



Get Ready: This is the Technology Model That Consumers Now Expect

By Susan Saldibar

You know those people who love to chastise others for using social media and texting instead of picking up the phone and calling? I had lunch with one of them (or so I thought) the other day. And, just to get her riled up, I suggested we do a Snapchat. But when I fumbled ever so slightly with the post, she took the phone and, fingers flying, bailed me out. And, I have to share this: she is in her mid-70s, not mid-20s.

What a wakeup call! It underscores what most of us have known for a while now . . . seniors are getting comfortable with technology. And they are becoming more connected than many senior living community operators want to believe. Way more!

It's about a lot more than just WiFi.

I thought of all this after reading a great article by Joe Cuticelli, CEO of Sodexo Seniors North America (Sodexo is a Senior Housing Forum partner). He wrote about one particularly

connected retirement community, Waterman Village in Florida. These residents are 'rockin technology. And it's about a lot more than just WiFi. They are using a platform called Connected Living to connect to each other, the community and family and friends. Just to give you an idea of what technology is doing for this senior community:

- Digital touch screens, with "you are here" GPS to guide new residents around the campus.
- TV connectivity to a special information channel that provides a menu of information and connects residents to calendar of events as well as other resources.
- Mobile device and desktop connectivity.
- Connection with Lyft for on the spot transportation needs.

To demonstrate their commitment to technology, Waterman Village recently held a BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) day. They outfitted all devices with the Connected Living social networking application, so now those folks can never be left in the dark as to what's happening throughout the community. They are also connected to family and friends.

This is no longer just a "nice to have".

According to Jocelyn Jones, Director of Recreational Services for Waterman Village, "It was great to see the residents so involved and interested in learning a new program on their smartphones, iPads and Android devices. It will be a great opportunity for so many of our residents to stay connected with family and friends as well as having the daily activities and the menu in the palms of their hands."

What does all this tell us, apart from the fact that Sodexo partners with some very cool technology providers? It should tell us that wireless connectivity and all the great apps individuals enjoy as consumers are now pretty much expected in communities. No more "nice to have".

Today communities are using technology that informs, organizes and connects to attract this new generation of 70-somethings who are internet savvy and will not settle for anything less in a senior living community than they have had as consumers in their own homes.

Bottom line: if you want these individuals in your community, you'd better be ready to "connect" with them!



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