

# Case Study: Leveraging Engagement Technology to Increase Social Networks in a New Continuing Care Community



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## Categories:

- ◆ Reduced Social Isolation and Feelings of Loneliness
- ◆ Increased Resident Engagement & Satisfaction, Social Networks, Quality of Life, Staff Efficiencies, and Increased Revenue
- ◆ Create Wellness Culture

## About the Organization

### Organization Name:

The Vista, A Christian Health Community

### Main Contributor:

Patrick Duffy, Executive Director

### Organization Type:

Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC)

### Organization Description:

The Vista is a senior-living community in Northern New Jersey. Residents receive priority access to all levels of care, including short-term rehab, assisted living, memory support, skilled-nursing care, and mental-health services. The services, amenities, and programs are designed with one important concept in mind: to help you maintain control of your own life—today and in the future.

## Project Description

Christian Health, the parent organization to The Vista, partnered with Wellzesta several years prior to opening the new community. Together, we worked on multiple aspects of communication, development, and wellness using techniques such as resident focus groups, surveys, and in-person meetings. Throughout this planning process, Wellzesta was able to create a platform to engage depositors early before the community even opened. Together, we delivered a phased onboarding for residents as they moved into The Vista to help maintain a high-level of communication among residents and staff, as well as supporting the Vista's desire to be a wellness-based community.

## Socialization Modality

Social network, video chat, event/activity sharing, email, text chat, picture chat, digital signage, community app, community blog, activity calendar, in-house television channel, art, games, exercise, facilitated communications and conversations, companion app

## System Embodiment

Tablet, desktop computer, laptop, all-in-one computer, smart TV, fixed touch screen, smartphone, voice activated assistant technology

## Business Model

Private pay, life care, fee for service

## Implementation Approach

As a bluesky community, the Vista and Wellzesta teams needed to roll out a phased approach to onboarding training. Groups of residents would move in at various times; in fact, many moved during the height of COVID. We were able to successfully offer multiple video conference meetings and small group coaching sessions to help demonstrate the software, as well as provide residents with the daily benefits such as: finding what they need in a brand-new community, learning who the team members and their new neighbors were, finding out about services and programs in a timely manner, and supplementing wellness classes with Wellzesta's online videos, articles, and classes for improved well-being.

## Outcomes

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Reduce social isolation, reduce feelings of loneliness, increased resident engagement and satisfaction, increased social networks, increased quality of life, increased staff efficiencies, increased revenue, increased community connectedness

Before the Wellzesta platform was launched, having Wellzesta as part of the development team alongside architects, bankers, contractors, and culinary and marketing consultants helped establish credibility. This early participation from the technology/wellness consultant (Wellzesta) allowed the future residents to understand the benefits of the platform and how it could support their daily life at The Vista. For example, Wellzesta staff attended marketing events early to meet future residents and tell their story, as well as participate in focus groups to discover what the residents really wanted, especially as it related to their health and well-being. This proved effective during the launch of the platform.

There are many moving parts to the opening of a new community, so it was imperative that the platform offered real-time information and a way for residents to easily connect and communicate. Most residents ended up using the software on multiple devices, such as a laptop, tablet, or smartphone. That way, they were always in the know. Through small group trainings, and everyone having equal access to the platform, the resident engagement rate was and continues to be extremely high. Most weeks, the community experiences an 85-92 percent weekly engagement rate, which means the platform really gets used and residents feel comfortable discovering information and engaging in this way.

Features like “search” allow new residents to learn about other residents and begin forming new friendships. Wellzesta maps the social network for all client organizations, which helps staff know how the community is connected. Staff also had the ability to work together from the very beginning/opening of the community through the use of one software platform. This helps with eliminating silos and also supports organizational cohesiveness. Leadership from the top level of both the parent organization and the community itself were supporters of the technology, which further supported the successful opening and operation of the community.

Another outcome that speaks to the quality of the partnership, as well as the culture created, is the continued personalization and percentage engagement in classes,

events, online activities, and general use of the platform. For example, Vista team members are able to see how residents respond to certain classes or events by star-rating. Because the software allows for segmentation and shows real-time data, team members can then see what is working well and continue to create programming that their residents enjoy and benefit from physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Another successful outcome shows that residents have consistently rated life enrichment and wellness programming with high marks (average: 4.5 out of 5). The residents can also provide their feedback on what is most helpful for their own health and well-being, and the software indicates that the majority of residents (over 90%) have either a four- or five-star rating on the programming's positive impact on their well-being.

## Challenges and Pitfalls to Avoid

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During the opening of any community, residents often come in groups and then some sporadically trickle in. In order to have a more robust training session, it is typically best to have residents together to learn about anything new, but especially technology, at the same time so they can help and encourage one another. The Vista presented a challenge: How do we provide the same high-quality training to all residents no matter what timeframe they move in? A stronger tiered approach may be more successful and rotating liaisons may also be supportive. To avoid this, the Wellzesta client success team created a more robust Knowledge Base online, opened up office hours for residents who needed more support, and offered additional coaching sessions as groups moved into the new community.

## Lessons Learned/ Advice to Share with Others

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Communicating early and often is key. In fact, during an expansion or in a new community, there probably needs to be even more communication than usual. Having a platform supports this and makes it easier. However, we recognize the need to educate team members (even those outside of life enrichment or wellness or technology) about the benefits, so they can direct residents to the appropriate places for the right content and information. We encourage sales and marketing teams to take a hands-on approach, using the technology themselves to understand its benefits, particularly as they increase occupancy and/or to help with turnover.