Staffing For Success: How We Are Creating a Culture of Stability

With nine continuing care retirement communities in North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia and Indiana, Senior Living Communities has built a reputation as a top-tier senior care provider. Executives at Senior Living Communities attribute much of their success to the people and programs used to build a culture that listens to and supports their employees.

"The best way to fulfill our commitment in helping our residents live longer, healthier and happier lives is by having a staff full of caring professionals dedicated to providing quality services," stated Ben Thompson, Vice President of Special Projects at Senior Living Communities.

Getting staffing right is a priority to Senior Living Communities because of the significant benefits it brings throughout the organization. "With a highly engaged staff there is going to be less turnover, higher quality care and service, and better resident and family relationships, which ultimately leads to higher occupancy and better financial performance."

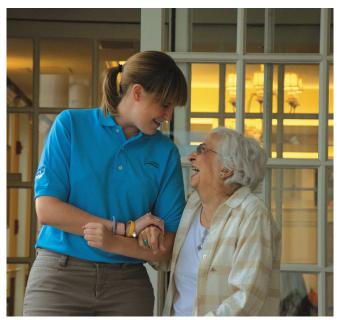Like most senior care providers, Senior Living Communities had some staffing challenges, including high caregiver turnover. Management prioritized staffing and labor management as a strategic priority throughout its communities. "To get the performance we desired, we focused on creating a culture that emphasizes the three critical desires of our staff members – being heard, being valued, and being respected," stated Thompson.

Corporate Support

To build, drive and sustain their staff initiatives, managers committed to continuous corporate support to drive employee-based programs. To lead the charge, a Vice President of Talent Management was added, whose primary responsibility is to improve employee relations and serve as an employee advocate.

"Our first step was to gather feedback from employees and allow them to tell us what was causing them the most frustration. We ranked the top staff complaints at each of our communities to determine if there were overarching issues throughout the organization," stated Thompson.

Managers found that employee scheduling consistently ranked as a top three complaint at each of their communities. "Scheduling was a major issue for many of our staff members. People were leaving because they weren't happy with their schedules," said Thompson.

Happy faces are seen throughout Senior Living Communities and employees are more engaged thanks to OnShift.

Consistency & Flexibility in Scheduling

All communities were using paper and pen for staff scheduling. "The whole process was hard to manage because there are a lot of moving parts. Staff became frustrated with inconsistencies in their schedules and with changes that weren't always communicated," said Thompson.

That's when Senior Living Communities turned to OnShift, whose scheduling and labor management software provides staff with the clarity, communication and control they were seeking. "Anything you can put in employees' hands to show them that you care about them really sets them up for success," stated Thompson.

With OnShift, staff gain 24/7 online and mobile access to their schedules and are empowered to easily make adjustments. "They have their schedules right in their pockets. They're able to electronically request time-off, swap shifts and see their schedules on the go."

And employees at Senior Living Communities like the newer, more modern way of scheduling. "OnShift has been a hit among staff – the feedback has been very positive," stated Thompson.

"Staff satisfaction is up. With OnShift, we don't hear scheduling complaints anymore."

Ben Thompson, Vice President of Special Projects at Senior Living Communities

Satisfaction Up, Turnover Down 15.6%

Senior Living Communities recognized that satisfaction is not sustainable without consistent attention. "This process was an important first step to improving engagement, but it was critical for us to not just 'check the box' and move on. We wanted employees to continually have a voice within our organization," added Thompson. "We continue to survey staff, coach managers and implement programs to foster staff stability."

This has led to the introduction of additional employee-centric programs including a flexible paid time off policy, 401K program and scholarship opportunities. Executives viewed these initiatives as ways to reinforce their culture and attention to employees. "At the end of the day, we're only as good as the 3:00 a.m. CNA. If that person is not engaged and not delivering quality care, it's detrimental to the organization."

One of the leading indicators Senior Living Communities links to staff satisfaction is employee call-offs. "We've experienced a lower number of call-offs," said Thompson. Satisfaction is on the rise and OnShift played an

important role in achieving this milestone. "Giving staff greater visibility into and control of their schedules meant that we were creating schedules that were a better fit for each employee's life."

Consistency in communication has also been a key component in keeping staff engaged. OnShift's communication platform helps keep all employees on the same page and removes any perceived favoritism when filling open shifts.

"Schedulers used to be in a difficult position when an employee called off. They'd scramble to fill the shift and assign it to the first person who agreed to work. That really irritated other employees who were unaware of those opportunities," stated Thompson. "Now with OnShift, it's extremely easy to communicate with all employees at the same time and in the way each employee prefers – text, email, phone or mobile notification. Everyone has the same opportunity to request those shifts. This has really helped facilitate open communications with our staff." What's more, the time to fill a call-off decreased 50% with OnShift.

Satisfaction and engagement continued to climb. "Staff satisfaction is up. With OnShift, we don't hear scheduling complaints anymore. I'm proud to say that we're doing a lot less exit interviews because our turnover is down 15.6%," explained Thompson.

Controlling Costs

As part of its focus on staffing and labor management, Senior Living Communities also looked to improve its bottom line by proactively managing labor costs, their number one operating expense.

"We had a pretty good handle on overtime prior to OnShift, but with OnShift's predictive analytics and proactive alerts we were still able to reduce overtime by up to 28% in some communities," stated Thompson.

The financial savings realized from OnShift did not end with overtime. OnShift alerts management of any discrepancies in an employee's schedule information and punch data. "OnShift's punch variance reporting helped us save over $300,000 annually in unnecessary costs."

Five Star Staffing Success

Labor budget management within OnShift yielded benefits beyond cost savings. Proactive shift adjustments based on census fluctuations are critical given the recent changes to the Five Star Quality Rating System which have put a spotlight on staffing. "Knowing the daily adjustments needed to hit our labor budget has helped us consistently achieve our staffing goals, which has set us up for continued Five Star success," stated Thompson.

Staffing For Stability

With higher satisfaction, lower turnover and more control over labor costs, Senior Living Communities is reaching the organizational benefits it set out to achieve. With their proactive staffing practices and employee-centric strategies, the communities are positioned for ongoing success.

Thompson loves the progress. "By implementing programs that matter to our employees, we have created an environment where people enjoy coming to work. They are smiling more. This is apparent to other employees, our residents and their families."

Key Results	
15.6%	**reduction in turnover**
75+%	**increase in scheduling efficiencies**
2 yr.	**decrease in call-offs**
$300,000	**saved in annual labor costs**