



## Speaking from the Heart -- Should This Be Easier for Us?

*By Susan Saldibar*

Since talking with Nancy Anderson, VP of Engagement Solutions for Align, and Staff Engagement Specialist and co-founder, Neil Gulsvig, I have gained a greater appreciation as to this massive shift taking place (hopefully) in the hearts and minds of senior care providers.

And while there is plenty to fix in today's senior living communities, there is also some great work being done along the lines of building a true [culture of engagement](#).

### **The Five Key Culture Attributes**

I promised a follow up from the first article to concentrate on the five key culture attributes that form the building blocks of a culture of engagement. Here they are.

1. **Clear sense of purpose.** Make sure your employees have an unobstructed view of that purpose and how they contribute to it. Define your community goals and mission in terms of "what matters most". Be sure to get commitment from all levels of management. Finally, identify where each employee's contribution impacts the goals of the community. Make sure they, and you, are aware of it at all times.
2. **People-Focused Managers.** First of all, Nancy recommends that you select your management team based on "people-focused" qualities. According to a Gallup report, managers have the greatest impact on employee engagement. You want mentors and coaches, not administrators. Make sure you choose them with care.
3. **Active Employee Voice.** This is an area where many organizations fail, simply due to lack of follow through. You need to have a program in place that not only encourages input from employees, but acts as a channel for change, says Nancy. Whether it's forums, surveys or focus groups, the key is to make sure their ideas are heard and transformed into positive change and creative improvements to the community.
4. **Meaningful Connectedness.** Work towards building a sense of belonging, trust and camaraderie among team members. The key is to be 100% authentic. Hiring "people-focused" managers helps. The message should be "we're all in this together" from senior management on down. You will be paid back with higher productivity and greater team loyalty.
5. **Visible Integrity.** Seeing is believing. Sharing ideas, exhibiting open mindedness, being honest and straightforward; all are ways to put a visual stamp of integrity on everything you do within your community. Senior management should act as role models and demonstrate visible integrity through their actions.

## **Should this be easier for senior living communities?**

If there is a challenge here, and arguably there is, it is getting everyone, from senior management down, to embrace and execute these attributes on a daily basis. When you think about it, that's the difference between a "program" and a real culture change. Sort of like the mountain climber who finally reaches the highest peak. Not easy to get there, but oh so rewarding when you finally do.

Should this be somehow easier for senior living communities, than other types of organizations. Neil believes it can be. Really? How so?

"Compared to other industries, senior living as well as long-term and post-acute care organizations have an advantage," Neil explains. "In retail, the mission is to sell more stuff. In manufacturing, it's about efficiently producing widgets. In our world, we are improving the quality of life for vulnerable human beings. So, this is an opportunity to speak from the heart in language that resonates with staff."

## **The Drought is Coming – Are You Ready?**

It's no secret that a staffing shortage is on the horizon. Innovative providers will come out on top when it comes to attracting and retaining top talent. Read PointClickCare's blog on how [technology](#) can make your community more appealing to the next generation of leaders.

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