



Wake Up Call: Are We Really 10 Years Behind On This?

By Susan Saldibar

Shelley Yager, VP of Senior Enterprise Sales for [RealPage](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner), just said something I found pretty amazing. She told Steve Moran, in a recent Conversations video, that senior living communities are about ten years behind other housing industries (student, multi-tenant) when it comes to using technology.

Ten years! In the world of technology, that's an eternity. But Shelley has been in this business for over twenty years. She knows what she's talking about.

Technology isn't standing still. Are you?

While community operators have been wringing their hands as to which technology move to make first, RealPage has been busy creating a soup-to-nuts platform that tackles everything from pre-assessment through a resident's entire community stay. So they're already into the next generation of tech advances.

Steve asked Shelley for a quick update on RealPage, in terms of what components they would put into play for a community of about fifty or so locations. Here's how it works:

- **Website:** A review and revamp to incorporate things like chat capability, 3-D floor plans, etc.
- **Multi-channel communications:** Ensure that the community has a well-developed multi-channel communications capability, including online, phone and basically any other ways a prospect might wish to interact with a community.
- **Contact center for early lead response:** This is intended to handle the initial contact between prospect and community. Shelley mentioned that 40-60% of initial inquiries fall through the cracks, because reps

are busy out in the community, conducting tours, etc. Makes sense to have a trained contact center agent handle those initial calls. And, according to Shelley, they also determine the source of each lead, so you know where your best leads are coming from. Pretty cool.

- **Lead management automation:** As leads are qualified, they would deploy their automated lead management and nurture tools, freeing up sales to develop the warmer leads.
- **Pre-assessment and operations tools:** “For most communities there is still a gap between marketing, operations, care and financial areas; still a lot of disconnects,” says Shelley. RealPage’s property management software allows operators to handle all facets of community operations, including pre-assessment, move-in, scheduling, staffing, care fees, etc.

So, if senior living operators are 10 years behind, how do they catch up?

Steve asked Shelley about opportunities for senior living; if she could “wave a magic wand”, what areas would she improve. Her one word answer, as you may guess is “Technology.”

First, according to Shelley, community operators need to realize how critical it is now to get on board with technology. They need to realize the advantages technology can bring to their communities. And, for those who still struggle, Shelley has a suggestion. “Start by looking at your culture. Fine tune it, and build your technology around that culture,” she says.

Also, they need to think seriously about the benefits of using software-as-a-service (SAS) versus developing their own solutions. “The cost to develop in-house is dollars to the pennies it costs for a SAS solution,” says Shelley.

But Shelley doesn’t advise installing technology without a game plan. As she mentions, it’s important to start by defining what is important in your community before you put technology into play. Then, it’s up to providers, like RealPage to “to build a platform to support the customer experience you want them to have.”

Somehow that makes it seem less daunting, starting from inside out. That way you are more likely to experience the value at each touchpoint that is important to your community.

