

Case Study: Improving System-Wide Communication with Connected Living Enterprise Platform During the COVID-19 Crisis



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Categories:

- ◆ Increased Communication
- ◆ Increased Staff Efficiencies
- ◆ Increased Remote Programming

About the Organization

Organization Name: Waterman Village

Main Contributor:

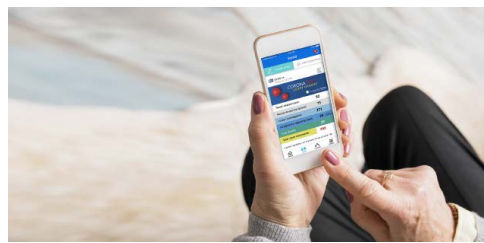
Main Contributor: Andrew Dujon,
President & CEO

Organization Type: Multi-level
retirement community

Organization Description:

In 1989, Waterman Village opened as an extension of the Waterman Hospital. In 1992, Waterman Village no longer was an extension of the hospital, and became its own distinct nonprofit organization with a volunteer board of directors. Since then, Waterman Village Retirement Community in Mount Dora, FL, has grown to become one of the southeast's TOTAL retirement living community destinations. The community offers independent living, assisted living, skilled nursing, memory care, Medicare home health, private home health, a partnership with CVS for on-site pharmacy services, a public outpatient physical-occupational-speech therapy clinic, a brain wellness academy, and the Chapel Fellowship church.

Project Description



This case study demonstrates how an enterprise communication platform that incorporates mobile push notifications, led to improved customer experience for employees, residents, and their families at Waterman Village during the first few weeks of the Coronavirus Disease 19 (COVID-19) pandemic. Next to basic hygiene, accurate

and timely information is one of the greatest weapons in the mounting battle against COVID-19 in the United States. Connected Living's technology, combined with a robust COVID-19 response kit, empowered community staff to distribute crucial updates more efficiently. Families and residents appreciated immediate notification and access to timely information. Due to the ease of accessing critical information when it mattered most, customer adoption of the Connected Living mobile app (integrated with the enterprise platform) nearly doubled in this two-week timeframe.

The Communication Challenge

Communication is never more important than during a crisis. Families often find it challenging to parse through already overflowing inboxes to find the critical messages from a senior living community.

In the midst of a crisis, how do senior living communities most effectively share updates—especially when residents' family members are scattered across the world? Email is the main technology used to connect today, but families often find it challenging to parse through already overflowing inboxes to find the critical messages from a senior living community. On any given day, the average adult child is tasked with work deadlines and family responsibilities, in addition to keeping up with how mom is doing in her senior living community. Families want clear, precise information from a senior living community on a regular basis, and especially in emergent scenarios. Many senior living organizations are updating their websites with COVID-19 information. This is helpful, yet it requires families to stop and seek information, rather than receiving it in real-time during the flow of daily life. Waterman Village addressed the need expressed by families—to be conveniently connected—by activating the Connected Living Enterprise Content Management and Communication Platform.

Socialization Modality/System Embodiment

The Connected Living Enterprise solution is fueled by a web-based, flexible and scalable content management system that delivers content and communication to specific audiences at specific times through many endpoints to enhance engagement and personalization. It centralizes input and management of all community information including calendars, menus, bulletins, notifications, and more. Ecosystem endpoints include; mobile app, digital signage, in-room TV, Alexa-enabled voice products, and the web-based resident network. This ecosystem creates a more customer-centric environment that's always available to provide exceptional experiences.



“Waterman Village is a perfect example of a community bringing the best of today’s technology innovations and embracing at the leading edge of the market what tomorrow holds. One positive outcome of COVID-19 can be the rapid acceleration of communication and the importance of a connected life at all times.”

Sarah Hoit, CEO, Connected Living

Connected Living’s mobile app, available on iOS and Android platforms by the same name, functions as a communication hub for seniors and their families. The app allows them to share information, including location and activities, on a private social feed, and even access a concierge. The Connected Living app serves as a direct link for families who may be affected by quarantines or visitation restrictions. Tailored to be friendly to family members of all ages, the app is easy and intuitive to use.

Share Critical Information During A Crisis

A portion of the app is dedicated to the latest senior-specific information and updates from credible



sources such as the World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and John Hopkins University, along with Argentum and LeadingAge, the largest senior living trade association and the largest association of nonprofit providers of aging services.

The free Connected Living app is available to anyone with an interest in educating and sharing information about COVID-19 and its impact on senior communities.

“As organizations that serve and support older adults mobilize to protect their residents, access to current and reliable information is essential for making critical operational decisions,”

~Katie Smith Sloan, President and CEO of LeadingAge

Business Model

Waterman Village accepts Private Pay, Medicare, Medicare Advantage, Managed Care, Private Insurance, and Medicaid as payment sources. The skilled nursing facility (SNF) also has arrangements with a local accountable care organization and hospital for bundled payment arrangements. Waterman Village has various service lines including independent living, assisted living, skilled nursing, Medicare home health, private home health, and a partnership with CVS for on-site pharmacy services.

Implementation Approach

The Customer Experience

After downloading the app and creating a basic profile, users at Waterman Village were able to immediately access the latest information about COVID-19 from Waterman Village and national, trusted sources. New information, updates, and tips about the coronavirus outbreak are shared daily.

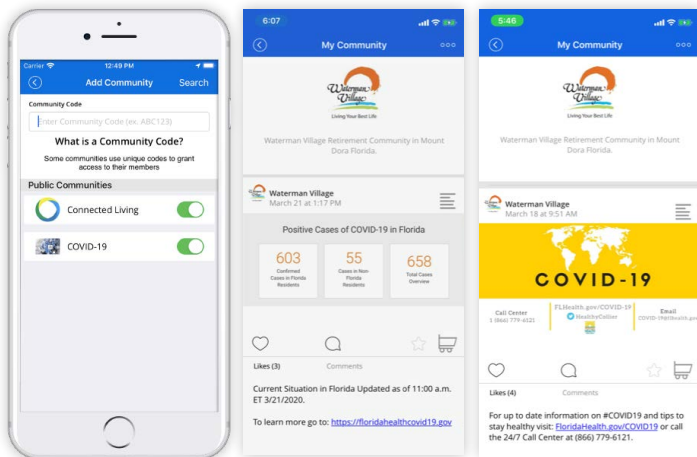
“Providing tools, tips, resources, and the latest information is proving critical during this challenging time. This is another step forward in the efforts to help older adults and their families stay informed and connected as communities work to navigate this new landscape,”

~Argentum President and CEO James Balda

Leadership at the community employed a private code on the app to communicate with residents, their families, and employees during the pandemic.

Waterman Village uses the mobile app to send factual information and keep residents and staff updated on the COVID-19 crisis and community engagement.

Residents, families and employees receive a mobile push notification when important community information has arrived.



“The Connected Living Community App has proven to be an invaluable tool to augment all of the traditional communication vehicles we’ve used over the years, for effective and streamlined communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 Pandemic is like no other we’ve witnessed before. Getting information out to our residents, families, and associates is crucial during these times, and knowing everyone who is connected is receiving a push notification when we send out a message provides great peace-of-mind.”

~ Sandra Van Syckel, Risk Manager

“Connected Living has been a great partner for many years, so I was not surprised when I heard they were in front of everyone else regarding the COVID-19 emergency toolkit. The kit was easy to implement virtually, and we were up and running in minutes. They were first to reach out with a communication plan when we were dealing with Hurricane Irma back in 2017. The technology Connected Living develops is innovative, but when you couple that with the service provided...they are second to none.”

~ Andrew Dujon, President & CEO

COVID-19 Resource Kit

Connected Living has developed a comprehensive emergency toolkit for COVID-19 that any senior living community can access to best reach all their constituents. The company is actively working to keep important senior audiences informed through its suite of technology services, including specialized digital signage, television messaging,

mobile apps, and Alexa. The communication tools assist all constituents who work and live inside and outside of a senior living community.

“We applaud Connected Living for making this important resource available to anyone who may be seeking updated and accurate information regarding COVID-19, particularly as it relates to older adults.”

~James Balda, President and CEO of Argentum

“Connected Living is filling an important gap by packaging older adult-specific information in a way that can be easily digested and put into practical action and accessed for free. They have also assembled a COVID-19 response kit for senior living communities to access.”

~Katie Smith Sloan, President and CEO of LeadingAge

Here's How Waterman Village Leveraged the Resource Kit and Enterprise Platform:

- ◆ Sent messages with push notifications to update specific audiences: residents, employees, and families.
- ◆ Educated constituents with curated COVID-19 content: opt-in via mobile app.
- ◆ Delighted residents with inspirational quotes to add levity and comfort to daily life during this pandemic. These uplifting tidbits appear in the social feed.
- ◆ Displayed information about protocols and updates on digital signage and in-room TV.
- ◆ Shared voice-enabled daily announcements with constituents who have an Alexa-enabled Echo smart-speaker.
- ◆ Purchased an iPad to support remote engagement with families and remote programming provided by Connected Living.
- ◆ Implemented Connected Living University digital programming, called Discussion Groups, to save time and deliver engaging experiences.

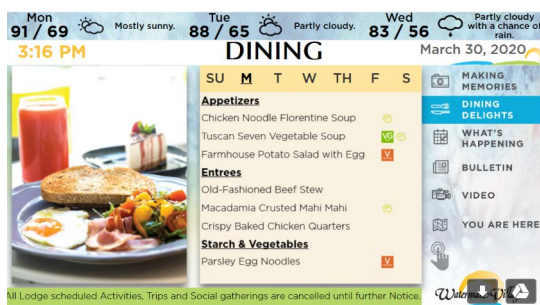
Outcomes

Connected Living collected key data points during the two-week timeframe of the study to determine how usage of the Connected Living Community (CLC) mobile app and Connected Living ecosystem helped support communication, education, and engagement.

Communication

- ◆ 86 constituents (majority are residents) connected with the community to access information on their mobile devices.

- ◆ The number of families opting-in for messaging and push notifications nearly doubled and community information more than doubled from 60 to 150.
- ◆ 33 residents connected their personal Alexa-enabled smart speakers to the Connected Living skill in order to connect with community information seamlessly.
- ◆ The community created and shared 11 photo albums during the study.
 - **Photos showcased meaningful 1-1 interactions to bring peace of mind to families who could view the albums from the CLC mobile app.**



Staff Efficiency

- ◆ The Community shared 11 alerts consisting of reminders or updates about activities during the study timeframe.
 - The ability to create an alert and instantly share it on in-room tv, digital signage, and the mobile app saved staff 30 minutes of time (that would have been used to create paper flyers and email or distribute to mailboxes) per alert.
- ◆ Due to integration with BITE, Sodexo’s dining platform, all content for the menu flows through digital signage, mobile app, and voice on Alexa. Since inception, 54,415 inputs have flowed through in 1.5 years, and staff has spent very little time entering menu content.

Remote Programming

As part of the COVID-19 response, the community intends to engage in the use of Connected Living’s remote programming offerings and courses available through Connected Living University to keep residents engaged during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond using the full suite of remote engagement options including:

- ◆ Great Courses
- ◆ CL University
- ◆ Live webinar training
- ◆ Remote ambassador programs
- ◆ CL YouTube channel (coming soon)

This is the value in being a “Connected Community”—it’s easier to scale dissemination of information and deliver person-centered experiences, even in extraordinary circumstances.

Challenges and Pitfalls to Avoid

During critical or emergent situations, more communication is better than less or none. Try to avoid overthinking your communication strategy. Get started and engage with your constituents, even if you don’t have all the answers at the moment. This is a challenging environment and communities need to move quickly—technology has to work and be simple. Wipe inertia out—just do it!

Lessons Learned/Advice to Share with Others

Once you’ve chosen your communication method and channels, remind your constituents several times how to get connected. Once is not enough. Clarity and simplicity is key; this is not a “nice to have” but should be a “must have.” Technology and connection is essential now more than ever before in senior living communities.

Conclusion

“This is an important moment where we can use everything we have built to provide connection and information to seniors, families, communities, and their staff to stay as safe as possible during this health crisis,” Hoit said. “Our hope is that by making it easier to stay connected—by providing both technology and important tips and information to help manage the threat of COVID-19—we will help to ease some of the stress and anxiety.” The swift customer adoption of the mobile app—it more than doubled in two weeks—in the middle of a crisis demonstrates the need and desire that customers have to be connected.

Temi powered by Connected Living—Just released and available now to bring a companion device, connection, entertainment, lifelong learning and fun into the community and resident room. For more information please contact Sanjeev Shetty (sshetty@connectedliving.com).

Temi - A premium designed, video-oriented, friendly robot.

- Visits residents in their rooms
- Connects residents with friends, family, entertainment and companionship
- Interacts with residents through CL Alexa skill

