



Is the Next Growth Market Sitting Under Our Noses?

By Susan Saldibar

What's great about the challenges looming ahead for senior housing are the creative solutions taking shape to help meet them. So it's kind of cool to talk to people like Travis Palmquist, Vice President and General Manager of Senior Living for [PointClickCare](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner). Primarily because Travis is a man on a mission, excited about getting his creative solution into the mix.

I wrote recently about Travis' emerging growth strategy, one of providing a deeper, more meaningful bench of "ancillary" services. Not fluff stuff, but serious services that go beyond basic health to offer holistic programs to keep seniors as well as possible, for as long as possible. These services might include rehab services, diabetes management, cardiac health, weight management, chronic disease management and so on.

Travis and his team at PointClickCare are convinced that these services, backed up by good marketing, could be instrumental in helping operators stem the chronic <90% occupancy slump. They could also be used as pretty potent competitive leverage.

It's one thing to talk about these concepts. How does a community actually implement them?

I asked Travis to walk me through how a community would implement these services without totally depleting their resources. Here is what he told me.

- First, you need a clear, well thought out plan. “No strategy is wrong. Just different! But you need a strategy. You need a plan,” says Travis. He recommends that communities evaluate and design their own models as to which services to offer and how to prepare, market, roll out and support them. Explore different reimbursement models --- supplements, capping of certain types of residents, etc. What works for your community?

One way to build your model is from the outside in. “Find a good clinician, who you may have already planned to hire, bring them in and build the programs around them,” says Travis. “Create the service plan, Then, put it in hands of caregivers.”

- Second, you need a strong technology backbone. “You can’t just dive into this without the infrastructure to support both the operational and financial pieces of the plan,” says Travis. You need a system that will allow you to track services across locations and organize them in a way that doesn’t allow them to slip through the cracks when it’s time to bill.

And, technology may help further differentiate your community. Travis explains, “Even if you deliver high standard of service, families are showing up on tours, asking about what kind of technology? What kind of remote care do you offer? How can I be communicated with?”

Those communities with a history in the healthcare industry may be more naturally dialed into the ancillary services opportunity, according to Travis. Many come with existing relationships with local healthcare providers which can help jumpstart the programs.

But there’s enough innovation to go around, he insists. Those with the ability to tap into their creativity and listen and learn from the broader community around them have the best chance to succeed. This isn’t a strategy for those who just want to continue “business as usual”, however.

“Step away from the core way you do business. Do some planning and modeling; know what’s out there. If you tiptoe without the infrastructure, you are making a mistake.”

Strengthen your competitive edge through Ancillary Services

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