



State of Senior Living Leadership Survey Results - Perception of Pay

By Michelle Seitzer

Recently [ServiceTrac](#), a Senior Housing Forum partner specializing in employee, resident, and family member research, joined forces with Senior Housing Forum to do a Gallup Style "[State of the Senior Living Leader Survey](#)." This was done using the ServiceTrac online survey platform.

The survey revealed a range of interesting perspectives from 500 respondents about job satisfaction, loyalty, and more — and in this series, we'll explore what lessons we can learn from the results.

The Competition Pays Better (Or So We Think)

One surprising data point was the perception of pay across senior living staff. In response to the question, "Is your pay comparable to what others earn for similar work?" survey results said nearly 40% of a community's team — from administrators and department heads down to direct care and service staffers — believe those in similar lines of work get paid more. And what's most intriguing is that they don't believe their counterparts are getting paid more because they do more: it's the same job, same setting, but higher pay.

Mixed Messages

So where's the communication breakdown happening? Maybe the perception bias is a reflection of communicating with prospective employees too much in the abstract — Work here, and feel like part of a family, or Join our team, and make a difference in seniors' lives — and overlooking the significance of the hard numbers.

Here's what ServiceTrac's team thinks about the disconnect: "On a national scale, our research shows that some of the main drivers of employee satisfaction is the perception of feeling valued, understanding how their role impacts the organization, and their direct supervisor's accessibility toward training and development.

These are all cultural and strategic organizational characteristics that are not directly associated to employee pay but give accelerated dividends toward employee satisfaction.”

It's All About the Benjamins

At the end of the day, we all want to get paid — no matter what position or title we hold. But we also want to be valued by our employer. It's hard to put that in a paycheck.

If we want staff who take their jobs seriously, they should know why they're getting paid what they're getting paid. Their professional “market value” and the comps. And that, despite their perception there may be more green on the other side, their pay is a combination of skill level, services rendered, COLA, and occupational/industry standards.

The Wandering Eye: Keeping Morale Up and Turnover Down

We could never pay our most dedicated employees enough, and many of the best aren't looking for more money if they're already willing to work above their pay grade. But if they think someone else doing the same job down the road is getting paid more, we can do something about that. We can change that bias and keep them in our community. Appreciation goes a long way, but openness and transparency about pay could really clinch retention and nip turnover in the bud.

Salary Straight Talk

So what's next? Create a communication strategy that clearly articulates and justifies pay and benefits per staffing position. Think carefully about how to present it in a professional way, then make it part of your hiring process. Happy workers often equals happy residents, and that's a goal we can all get behind.

This is the first in a series of articles with insights from the ServiceTrac/Senior Housing Forum State of The Senior Living Leader Survey.



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