A New Technology Can Connect Senior Community Residents With Their Families and Keep Them Informed

- By Miles McCollumOctober 19, 2017

Credit: Getty Images

(Editor's note: This content is provided by LifeShare Technologies, a Next Avenue sponsor.)

A small, wooden child-sized table nestled in the upstairs of a small Indiana church was the weekly meeting place for a group of friends that had previously built a successful software business and had the ambition to do it again. Sitting around that small table with knees nearly pressed against their chests was not the most ideal setting to start a business. However it provided a central meeting place for the group to get back together.

Some may say there was divine intervention since they were meeting in a church, but at that small table, a big idea was born. This idea would turn into a reality that has significantly changed the lives of our older population. Three entrepreneurs with a need to communicate with their aging loved ones found a way to send pictures and messages through "grandma's" preferred method of communication. Their only criteria? Keep it simple.

Co-founders Steve Rusche, John Moore and Doug Stevens all had aging family members either living at home or as a resident of a senior living community. Because they worried they were not calling or visiting as often as they should, they desperately needed a way to bridge the gap of communication for family member and their older

relatives. All agreed their loved one did not want to learn how to use a smart phone, computer, tablet or any form of technology with the name "smart" in it, so they decided to use a technology they were all familiar with — the television. By connecting a small device to grandma's TV, family and friends from all over the world now had a gateway to send pictures and messages, which would then appear on her TV. The three founders all knew that if it was a complicated process, the idea would be just that… an idea. But if it was easy to view a picture of a new grandbaby, right there on the TV, LifeShare would quickly be way more than just an idea.

Real-Time Announcements, Games, Notifications and More

After LifeShare created a gateway for thousands of people to communicate with loved ones, the staff at senior living communities began to request a similar function for their public area television sets. Directors explained how TVs are placed in common areas but don't serve a useful purpose for residents. They also said they were spending too much money on printing costs and needed a more efficient way to display activities and announcements. With this in mind, the three founders went back to the thinking table (this time an adult-size table in their own office) and strategically built a digital signage platform which is now referred to as CommunityShare.

Digital signage is great, but could there be more to it than just a slideshow? The team analyzed senior living communities, surveyed the clients, talked with those who were actively creating the content and built features that real users were requesting to have with their digital signage such as monthly calendaring, real-time announcements, resident notifications, group games, therapeutic music and faith and podcasts. Using the same criteria as LifeShare, the founders made it a point to make CommunityShare simple to use for senior living communities staff. Staff are able to add content to their digital signage in seconds, from any device, at any location.

Cindy Syoen, activities director at Barkley Place Senior Living and Blue Harbor Senior Living, said the residents have learned to count on the LifeShare gateway.

"Residents are much more aware of the daily activities, birthdays and overall happenings," says Syoen. "Residents have asked me to post things under announcements on CommunityShare including movie nights, speakers and meetings. They really love this option and understand that I can add just about anything!"

Mobile App Designed for Families

After taking a step back and talking with many users, they began to explain how the residents had their own form of communication and concierge service, and the staff now had their elegant and easy-to-use digital signage and web admin, but the family members were still feeling disconnected. The founders began to develop a mobile app to give family members an easy way to stay informed. Once family members download the app, they are able to see scheduled activities, the dining menu, pictures and any announcement that is made as soon as it is made. Not only was the app a great feature for families, but the communities instantly began to leverage it as a marketing feature.

LifeShare is changing the entire environment at senior living communities, yet there is one thing that still remains the same — the mission to keep it simple.

If you want to learn more about LifeShare, see an online demo, try the system for free or just talk to someone about the company, click this link. We would love to connect with you.

By Miles McCollum

Miles joined the LifeShare team after graduating from Anderson University in 2014. Before transitioning to sales and marketing, Miles spent three years working with the client experience team where he gained an understanding of the industry need and the desires of senior communities, which is when he realized the positive impact LifeShare can have.

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