

Providers could arrange comprehensive home inspections so people who want to age in place know what needs remodeling.

These services can all generate revenue and goodwill for a provider -- without having to build a single new physical unit.

Bersani said it's a good way to get to know people and gain trust and credibility for later. It can introduce a prospect to a provider's people and services, helping them make educated decisions later.

"It's better for business and better for the consumer," she said.

Providers who offer home-based services can also put out a welcome mat for their stay-at-home seniors, inviting them to special programs, a holiday meal or offering pricing discounts.

"What happens when that resident does make a move-in decision?" Palmquist said. "Who's got that relationship? Who's sticky?"



**58% of older adults**  
haven't changed residences

**20** IN MORE THAN  
**YEARS**



**75% of older adults**  
plan to live in their homes  
**for the rest of**  
**THEIR LIVES**

Source: National Council of Aging, 2015

<sup>12</sup>Mary Kate Nelson, "Three Senior Living Trends for 2017 and Beyond," Senior Housing News.com, Nov. 16, 2016



### QUESTION THREE

## *Are you providing an environment that feels more like home?*

Along with desires to age in place, another trend in senior housing is to make a resident's new home feel more like the old one.<sup>13</sup>

"People are looking more at programs and services that create a home-like atmosphere," said Steve Maag of LeadingAge.

Maag said providers will want to shed anything that feels institutional and move toward a sense of providing hospitality.

That means working hard to meet an individual's choices, to the extent that it's possible. What was once a maternal approach to care is now more driven by what a resident wants.

That means letting residents set their own wake-up and meal times, organize their activities and form their own social bonds.

A provider with residents who want to plant a garden, form a book club, make a group craft project or start weekly card games, Bible studies or prayer circles should encourage them -- and help out with space and supplies.

It's part of a larger shift toward person-centered care, a holistic approach that offers broader services to enhance resident's creative, intellectual and spiritual needs.<sup>14</sup>

Part of giving people what they want is to recognize how those wants have changed.

Bersani said in the early days of assisted living, ice cream parlors and bistros were hot amenities. They've since been supplanted by pubs. Today's seniors are more likely to want an occasional cocktail, especially when entertaining guests.

They want senior housing that looks like a home, too.

Residents want to give up the headaches of home -- stairs, yard work, snow removal, repairs -- without sacrificing the comforts. Kitchenettes, large closets, dishwashers, a washer and dryer and outdoor spaces are all selling points today.

The ability to take a pet to assisted living can also be a make-or-break consideration for many seniors.

<sup>13</sup> "9 Assisted Living Trends to Watch for in 2016." The Senior List.com. Jan. 13, 2016

<sup>14</sup> Caitlin Burm, "How Person-Centered Care is Changing the Senior Care Industry." A Place For Mom.com, March 2, 2017

A home-like look and feel is also a big selling point for residents' families. Maag said families may not fully understand the intricacies of the care environment, but they do pay attention to a community's curb appeal. They'll notice how it looks. How it smells. Whether the carpets seem clean and if the food tastes good.

While federal and state regulations make it tough right now, some analysts hope for a day where assisted living centers can provide a wider range of care. A resident could stay in a single unit as services grew to fit her needs, taking her from help with minor daily tasks to full-time skilled nursing care.

John Nelson, the co-author of "What Color is Your Parachute?" says the appeal of aging in place is often less about having an attachment to a legacy home than not wanting to be uprooted.

"Think of aging in place as finding the residence that will allow you to stay there as long as possible, no matter what happens," Nelson said. "Most of us will move at some point in retirement. If we're smart about it, an easy early move can prevent a difficult later move."<sup>15</sup>



## QUESTION FOUR

### *Are you offering enough on-site ancillary services?*

Many assisted living providers offer transportation to their residents for shopping, medical appointments and errands, but what if more of these services were available on-site?

Larger communities may already have hair salons or a mini market, but creative thinking and local business partnerships can expand the list of offerings:

- *A massage therapist could make weekly or monthly visits.*
- *A UPS store could have someone visit during the holidays to help wrap, pack and ship gifts.*
- *A notary can be available by appointment.*
- *An audiologist can come in to clean hearing aids.*
- *A community could host "Antiques Roadshow"- style appraisals.*
- *An AV specialist can help residents set up Netflix.*
- *Music teachers can offer piano or singing lessons.*
- *Pet-friendly community can arrange for a veterinarian to drop in for annual checkups, vaccinations and licensing.*

<sup>15</sup> "Aging in Place," Retired Brains.com. Web

# 24 ideas for on-site ancillary services



If residents pay the outside expert directly, the community may not need to provide much more than a temporary space, which could include vacant resident rooms.

It's a win for the community, which can boast a longer list of in-home services. It's a win for the outside expert, which can have a bunch of potential new customers in one place.

Community operators could even arrange for a finder's fee if the outsider's on-site services generate additional referrals.

Providing these services isn't just about padding the amenity list.

Five-Star Senior Living has been able to offset losses from reduced occupancy by growing its ancillary service revenues.<sup>16</sup>

Good services that keep residents happier and healthier may also slow resident turnover, saving marketing and maintenance costs.

Bersani said there's a trend toward wider ancillary services, especially evidence-based therapy options -- tai chi and meditation -- and services that boost creativity. Baby boomers have a wide range of interests and don't want to give those up when they move to senior housing.

"We've come a long way since Bingo," she said.

ACUPUNCTURE  
BASIC LEGAL HELP  
DENTAL CLEANINGS  
EYEGLASS REPAIR  
MASSAGE THERAPY  
ORGANIZING HELP  
TV EQUIPMENT SETUP  
HEARING AID  
MAINTENANCE

ANTIQUES APPRAISALS  
CAR WINTERIZING  
DRY CLEANING  
GROCERY DELIVERIES  
MUSIC LESSONS  
TAI CHI  
VETERINARY SERVICES  
GIFT WRAPPING  
& SHIPPING

ART LESSONS  
COMPUTER TRAINING  
DOCUMENT SHREDDING  
HAIRCUTS & STYLING  
NOTARY SERVICES  
YOGA  
TAX PREPARATION  
MANICURES  
& PEDICURES

<sup>16</sup>Kortney Liepelt, "Under Pressure, Providers Go Big on Ancillary Services." Senior Housing News.com, Jan. 8, 2017



## QUESTION FIVE

### *Are you providing technology support to your residents?*

Seniors may have been late to the technology party, but they're catching up fast. Many younger seniors use technology at the same rate as the general population.<sup>17</sup>

In four years, the number of seniors with smartphones surged from 18 to 42 percent, according to Pew Research.<sup>18</sup> It found two-thirds of Americans 65+ use the internet. Three-quarters of those go online at least once a day. One in three now has a tablet.

And technology is improving their lives. Texting, Skyping and Facebooking with friends and loved ones help ease feelings of depression and isolation. They give their brains a workout with digital games and puzzles. Some live in "smart homes," where they can adjust the thermostat, turn off lights and see who's at the door -- all without leaving the -- easy chair.

Many seniors bank, shop and get their news online. Pew found that only a third use social media, but that third really uses it a lot.

As a general rule, each new 65-year-old arriving every 9 seconds will be more tech-friendly than those who came before. They'll embrace -- and even expect -- a role for technology as part of their senior care.

Providers must ensure their facilities support the technology their residents already use, including reliable Wi-Fi, access to some type of technical help and protection against digital crime.

Those seniors who haven't embraced technology cite legitimate reasons -- expense, unfamiliarity and safety. Some have physical disabilities that make using technology difficult. Nearly half of seniors told Pew that they feel they need help setting up new technology.

But these worries can be overcome. Only 5 percent of seniors who responded to Brookdale Senior Living's landmark "Rewiring Aging" survey said they were opposed to technology in general.

Michigan State University researcher William Chopik said many seniors feel the health and mental benefits of learning technology outweigh the costs and challenges.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> "What Digital Divide? Seniors Embrace Social Technology," MSU Today, Aug. 25, 2016

<sup>18</sup> "Tech Adoption Climbs Among Older Adults." Pew Internet.org. May 17, 2017, p.5

<sup>19</sup> "What Digital Divide? Seniors Embrace Social Technology." MSU Today, Aug. 25, 2016

This general acceptance is leading assisted living providers to use technology in new ways. They assign residents Chromebooks and tablets. They send alerts reminding them to take their medication. They use virtual reality tools to help enhance memory.

Electronic wristbands replacing easy-to-lose room keys. Bright, colorful flatscreens are replacing white boards. Electronic pill bottles send alerts if they go unopened for too long. Telemedicine allows a patient in Idaho to consult with a specialist in Boston.

Bersani said tools to monitor movement will soon have a big role in patient care. Wearables can track a resident's sleep, heart rate, blood pressure and activity level. One new balance sensor comes with a "personal airbag" that inflates during a fall to protect hips.<sup>20</sup>

Apple is developing a watch to monitor glucose levels, an innovation described as "life science's holy grail."<sup>21</sup>

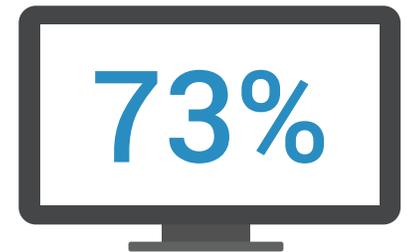
If wearables indicate a sudden change in a patient's routine, doctors can investigate before something serious happens. Seniors introduced to technology during their care will be more open to its personal uses and benefits -- and vice-versa.

## percentage of seniors 65+ who...



Source: Pew Research Center

...think they need help learning most new devices



"The increased use of Skype/FaceTime among grandparents and their grandchildren will make seniors more comfortable with video-based technology for health care consultations," said Elizabeth Newman of McKnight's Long-Term Care News.<sup>22</sup>

Brookdale's Chief Medical Officer Dr. Kevin O'Neil said his company's aggressive embrace of technology to help patients connect with loved ones has brought life-altering rewards.<sup>23</sup>

Those family members enjoy benefits, too. Being able to Skype with an aging relative or their provider can help with the stress and guilt associated with moving a loved one to senior care.

Younger relatives, particularly millennial digital natives, see technology as an essential part of their lives. They'll insist on it for their grandparents as they help them shop for senior services.

Facilities that can show prospective residents and their families direct benefits from technology-based uses will have a marketing advantage. They can also use technology to streamline daily work, save money and -- in the case of remote home monitoring services -- even generate additional revenue streams.

<sup>20</sup> Ben Coxworth, "Wearable Airbag designed to protect seniors when they fall." New Atlas.com, January 13, 2015

<sup>21</sup> Christina Farr, "Apple has a Secret Team Working on the Holy Grail for Treating Diabetes." CNBC.com, April 12, 2017

<sup>22</sup> Robyn Tellefsen, "What's Ahead for Senior Care: Expert Predictions." Our Parents.com, Feb. 6, 2017

<sup>23</sup> "Brookdale Expanding Technology Programs for Residents." McKnight's Senior Living.com, January 25, 2016



## QUESTION SIX

### *Are you helping protect residents from fraud and digital theft?*

Scam artists, telemarketers and identity thieves set their sights most often on older victims, targeting them for their savings and what they see as a trusting nature.<sup>24</sup>

Calls to the Senate Aging Committee's Fraud Hotline more than doubled in 2016. Nearly 1 in 10 seniors have been the target of a popular scam where a caller poses as an IRS agent.<sup>25</sup>

Sweepstakes scams prey on trusting seniors. Grandparent scams lure victims by making them think they're helping a relative who's in trouble.

Older victims may take days or weeks to learn they've been scammed and may be too embarrassed to report it. When they do report it, the FBI says they don't always remember key details.

Malware and ransomware threaten everyone's data, but seniors less familiar with them may be more vulnerable. A Home Instead study found 28% of seniors have mistakenly downloaded a virus.

Fraud and digital theft targeting seniors has been called "the crime of the 21st Century."<sup>26</sup>

And families have good reason to worry about older loved one becoming victims. In a best-case scenario, it could mean the hassle of changing passwords or resetting devices.

The bigger nightmare is a scammer wiping out a senior's savings -- and their ability to pay for care.

Assisted living facilities can set themselves apart by offering proactive steps and services to help their residents reduce the risk of online and financial crimes.

<sup>24</sup> "Common Fraud Schemes: Fraud Against Seniors." FBI.gov

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Senate. Special Committee on Aging. "Fighting Fraud: Senate Aging Committee Identifies Top 10 Scams Targeting Our Nation's Seniors". 2017

<sup>26</sup> "Two-thirds of Seniors have been Scammed Online. HomeInstead.com, Feb. 16, 2017

# common scams targeting seniors

## MEDICARE/HEALTH INSURANCE

SCAMMERS POSE AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF MEDICARE OR HEALTH INSURANCE PROVIDER AND ASK THE TARGET FOR PERSONAL OR FINANCIAL DATA.

## SWEEPSTAKES

A SCAMMER SAYS THE TARGET HAS WON A LOTTERY BUT MUST PAY A FEE TO COLLECT THE PRIZE.



### IRS

SCAMMERS POSING AS AN IRS AGENT THREATENS TO ARREST THE RECIPIENT UNLESS BACK TAXES AREN'T PAID IMMEDIATELY.



### GRANDPARENT

A SCAMMER CALLS ON BEHALF OF A BELOVED FAMILY MEMBER WHO NEEDS URGENT MONEY FOR LEGAL OR MEDICAL ATTENTION.



### ROMANCE/SOLDIER

A SCAMMER DEVELOPS AN ONLINE RELATIONSHIP WITH A TARGET UNDER A FAKE PROFILE AND CONVINCES THAT PERSON TO SEND MONEY. AVARIATION INVOLVES SOMEONE POSING AS A DEPLOYED MEMBER OF THE MILITARY.

These programs could include such things as:

- *Offering virus and anti-spyware software licenses for residents' personal devices.*
- *Help to identify malware or ransomware -- and access to a list of trusted repair people who can remove it.*
- *Inviting police, FBI or AARP experts to lead seminars to help residents learn to identify scams.*
- *Creating a forum to warn other residents about local scam attempts. If a resident is too ashamed to share their story, the provider can offer them anonymity.*
- *Helping residents sign up for the Do Not Call List.*
- *Offering places to shred sensitive and financial documents.*

As more senior housing facilities transition to digital records, it's also important to ensure those records are safe and secure.

Seniors and their families are worried about fraud and digital crime. Providers who prioritize protection can stand out from the crowd. Many of these protective services carry little or no operational cost and the peace of mind they provide is priceless.

## Conclusion

This white paper has shown six areas in which assisted living communities can expand service offerings to meet evolving demands of residents and their families.

Not every option is right for every situation, but providers must be open to new ideas and be creative to stay competitive.

New services can add costs, but can also generate new revenue streams. Creative planning and community partnerships can lead to win-win results.

And providers who don't evolve will be at a disadvantage in a time of historic opportunity and growing competition.

## About SeniorVu®

SeniorVu® published this white paper to help assisted living providers assess their existing services compared with changing demands.

SeniorVu® is a fully integrated marketing and lead-generation platform for senior communities in search of future residents.

The SeniorVu® platform offers ways to identify and target a pool of qualified prospects (seniors and adult children) via a proprietary database, a patent- pending scoring algorithm with 250+ marketing attributes, and a suite of digital marketing services.