**Providing Great Senior Living Service During The Great Resignation**

Have you experienced inferior service during the last few years? Maybe you ordered a new dining room table, or washer and dryer and were told there were going to be massive shipping delays. Perhaps you went to your favorite restaurant and couldn’t get in for dinner because they closed earlier than usual. Or maybe you went to a hotel for vacation and were told that housekeeping wouldn’t be available during your stay.

I’m guessing everyone reading this has experienced at least some version of these disappointing, frustrating events. Intellectually we understand that the pandemic, Covid-19 policies, supply chain issues, and, of course, The Great Resignation are to blame. Still, customer service complications are incredibly annoying.

But delayed appliances, closed restaurants, and a lack of turndown service are small potatoes compared to what our residents and families have been experiencing. Many of them logically understand why there have been changes in our services, but they are tired of excuses. While you are diligently working to staff up, here are five ways to ensure you are providing great service while hiring and retention are tough.

1. Be sure your residents and their families know what to expect. Senior living customers are not thrilled when you tell them dining room hours are limited or the van trips to the grocery store or shopping center are going to be available less frequently. But this news is certainly tolerated better when they’re given a heads-up. Do everything in your power to overcommunicate when amenities will be abbreviated. Put up signs, send e-mails, and do verbal reminders.
2. Train your staff to answer questions. Even though many residents and families “get” that there is a staffing problem, particularly in healthcare and senior living, they still may ask questions. When they ask why there’s a service interruption or change, it’s okay to share that staffing is the reason. But be sure to follow that up with how it’s your organization’s highest priority to resolve it.
3. Apologize. Of course, it’s not your or your team’s fault that the pandemic, Covid-19 policies, supply chain issues, and The Great Resignation happened. But it’s important to keep apologizing for the inconvenience. It will go a long way to reducing complaints.
4. Ask your residents and their families for ideas on how to deal with the service interruptions. As stakeholders, they have a vested interest in improving the situation. Perhaps they have thoughts on how to attract talent, augment staff with volunteers, or how to ensure the most valued services are the least interrupted.
5. Thank the staff who are showing up and treat them as generously as you can. Happy, appreciated team members will be kinder and more patient with your residents and their families. Pay them as well as possible, offer unexpected treats, and be sure they are taking their vacation and personal days. Even though it can be tempting to allow dedicated staff to work relentless hours to make up for staffing shortages, resist that urge. They *will* burn out and their attitude toward your senior living customers will be negatively impacted. Don’t ever forget that your staff have lots of choices right now. Make sure they know you recognize their value.

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