



How Culture Built a New Breed of Technology

By Susan Saldibar

The official purpose of my recent call with Troy Griffiths, CEO for [Vigil Health Solutions](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner), was to chat about the celebration of their 20th anniversary, and to get his thoughts on their success and how far technology has come over the last twenty years. After all, these are the folks who not only provide cutting edge call alert and resident monitoring solutions, but integrate with popular technologies, such as Amazon Echo® and Google Home®. They are also the ones who partnered with GTX to integrate and distribute GPS SmartSole®, a shoe insert that helps locate residents who have wandered outside their safety zone. And they continue to do a lot of really creative things with sensors.

Because of their reputation as innovators, I expected the conversation to revolve around the evolution of call alert and resident monitoring technology in senior living communities.

Instead Troy was eager to talk about something that he felt had made an even greater impact on their success: Culture. I was all ears. Building successful culture is something that leadership in this industry is working hard to achieve. And answers are hard to come by.

Culture drives business. Culture trumps strategy.

For Troy, a big part of Vigil's success has revolved around having the right people in place and developing a culture of caring about how their technology improves the lives of seniors and their communities. "Culture trumps strategy every day," he tells me. "Ours has been shaped by a caring, collaborative and trusting team."

I asked Troy how they built that kind of culture. In some ways, it built itself through the longevity of its employees, many of whom have been on board from day one. So there is a deep, very personal investment in Vigil from its veterans. For new hires, Troy tells me, a sort of culture "litmus test" has evolved, and it starts with the interview process. "We actually have members of our team sit in during interviews," Troy tells me.

“Candidates will ask our employees what they like about working at Vigil and they will say, almost without having to think, ‘It’s the people,’” Troy says. Of course, new employees need to demonstrate that they can walk the walk and truly connect with Vigil’s mission to build innovative applications that make life better for seniors. But, for Troy, it’s the people and their culture of caring, along with their creativity, that have made them successful.

When the talk did turn to technology, Troy was equally enthusiastic, talking about how far technology has come in the last twenty years and how Vigil has been able to harness it successfully. But Vigil is out to develop much more than just “cool stuff”.

Purpose Built Technology

“There is plenty of tempting technology out there that could be inserted into our call and resident monitoring solutions,” Troy says. “And, where it makes sense, we’re not shy about using it,” he adds. But shiny objects alone aren’t enough to get their attention. The Vigil team looks for a strong human benefit that makes sense before they will even look at a project. “We won’t develop something just because it’s ‘cool’ or just because it can be done,” says Troy. That made me think of those tiny surveillance cameras some communities are hiding in every nook and cranny. I asked Troy about them. “There may be technical reasons why technology such as cameras might make sense, but we feel there are some very human reasons why they don’t make sense, such as privacy and dignity,” he adds.

And Vigil has little hubris, when it comes to technology. In fact, they are big on partnering, when it makes sense to do so.

“Through partnerships, we are able to accelerate some great solutions for seniors,” Troy tells me. “I think that partnering and using each other’s talents makes for better technology and a stronger industry that is more attuned to the needs of its seniors.”

So, what about this landmark anniversary for Vigil? “Wow. Twenty years went fast! Blink and it’s 20 years later,” Troy says. “And we’ve evolved a lot since then. It is very rewarding work and I couldn’t be happier with the team! Proud of the product we deliver, our customers, but really glad to see where the team has taken us.” As to what’s coming in the next twenty years, “More innovation and more partnering. We are looking to grow and have some exciting new applications in the works,” Troy tells me.

How will Vigil celebrate? Nothing flashy or ostentatious. Instead, lots of smaller celebrations to make sure everyone can take part in at least one or two of them. I like that approach. Very inclusive and caring. Very “Vigil”.



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