



RHarper Consulting Update

Repositioning? Don't Forget Your Technology!

Over the past decade, many continuing-care retirement communities have repositioned their product by upgrading and rehabbing their facilities, adding new programs and buildings, providing additional levels of care, and generally reinventing themselves to keep pace with the ever-evolving senior market. Assisted living and skilled nursing facilities have found themselves striving to differentiate their products in an increasingly competitive market as well. An area frequently overlooked during the repositioning process is the advanced technology now available.

The 1950s-technology wall-mounted pull-cord system has been obsolete for decades, but it is surprising how often I see this system installed in recently completed projects. It may be because regulations have not kept up with technology and these systems are "required." In most cases, though, it is simply a default selection by an engineering/design team that is overwhelmed by the advances in the past few years and lacks the resources to objectively evaluate systems and make educated recommendations to their clients. Operators and managers are guilty as well, for taking the path of least resistance and continuing to use obsolete systems due to lack of initiative, lack of capital, or the presence of a workforce which may have difficulty adapting to new technology.

Keep four basic requirements in mind when you consider technological improvements:

Create a technology strategic plan – The range of choices in today's technology is indeed overwhelming and the fear of selecting the "wrong" system is well founded. Many systems have simply disappeared due to lack of distribution and support, leaving their early adopters with a "white elephant." Determine exactly what you want your technology to accomplish – and consider integration with existing systems and acceptance by staff.

It's not just for emergencies anymore – A fully integrated system can provide monitoring of practically unlimited inputs from residents, staff, and monitoring devices. Not only should your system react to and dispatch floor staff in the event of a resident triggering an alert, new generation adaptive learning technologies can "learn" the daily activity patterns of individual residents and alert care staff to significant deviations from those patterns and proactively recommend interventions. Motion sensors and pressure strips on beds, chairs and bathroom floors can monitor and alert for falls, prolonged periods of inactivity, or significant deviations from normal waking times.

Staff productivity and compliance – Today's systems can monitor the number of minutes care givers spend with each individual resident and make recommendations for resident/staff assignments to balance care loads appropriately. Further, if you are utilizing or contemplate using an enhanced care system when residents are billed for additional services, these systems can integrate with billing systems to capture those charges.

Web portals - Resident families are now able to access data on their family members via the web, and are willing to pay extra for that service. Interfacing weight scales, glucometers, medication management systems, meal selections, and other resident care services with your system provides a service to families that is at least on par with a local automobile service department which lets them monitor their vehicle during service visits.

Technology affects our daily lives continuously, and in ever more profound ways. The senior care industry has not embraced technology as readily as other industries in our society. As you focus on new strategic directions for your community, spend the time and capital to transform your community's operations into a technology leader and enjoy the benefits in productivity, enhanced revenue, better relations with resident families - and, most importantly, better resident safety and care.

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RHarper Consulting Group provides development consulting, program management, and owner representation services focused on the senior living and mixed use sectors. In addition, Mr. Harper is also a listed mediator and arbitrator providing dispute resolution services for the construction and real estate industries.

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Roger Harper, Principal of [RHarper Consulting Group](#), provides development consulting services to the senior housing industry.

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