



Don't be a DRIP; You're Better Than This!

By Susan Saldibar

Are you afraid of what data might tell you about your community?

Those of you who own and operate senior living communities have collected an abundance of data over the years. And, if put together properly, that data could tell you things about your communities that you really need to know. So, what are you doing about it? Letting it sit?

That's a question Dana Fillmore, Healthcare Customer Marketing Manager for [Gordon Food Service](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner), asks communities about their food services. And she has a name for those who have data but don't do anything with it. She calls them "DRIPs", Data Rich, Information Poor. A humorous acronym, perhaps, but there's nothing funny about letting the data sit around without making a concerted effort to gather it up and make sense of it all.

"We get so much data put in front of us about food costs, supply costs, labor costs and so on. But rarely do communities spend time to look at it, analyze it and use it to improve," Dana says. For those who do, however, she believes there is much to be gained.

So, for you DRIPs out there, here is what Dana recommends.

First, evaluate your own community.

Start by doing some internal tracking of those things that are important to your community (e.g. food cost per meal, labor hours needed for each meal, etc.). Using that information, create your own unique set of KPIs to track.

"When you identify a KPI that doesn't meet your goal, you can dive deeper and do an audit of that area to determine why," Dana says. "Follow the numbers. They will tell you what you need to know and where to put your focus," she adds.

Now, compare your community to competing communities.

Once you have a handle on your own KPIs and areas where you want to improve, it's time to turn your attention outward to the industry. How do you compare with your peer communities; those about the same size as yours and providing the same care?

This can be a real eye opener, Dana tells me. For instance, you may think you're doing great and keeping costs under control, only to find that, compared to others, your costs are quite a bit higher. Conversely, you may find communities which are spending more per meal than yours, but are successfully using their dining experiences to fill rooms. "So, if your community is trying to differentiate on food quality, it may be time to spend more money per person," says Dana.

Use "AI" to "Unleash the power of your data!"

We've all heard of "Artificial Intelligence". Dana suggests using a different form of "AI", one which stands for "Actionable Intelligence". In other words, taking the data you've collected and, adding your own human experience and knowledge, transforming it into actions. But she warns communities to make sure that those KPIs track to what's most important in your community. Otherwise, you'll be wasting time and energy taking actions that will not have a major impact.

Gordon Food Service has sponsored surveys and, therefore, has accumulated a large database that they share with their clients. They firmly believe that knowing as much as possible about the competition and conducting regular internal and external audits is helping communities better position themselves and improving the overall dining experience for residents.

"It's one thing to get your hands on data," says Dana. "But you need to take steps to unleash the power of your data and turn it into actionable intelligence that you can use to steer your community in the direction you want to go. You can do it. Don't be a DRIP!"

Gordon Food Service has tools to help senior living communities harness valuable data and turn it into actionable intelligence. They also help communities save money on dining services, without impacting the quality of the food. They have a great article on plate cost, which you can access [here](#).



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