



This is Where “Safety” is Going. Are You Ready?

By Susan Saldibar

Call systems are life savers. Literally. Someone falls or becomes ill, they press a button, which sends an alert to care staff and help is on its way. These “buttons” are typically located on the bed, mounted on the wall or worn as a pendant or watch.

As great as these devices are, however, two critical factors are changing the industry. One is technology. The other is a discerning new demographic group: baby boomers.

I learned a lot about how both come together in the second part of the Conversations Video between Steve Moran and Troy Griffiths, CEO of Vigil Health Solutions. Vigil is a Senior Housing Forum partner and a leader in providing call systems and resident monitoring systems.

Why press buttons when Amazon Echo or Google Home can do it for you?

Steve asked Troy where he saw Vigil going in the future. Vigil, as you may know, has a real penchant for coming up with creative ways to integrate their call systems with new consumer technology. Troy proceeded to describe some pretty cool stuff, some of which I know they are already doing.

Here are some of the items that Vigil is either integrating with now or plans to in the future:

- Amazon’s Echo and Google Home for voice activated “help”.
- Shoe insoles with GPS trackers to alert staff when a resident leaves a designated zone.
- Apple watches and other smart wearable devices.

Boomers are leading the charge to make alert and sensor technology more dignified. It's about time.

There is no question that inserting sensor, tracking and call technology into everyday devices is innovative. But I have to wonder why it is so important to “hide” these technologies in shoes and other wearables?

It may be the increasing attention being paid to maintaining the dignity of aging seniors. “We’re focused on safety, but also their dignity and independence,” says Troy. “So we try to keep our monitoring piece discreet and homelike,” he added. Basically it’s about allowing residents to go about their daily business, without what Troy refers to as “the stigma of something that ages them.”

As a boomer myself, I admit that works for me. And using normal, less “old person-like” devices to protect ourselves as we age may, in the end, be more about maintaining overall dignity than boomer vanity. (Heck, I can’t even get my 92 year old mother to accept those white pendants with big red buttons!)

More openness and collaboration between technology partners. Who thought that would happen?

Steve took a moment to note that there seemed to be a lot more openness and collaboration between technology partners at Argentum. And that seems to be the case even when there is overlap between capabilities.

Troy agreed wholeheartedly. In fact, Vigil regularly collaborates to leverage the talents and capabilities of partners to deliver a better solution to their end users. “We can find the ‘best of breed’ partners and merge that into what we’re doing, which brings a total solution to the customer,” he says. “That’s what we’re trying to do and I think that’s where the industry is going.”

Start-ups have some cool ideas. But being able to execute them is challenging without experience.

Vigil is already on the cutting edge of call system technology. Troy talked a bit about what they are doing with their passive sensor technology and silent call alerts that go to virtually any type of device, mobile or wired. They can connect their technology to just about everything; chairs, beds, doors, smoke detectors, and so on. And, true to their innovative spirit, their creative team keeps looking for new things to connect to.

Finally, Steve asked Troy what senior living communities should be looking for as technology continues to drive innovative partnerships towards even more flexible and adaptable solutions.

“Make sure you consider companies that have been around awhile,” Troy advises. “There are lots of cool start-ups with cool ideas but the actual execution of those ideas can be a challenge. So, the technology is exciting, but temper that with someone who knows your business.”



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