

DIFFERENTIATING YOURSELF IN A COMPETITIVE MARKET

A census in decline. Decreased reimbursements. Increased competition from other senior living communities. Sound like a snapshot of what you're seeing in your community?

If so, you're not alone. This is the state of affairs at most senior living communities today. But it doesn't have to spell doom and gloom. Instead, it can be a great opportunity to gather your team and focus on ways to differentiate yourself among the plethora of options available to your residents and prospects. By doing so, you'll have the opportunity to turn the tide of decline and the quality of care you provide.

That's exactly what Christian Community Homes and Services in Hudson, Wisconsin did with their foodservice program.

"We wanted to have an impact on the everyday resident experience, and foodservice was a place where we could make some significant improvements," said Dan Goodier, Executive Director.

Goodier and his foodservice staff—including an Executive Chef—began thinking about ways to improve the experience from a traditional tray line cafeteria with premade, reheated food.

"We looked outside the healthcare industry, focusing specifically on the service and choices provided by the hotel and restaurant industries," said Goodier.

The result was an overhauled program that took foodservice to a whole new level. A sit-down restaurant experience is now available to all residents for three meals a day. The kitchen is open early and closed late, so residents can eat when they feel like it. They make selections from a comprehensive menu of choices. And food is served in courses as it is prepared to order in an open kitchen that is visible from the restaurant-like dining room.

"The response from residents and staff has been tremendous," said Goodier. "And it is becoming the focus of our efforts as we design and build a new facility."

This focus is what we refer to as your "Center of Excellence." It's an area of focus that you can cultivate and grow so that it becomes an integral and distinguishing part of your community.

How do you find your Center of Excellence? Community Living Solutions works with senior living communities throughout the Midwest to help them determine the changes they can make to their services or atmosphere to sustain their business. While the specific steps are different for many organizations, there are typically three areas of analysis that lead to a Center of Excellence:

1) Organization Analysis

Begin by taking a look at the assets your organization already has. What are your core competencies? Your talents? Your passions?

2) Economic Analysis

Once you have identified potential areas of focus, measure them up against the economic drivers in your market. What service or atmosphere changes might have the most impact on your reimbursements? What changes will help build and maintain census?

3) Competitive Analysis

Finally, take a look at what other communities are doing in your market to make sure that your area of focus—soon to become your Center of Excellence—is different than anything else that is currently out there.

When considering your Center of Excellence, an outside consultant can add significant value to the process. By providing a more global perspective based on regional and national trends, a consultant can offer a crystal clear picture of what is happening in the current marketplace so you can make strategically sound sustainable business decisions for the future.

For more information on how you can differentiate your community in a competitive marketplace, or for other sustainable business solutions, contact Community Living Solutions today.

**CLS IN ACTION****And the survey said...**

In preparation for our recent "Do Nothing Scenario Planning" presentation at the Wisconsin Association of Homes & Services for the Aging (WAHSA) Fall Conference, CLS surveyed providers to identify top concerns/stressors related to their organization today, anticipated challenges over the next five years, plans to offset declining Medicare/Medicaid revenue, and other related issues. The results surprised us, and may surprise you, too. If you are interested in seeing what your peers are thinking, [email jfrantz@communitylivingsolutions.com](mailto:jfrantz@communitylivingsolutions.com) for a free copy of the survey results.

For more information, contact [Community Living Solutions](mailto:dschacht@communitylivingsolutions.com) by phone at 920.969.9344 or by [email](mailto:dschacht@communitylivingsolutions.com) at dschacht@communitylivingsolutions.com.