This Stubborn Habit is More Dangerous Than You Think

By Susan Saldibar

Who are all these managers who still think paper-based systems are okay? You must be out there because, depending on who you talk to, up to 90% of senior living communities, (especially among independents), still rely pretty much on paper for most of their processes.

But, thankfully, there are innovators out there, such as Darren Mathis, CEO of LincWare (a Senior Housing Forum partner) who are determined to help senior living communities realize the benefits of paper-free processes. And what better place to start than with "admissions", one of the most tedious and error prone processes, involving massive amounts of paper forms and tight deadlines. LincWare's Admit+ admissions software platform has turned that antiquated process on its head. And it's all good.

This may be more than a paper problem. It's a strategic problem.

I realized, as I spoke with Darren, that the problems caused by the continuance of using paper to record and distribute key information reach deeper than even the paper itself. Here are a few of them:

- **Muddying the first impression.** "Customers tell me, 'We do a great job of selling the value of our communities, engaging our prospective residents and their families,'" says Darren. "'Then we drop a giant stack of paper in their laps. What does that say about our organization?'"
- **Derailing the move-in.** Once that paper is out of the reach of the community, it's out of your control. How many times have you heard "I gave her the paperwork and I haven't heard from her since." Darren reminded me that so much can happen between handing a "new resident" a stack of admission forms and actual move-in.
- **Wasting valuable time and talent.** To get a jump on the mounds of paperwork, many sales reps will start working on it well before the prospective resident even has a nurse's assessment. If, for some reason, the resident is not considered a good fit, there is a lot of time lost. The bottom line is, when you have sales chasing down paperwork instead of engaging with prospective residents, nobody wins.

- **Increasing your risk.** When changes to pricing, regulations and processes occur, documents need to be updated. Accurate versioning is another area often compromised by lack of coordination. And this is critical in senior living. Using outdated forms on the front end can cause major issues on the back end.
- **Turning off a new generation of employees.** In a digital age, it is important that companies keep up with technology. The new generation of employees knows tech and automated processes are expected. Paper is a turn off.

Darren gave me a quick demo of Admit+. It's pretty impressive; robust on the back end and super easy and intuitive on the front end. I can't begin to cover everything it does in one article, but here's what really stands out:

Centralization and consolidation.
Everything is together in one place. Enter a name, address or other key data once and it will then self-populate the appropriate fields. Pricing for rooms, care and amenities automatically appears as a fixed field (unless you open it up to allow customization). Version changes will instantly flow across communities, so no more outdated forms.

Nothing is left to human error or to fall through the cracks, such as inadvertently unsigned forms. That reduces the risk of misunderstandings (and potential litigation) downstream. Darren tells me, "We talk to clients all the time, especially on the finance side, and we ask 'What's your biggest fear?' And, more often than not, it's having a family member dispute fees, and then walking to the file cabinet to pull their residency agreement, and realize it's not signed," he says. "With our system, that will never happen, because we're able to guide the sales rep through a structured process, that they follow every single time. No data or document ever gets missed."

Flexible resident onboarding, in person or remote.
This is huge. With automatic contract generation and electronic signing, there is no more need to scan and email dozens of documents or, worse yet, use snail mail. Since it's interactive, much of the onboarding can be done right there in the community office, using an iPad.

Ability to track progress and follow-through.
No more, "What happened to Mrs. Jones' paperwork from last month?" It has a cool status update feature that creates a timeline and keeps track of all documents inserted into the system and signatures needed, flagging which ones are still needed and if they are on track.

You really have to see a demo of Admit+ to get a feel for the multiple benefits of this tool. I've only covered a few of them here.

What better point of entry into paperless automation than your admissions process?

For those of you ready to finally begin to wean off paper, admissions automation might be a good place to start. But find out for yourself. Admit+ has a cool admissions quiz which you can take here. Find out how organized your own admissions process is and where the gaps might be.

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