



Why Aren't There More Conferences Like This?

By Susan Saldibar

Last month, Steve Moran was invited to attend [Sodexo's Quality of Life Conference](#) in London. Steve admitted to going in with a bit of skepticism. After all, “quality of life” is such a broad term. The average person might be inclined to think, “Hmm. A conference about quality of life? What’s that all about?”

Quality of Life is more than three words. It’s for real.

As it turns out, the Sodexo Quality of Life Conference is about many things that are important to many people. It’s not just a tagline. And Steve found out as much after catching up with Sodexo’s Joe Cuticello, CEO of Seniors for Sodexo, for a [Conversations video interview](#). He shared his initial cynical reaction.

Joe understands Steve’s skepticism as to what the conference is all about. Joe explained that the real voice behind the “quality of life” mission of Sodexo is that of founder Pierre Bellon. “Pierre really, honestly felt a compulsion to understand how his company could improve the lives of those they served,” says Joe.

So what is the purpose of Sodexo’s Quality of Life Conference? “It’s about improving people’s lives,” says Joe Cuticello. “With 75 million consumer interactions Sodexo conducts every day, all around the world, we have an amazing opportunity to help people live their best lives every day,” he adds.

And, while Joe acknowledges that “Quality of Life” may mean different things to different people, he emphasizes the real mission behind the phrase is, quite simply, to improve people’s lives; day in and day out. (You can find some great examples of Quality of Life in our earlier article, [here](#).)

So, how does a conference do that?

A conference that was not about selling Sodexo, but about connecting and collaborating.

To clarify, this is actually the second Sodexo Quality of Life conference. The first was held two years ago in New York. Steve asked Joe about the conference itself. Joe was eager to explain that the starting point is to invite thought leaders from all over the world and from all industries. Clients, yes, but also non-clients; that means educators, all sorts of people representing various organizations and institutions. A multitude of topics are discussed. What is (refreshingly) not discussed are accolades directed towards Sodexo.

“The focus is not on what we “do” but rather on quality of life itself; what is it as a culture, as something that impacts all of us,” Joe says. “As our chairwoman said towards the end, ‘Let’s reflect on what we’ve learned. How do we define quality of life?’ So, in some sense, it’s a very broad discussion,” he adds.

Both Steve and Joe agreed that, if there was an underlying theme to the conference, it was the collective realization of how fast our society is moving; the digital trends, automation trends and so on that help improve not only quality of life, but length of life. As Joe remarked, “It made me think, ‘Will I live to be 300 years old? Do I want to?’” That’s the sort of content that causes one to reflect.

Sounds like the kind of conference every senior living operator should either host or attend, doesn’t it? In an industry that cries out to be infused with some fresh thinking, a conference on “quality of life” somehow makes a lot of sense. Very un-conferency. And very much needed.

Stay tuned for Part I of Steve and Joe’s Conversations video interview. Find out what the conference stand-out presentations were!



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