



Three Reasons Why 2017 Will Decide Who's at the Table

By Susan Saldibar

Wow. 2016 has been quite a year; for more reasons than our presidential election. It's also a year that many feel marks a turning point for technology in a senior care industry that continues to push back on fully embracing it.

I sat down for a quick Q&A with Travis Palmquist, VP and General Manager for Senior Living with [PointClickCare](#). I asked Travis to weigh in as to some of the technology coming along in 2017 and why this year may separate the real competitors from the wannabes. As expected, he had some great insight.

Embracing New Technology

Q: Embracing new technology doesn't come easily to operators of senior living communities. Why should 2017 be the year that this changes?

Travis: I see four distinct trends driving providers towards embracing technology:

1. **First, increased customer needs and expectations.** Whether it's health care needs or just higher expectations from a service standpoint; both are putting pressure on providers to get customer experience scores high and keep brand recognition strong. They'll need to in order to compete in this environment. Take Internet, for example. As we know, the days of residents having to pay for Internet access are gone. Everyone expects free Wi-Fi. Seniors and their families keep in contact via the Internet. Another example is medication management. I was told the other day that the average assisted living resident is on nine medications! Multiply that across 100+ residents; it's a huge challenge. But families expect that their loved ones will have accurate and efficient meds administration. You need technology to achieve that.
2. **Second are the emerging workforce challenges.** This is what's keeping so many operators up at night. We have an impending workforce crisis in this industry; a huge influx of boomers and a dwindling pool of prospective employees to choose from. Technology has a role to play here, if deployed properly. I'm seeing it used increasingly to automate many of those low value tasks that drag down employees, giving them more face time with residents. And it's a great unifier for centralizing information for rapid access. For communities who must do more with less resources, technology can be a game changer. Providers will be competing as intensely for the best staff as they will for move ins. Technology is a differentiator for both.

3. **Third, is our competitive landscape.** Never has the need been greater for providers to differentiate themselves. You go to any senior care conference and you'll see more bankers and investors than providers. And they are looking to invest. So how can a senior living community stand out from the crowd and get noticed? One way is by providing solid, integrated technology. Not only for engagement purposes, but to deliver a higher level of service.
4. **Finally, of course, there is liability pressure.** Any time you have a community of vulnerable adults, attorneys aren't far behind. The fear of legal issues or increased regulation scrutiny is real. And technology can help there as well. I mentioned medications management. With the dispensation of nine different medications per resident across an entire community, you can't have errors. So we are seeing technology emerge in the form of electronic communications with pharmacy, automated time windows and alerts. The key is to use technology, when possible, to help minimize risk as much as possible.

Reluctant To Invest

Q: So, what do you have to say to senior living leadership still reluctant to invest precious dollars into technology?

Travis: It's time to stop kicking the can. You need to get started. Get your vision clear and your plan together. Once you have your vision, you must pick a place to get started. Don't be intimidated to the point that you don't move forward. Take a crawl, walk, run approach if that works best for your organization.

There is still a small window of time where individual senior living providers can be innovative leaders in the markets that they serve. But, in a year or two, that window will be closed and they will simply be forced to be an "us too" provider. And for those who are currently leasing properties, keep in mind that there is a banker behind that real estate. If you're not up to date and doing all the right things, they'll quickly find an operator who is.

You know, our CEO often uses the quote 'If you're not at the table, you're on the menu,' to describe the changes that are happening within the senior care industry and the need for technology. How you answer the technology challenge may make the difference between running a profitable and successful community and being left in the dust by others who make the effort to "come to the table". The choice is yours.

Coming soon is more of my Q&A with Travis Palmquist on technology in store for 2017. In the meantime, find out more about what the future of Senior Living holds in a recent article on PointClickCare's Blog – [2020 Vision: The Future of Senior Living](#).

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