

# Case Study: Connecting and Engaging Residents through Customized Technology

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## Categories:

- ◆ Reduce Social Isolation
- ◆ Reduce Feelings of Loneliness
- ◆ Reduce Use of Antipsychotics
- ◆ Increased Resident Engagement and Satisfaction
- ◆ Increased Social Networks
- ◆ Increased Quality of Life
- ◆ Increased Staff Efficiencies

## About the Organization

**Organization Name:** Ingleside Engaged Living

**Main Contributor:** Dusanka Delovska-Trajkova, Chief Information Officer

**Organization Type:** Continued Care Retirement Community

### Organization Description:

Ingleside is an organization of people imbued with a spirit of giving. As the nonprofit parent of the Ingleside family of communities and affiliates, they lead Ingleside at Rock Creek, Westminster at Lake Ridge, Ingleside at King Farm, Westminster Ingleside Group, the Westminster Ingleside Foundation, and Ingleside at Home. All of their programs and services provide exceptional experiences for the older adults they serve, as well as employees, volunteers, and partners.

## Project Description

Ingleside sought a resident engagement platform to disseminate timely and accurate information, unify messaging, and streamline partnerships. By working collaboratively with Viibrant, and by integrating voice technology, this multi-site family of senior living affiliates was able to provide access for all residents, including those with mobility, dexterity, vision and/or cognitive challenges. The Ingleside staff and residents were invested in the success of the portal. Their requests were accommodated with customized technology, resulting in an engaged, connected community with an adoption rate of over 75%.

## Socialization Modality

Community Application, Voice Recognition, Engagement

## System Embodiment

Tablet, Desktop Computer, Laptop, Smartphone, Voice Activated Assistant Technology

## Business Model

As an independent, nonprofit organization, Ingleside provides management and strategic leadership for three of the Washington, DC, metropolitan area's premier life plan communities: Ingleside at Rock Creek, which is nestled alongside Washington, DC's beautiful, unspoiled Rock Creek Park; Westminster at Lake Ridge, which is set against the natural forested beauty of Northern Virginia; and Ingleside at King Farm, which is central to the award-winning intergenerational King Farm development near Washington, DC. In addition, Ingleside at Home is dedicated to providing high-quality personal and customized services for clients who don't live on campus.

To better satisfy the needs of staff and residents, Ingleside searched for a more dynamic solution to replace their current resident website. At the time, residents and staff could see information on events and dining, but they wanted more. High on the list was the need for a customizable system, especially given that Ingleside is a multi-site family of unique communities. Along with their IT committees, the Ingleside team gathered information for the requested requirements and bundled this input into a consolidated document.

Resident satisfaction is perhaps the most important function of the Ingleside partnership with its residents. Pride is taken in developing trust based on

transparency and interaction with residents who have a median age of over 85. This core value was central to Ingleside's decision to choose Viibrant as their new resident engagement platform.

"We selected Viibrant because they said, 'Yes' to basically everything we wanted, and they offered a personal touch," explains Dusanka Delovska-Trajkova, chief information officer at Ingleside. "The Viibrant team came to each of our campuses, which was important to us. They got to know each of our unique communities, and they took the time to understand our current procedures and our needs for the future."

## Implementation Approach

In terms of specific goals, the Ingleside staff sought to unify messaging and disseminate timely, accurate information. Partnerships needed to be considered as well.

Delovska-Trajkova describes, "We needed to interface with partners. As you can imagine, senior living is a fairly complex environment. We have dining, maintenance and healthcare partners. Each of our residents can move from one level of care to another through the whole continuum. As they do so, it was very important that we anticipate their needs, and we wanted their level of access to move with them. Thanks to Viibrant, our residents don't lose anything as they transition to another level of care."

After about a year with the new portal, resident surveys were conducted and showed a high degree of satisfaction among those who were using the portal. However, it also revealed that about 30 percent of the community was not using the portal due to challenges with vision, mobility, dexterity, or simply discomfort with technology. Reflecting on their mission to create diverse and enriched opportunities for seniors, Ingleside and their accessibility committees wanted to address this gap. Based on other communities dealing with the same issues, the Viibrant team suggested the use of voice technology.

Implementation was piloted with 50 residents, and specific goals were identified for the ensuing six months as follows:

- ◆ To get acceptance by residents; specifically, to get 90% of the pilot group to use Alexa daily.
- ◆ To add core skills, which meant adjusting certain workflows.
- ◆ To improve features based on resident and staff input via monthly meetings.
- ◆ To create a wish list of additional features along with a corresponding timeline.

## Outcomes

The results exceeded expectations. "What surprised us was how fast our initial group implemented the voice technology, how fast they wanted to move forward and how fast they wanted to add features, because they saw how easy the interaction is. They do not need computers. They do not need logins. They just need to speak," says Delovska-Trajkova.

A set of goals was then developed for the next six months:

- ◆ To add more complicated features, such as dining reservations, event registrations, and work orders.
- ◆ To evaluate Return on Investment (ROI) and resident satisfaction.
- ◆ To create a wish list of additional features along with a corresponding timeline.
- ◆ To plan expansion of the pilot group to additional residents.

Ingleside was also interested in how voice technology could benefit seniors with cognitive impairments such as dementia.

A particular group of residents created a program where they used Amazon Echo Devices to play music preferred by residents with such impairments. The music was selected by working with the residents' family members and has been used as a soothing device with positive results.

Ingleside also had an overarching goal. Delovska-Trajkova explains, "We were trying to understand how voice technology can contribute to the well-being of residents. We wanted to know how this technology could help give residents control and independence, thereby providing effective means to live their lives more fully. We wanted to know how this technology could contribute to a greater sense of connectedness to their families, particularly younger generations, thus creating meaningful socialization that contributes to the well-being and wellness of our residents."

Based on initial findings, Ingleside's Wellness Managers began to collaborate with Viibrant to incorporate the physical dimensions of wellness. The desire was to log the residents' activities and evaluate how they fulfilled the various dimensions of wellness. "Viibrant was very receptive, and they customized our portal based on our needs. We are working to tie in the residents' gadgets and wearables," Delovska-Trajkova explains. "For example, we could measure steps and load that information into the portal. This would give our residents information about the positive effects of their walking."

In addition, the Life Enrichment staff invited Amazon Alexa

to play stories and music and to tell jokes. The staff enjoyed the ease of use, especially the ability to quickly change subjects. They also appreciated how this technology has reduced their preparation time.

Ingleside worked with Viibrant to handle a vast number of calendar events as well. One of their campuses has over 400 activities a month. Delovska-Trajkova describes, “We had boards with multiple sign-up sheets, and we had a lottery system in place, because some events were limited in terms of the number of people who could participate. If people cancelled, it was very difficult to keep track.”

In the beginning, Ingleside allowed both options for event registration and cancellation—paper-based and computerized. They quickly decided to “pull off the Band-Aid,” as Delovska-Trajkova described it, and proceeded to set up two kiosks next to the life enrichment office. The staff and IT committees were instrumental in helping residents sign up for events online. After one month, two of their campuses were paperless. The third campus is following suit. According to Delovska-Trajkova, “Nowadays, nobody here mentions sign-up sheets. Nobody misses them.”

A highly regarded dining reservation system similar to OpenTable has also been implemented via Viibrant. The work order system has also been interfaced. Now, when residents place a maintenance order, it goes directly to the system that Ingleside’s team uses. A technician is assigned, saving several steps as compared to the previous method of manual entry. Notes allow residents to see what is being done, which provides transparency and improved workflow.

The experience at Ingleside demonstrates the profound benefits that result when a technology company and life plan communities take a co-development approach. Technology can be enchanting when communities are treated as co-development partners. When the technology is customizable and there is mutual respect with a common goal, true and meaningful success will follow. Residents and staff who have played an integral role in the design of their portal, or voice recognition software, will be much more likely to adopt it and reap the benefits.

## **Challenges and Pitfalls to Avoid**

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- ◆ As word spreads, residents will want to be involved in the committees that provide feedback. This is a resource and management challenge.
- ◆ Voice requires more training than originally thought, especially with individuals who have visual impairments. Users must rely on repetition to help with memorizing the commands and abilities of the devices.
- ◆ Technology and time is more limited than the imagination of residents.

## **Lessons Learned/Advice to Share with Others**

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- ◆ Plan for 30% more involvement.
- ◆ Choose a technology provider that is willing to grow with all of the new requests.
- ◆ Set up resident advisory groups to help test the technology and develop ideas.