



How Are You Doing When It Comes to Listening to Your . . .

By Jane Kincaid

“I know how you feel.” Those words, often spoken in empathy, can provide a great deal of comfort during trying times in life. They become even more meaningful when spoken from experience. Knowing that someone has shared and felt a similar struggle lets other know that they are truly not alone. And with that comes experience and support to help deal with the issue at hand.

This is a conversation familiar to the staff at Shelbyville, Ind.-based [LifeShare Technologies](#), a Senior Housing Forum partner. The company was founded to solve a personal problem.

“Our founders had loved ones who were dealing with the transition to a senior living community, resulting in a disconnect from the family,” says Brad Rusche, director of client experience at LifeShare. “They tried computers and tablets, and found the challenge of connecting was unfortunately more challenging than the problem itself.”

Through conversation, LifeShare discovered that campuses were also facing challenges—to keep residents up to date on activities, events, and services being offered, and to keep families aware of all the great resources available. So they decided to offer a solution that would keep everyone connected, and LifeShare Technologies was born. From that point on, LifeShare has kept up their conversations with senior living providers turned customers, which has been worth its weight in gold.

Relationship Value

Starting off as a small business, relationships were everything, says Rusche. “Only two people ran the support team, the relationships we built were a result of phone calls and emails with the same group of customers time and time again,” he says.

Those relationships quickly became friendships, and the value in creating loyalty with customers was clear, says Rusche. Recommendations to other potential clients, testimonials, and trust in the team's vision and the product paid back dividends.

Seven years later and several employees larger, LifeShare is still having conversations with customers on a regular basis. With the wisdom of having been on the other side, Rusche says LifeShare staff is always reminding each other to treat the customer they way they would have wanted to be treated. And the company places a big emphasis on employing kind-hearted people who truly enjoy serving others and fixing problems.

No One on Hold

A LifeShare customer may receive hours upon hours of help either onsite, through webinars, on the phone, and in email. There's no ticketing system for support requests, and no one is placed on hold or talking to someone in another country. If a customer has an issue, they receive a 'homey' and authentic support response that's immediate and thorough. "At the end of the day, we try to treat the customer as we would want to be treated," says Rusche.

Experience means everything, says Rusche. The staff intentionally decided to use a software solution that provides a "team email experience," instead of a ticketing platform.

"This was an effort to keep the personal relationships we worked so hard to build," he says. "We understand our customers' need for a prompt and concise answer to a question and don't see any value in requiring them to jump through the hoops of other ticketing platforms or asking someone to fill out a questionnaire that automatically sends a response to let them know we have received their question and will reach out to them. It seems like a waste of time."

Customers are regularly advised to not hesitate to pick up the phone or send an email to the support team. "Nobody wants the issue resolved or the question answered more than we do," says Rusche.

A Step Ahead

Being ready to anticipate and answer questions requires a proactive approach to communication, which LifeShare employs with their customer check-in plan.

"This could be something as simple as highlighting a new feature, giving suggestions on how to better utilize their account, or asking their opinion on a new product we are developing," says Rusche.

Even though customers are incredibly busy, says Rusche, the ongoing conversation between LifeShare and their customers is a result of the trust built by being intentional and not wasting customers' time.

Benefits for All

The benefits of such conversations with a company that strives to "be the guide" to their customers' stories can be seen in not only the customer experience, but in the platform itself.

Over the years, new features and tools have been direct results of customer conversations. "Not only do the ideas for product features come from our clients, we also lean heavily on their wisdom and perspective when it comes to working with future clients," says Rusche. "We have realized our customers are the experts in the industry, and we would be foolish to not listen and ask them questions."



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