

Case Study: inviacom'ssm Robust Internet Hardware Enables Interactive Engagement Software to Increase Social Interactions at Bridgewater Retirement Community



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- ◆ Prolonging Independence / Aging in Place
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- ◆ Quality of Life / Satisfaction of Care

About the Organization

Organization Name: Bridgewater Retirement Community

Main Contributor:

Sarah Hagan, Vice President of Independent & Assisted Living

Organization Type: Life Plan Community

Organization Description:
Bridgewater Retirement Community opened its doors in May 1965, with 7 staff members and 9 residents, in direct response to the special needs of the aged in the vicinity. By October 1965, all 60 beds were occupied, with names on the waiting list. Today, Bridgewater Retirement Community is situated on 55 acres within the Town of Bridgewater, VA. The community consists of 242 independent-living cottages and apartments, 86 assisted-living apartments, and a recently renovated health center of 6 nursing households that host 127 additional residents.

Project Description

inviacomsm designed, installed, and monitors 24/7 an exclusive wireless internet service that covers—more accurately, permeates—the Bridgewater Retirement Community campus. Users can access—with equal ease—dedicated, hi-speed internet in their own residences and poolside.

inviacomsm helps Bridgewater residents and staff “stay connected to the world and communicate with their loved ones with ease and convenience.”

Wellzesta, Inc., provides technology software solutions that “reduce employee turnover and social isolation in elder care.” As a result, senior living residents and employees at Bridgewater manage their lives better and strive for holistic well-being.

“We have residents ranging in age from 56 to 103,” says Sarah Hagan, vice president of independent living at Bridgewater. “Wellzesta has changed their lives.”

Bridgewater’s previous, local internet service lacked the necessary speed and bandwidth to accommodate Wellzesta’s software. Initially, users did not fully realize the benefits Wellzesta offered: increased social interaction, activity, and decreased isolation.

Since inviacomsm installed its proprietary, managed hi-speed wireless internet service at Bridgewater, everything has changed for the better.

“inviacom is our silent partner that allows Wellzesta to operate throughout our campus,” says Hagan.

Implementation Approach

“We call our wireless internet ‘blanketwifism,’” says Kevin Merrill, business development director for inviacomsm. “We deliver custom-designed internet primarily to senior living communities, applying the very latest technology, and we address the specific needs of each application. No 2 of our installations are alike.”

inviacomsm met the challenge of delivering a reliable, robust wireless internet that accommodates the demand of Bridgewater’s residents and staff, who use Wellzesta’s software to access events, schedule their days, manage holistic well-being, and monitor personal progress and health.

For the user experience to be powerful, software platforms from companies like Wellzesta are best partnered with strong internet service providers like inviacomsm.

System Embodiment

Unlike any other provider, inviacom'ssm blanketwifism utilizes 2 separate internet sources—a fiber backbone and a redundant copper line—that provides dynamic, seamless, and consistent hi-speed internet coverage. Bridgewater's previous off-the-rack, local internet connection used copper coaxial cable only.

Unlike—again—any other provider, blanketwifism from inviacomsm accounts for the possibility that every resident, guest, and employee is online all at the same time. The inviacomsm solution accomplishes this without sacrificing bandwidth, because it installs 4 separate networks that do not overlap or intersect.

Residents, guests, operations, and clinical services each connect to their own dedicated network, and each device is assigned its own bandwidth. inviacomsm also provides 24/7/365 live-customer and technical support that resolves most issues before customers even become aware of their existence.

"inviacom's customer service is phenomenal," says Hagan.

Wellzesta's software delights, informs, inspires, and enriches lives. Platforms branded as Wellzesta Life, Visualize, and Elevate are easy to use on any mobile device, laptop, and desktop.

Wellzesta Life is the "single source for wellness, communication, and engagement," connecting residents to the people and happenings in their communities that matter to them.

Wellzesta Visualize is a web-based platform that publishes event and meal information, announcements, and wellness content. It is shareable visually on digital signage like kiosks and websites. It is free for all Wellzesta Life clients.

Wellzesta Elevate is the first wellness-backed staff-engagement app designed specifically for senior living organizations. It allows for immediate connection among staff members, while elevating their well-being.

If not driven at peak efficiency by robust wireless internet hardware like inviacomsm, using Wellzesta software is like driving a Ferrari powered with a common four-cylinder motor rather than its eight-cylinder, 700-plus-horsepower hand-crafted engine.

"The fact that I can release real-time, live information to all 330 of our independent living residents in this moment of crisis with COVID-19 is critical," says Hagan. "I cannot imagine what we'd do without Wellzesta."

Business Model

Bridgewater is a life plan community, where most residents live independently until the time comes when they may need to rely on the additional services provided, including assisted living. It is important that residents who make the transition retain the same level of internet connectivity with inviacomsm as well as user engagement with Wellzesta.

Wellzesta's business methods are complementary with inviacom's, especially in educational approach, the level of customer support, and because they both specialize in serving senior living communities.

Both companies also apply an RMR (Recurring Monthly Revenue) model that requires no capital investment. Senior living communities can select any or all of Wellzesta's offerings and adjust at any time. inviacom'ssm turnkey, scalable solution also accommodates future growth.

inviacomsm is the only company that keeps pace with changing wireless internet technology, and it is the first to deploy it. inviacom'ssm clients are early adopters of technology that few others use.

inviacomsm assesses, implements, designs, engineers, installs, services, maintains, upgrades, and provides ongoing customer support for secure and reliable WiFi that transforms an entire property into a WiFi hotspot. It allows edge-to-edge campus coverage with no signal drop-off. Every resident's digital experience is personalized, which is made possible because of inviacom'ssm fast and secure wireless internet.

"Plug-and-play methods using equipment from one manufacturer will not work," says Merrill.

Outcomes

Once inviacomsm was operational, user engagement of Wellzesta's software at Bridgewater spiked to 95%. Resident and employee feedback was swift and positive.

"Wellzesta's calendar constantly reminds me of upcoming events..." "Everything is there for us... we can see what's going on..."

"It adds a whole new layer of participation and communication..."

"As opposed to paper... everything I need to know about the community is there in real time... it's amazing how much paper we're saving."

"If there is a special event that aligns with my interests, I will be notified."

"This is our breakfast companion."

"We can tailor the user experience to a customer's individual preferences," says Kyle Robinson, director of business development for Wellzesta. "We can also monitor the progress of residents in the 8 essential areas of holistic wellness: physical, social, financial, environmental, emotional, vocational, spiritual, and intellectual."

"Wellzesta helps our residents really get engaged in goal-setting, and in re-thinking their life purpose to enable individual growth," says Hagan. "It is our on-campus wellness tool. We can measure progress, and residents can offer feedback and tell us what they want us to offer."

The average age of a Wellzesta resident user is 84, and the software has a nationwide average engagement rate of 79%. This is because Wellzesta, inviacomsm, and Bridgewater Retirement Community recognize that human beings are also social beings.

Challenges and Pitfalls to Avoid

Life plan communities should consult with experts to assess the present configuration and condition of their wireless internet before adopting robust 3rd-party software platforms. Otherwise, they may not work as designed.

It is common-place for the average Life Plan Community resident to have up to 6 or 7 wireless devices that are in constant connection with their wireless service. If an internet service lacks campus-wide wireless internet that uses multiple internet carriers, custom-built software and numerous access points, optimal, campus-wide signal strength will be virtually impossible to achieve.

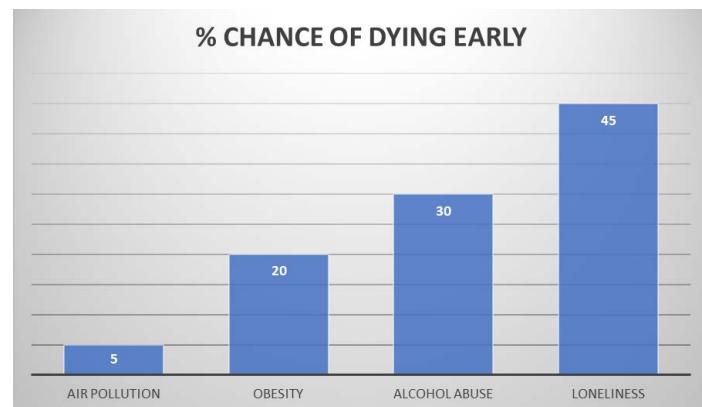
Cell phones have the weakest antennae and are the most-used devices. Android devices quickly look for the strongest signal with minimal noise. Apple devices (which comprise most devices used at Life-Plan Communities) tend to hang on to an existing signal for as long as possible before switching to a new access point.

And, if any wireless internet system is more than 3 years old, it is old technology.

Lessons Learned

Consistent, meaningful social engagement is nourishment for minds and souls. When diminished, avoided, or withheld, people can die sooner.

One published study concludes that these following maladies increase the chances of dying early:



The older one gets, the more likely loneliness can become a sole companion, adding stress to one's days. In fact, the stress hormone epinephrine presents at significantly higher levels over the age of 55 in lonely people than in people who engage in regular social interaction.

To paraphrase the William Wallace character in the movie *Braveheart*: Everybody dies; not everyone really lives. This statement gains relevance as people age and withdraw within the cocoon of progressive isolation.

This is why companies like Wellzesta and inviacomsm focus on the mission to eliminate loneliness by enabling residents to keep in touch with their Wellzesta- equipped devices and with each other.

"Our entire focus is to foster face-to-face social interaction in ways that matters to each individual resident," says Hagan.

Because of inviacomsm, blanketwifism, and Wellzesta, Bridgewater residents and employees can freely engage in online social interaction that studies have proven to be integral to mental and physical well-being. This is especially crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"COVID-19 has stopped all personal interaction among our residents," says Hagan. "Wellzesta has helped everyone remain engaged and safe. We have initiated virtual activities like cooking classes and museum tours. I saw 2 residents who live in different duplexes on the same street having coffee together. They were sitting on their own front porches, using Wellzesta to communicate on their iPads."

Advice to Share with Others

It is a good idea to offer Wellzesta's products and services to residents who are scheduled to move into participating life plan communities that use its software.

They are able to take advantage of the inherent benefits prior to move-in day.

"Offering our software prior to moving in hastens the transition process and helps future residents acclimate," says Robinson. "Our high-tech solutions actually encourage and foster higher levels and occurrences of personal engagement and connection."

"I talk with organizations and other communities who are looking at Wellzesta and they have told me 'we're going to wait 6 months,'" says Hagan. "My response to them is 'Why? Why do you want to delay the opportunities you can offer to your residents?'

"We consider Wellzesta and inviacom as partners—they are part of our extended family."