



Enhancing the Customer-Centric Experience in Assisted Living: Amping Up Care, Services and Quality of Life!

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Purpose

- The purpose of this presentation is to examine life in assisted living through the eyes of those residing there and how their lives can be improved through customer care and leadership.

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Description

- Enhancing the Customer-Centric Experience in Assisted Living: Amping Up Care, Services and Quality of Life! Is a 90-minute continuing education presentation.

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- It takes a comprehensive view of resident/client care, services and quality of life as well as purposeful and practical ways to enhance the overall experience in the assisted living community.

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- The presentation picks apart what residents really want or need to live their best lives while leadership and staff strive to deliver the very best features of high-level customer service.

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- Leadership's role in leading and championing change is also addressed in creative yet realistic ways. The audience will go back to their assisted living community with a fresh pair of eyes and firing brain cells.

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Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the "Ideal" resident experience based on needs and wants from the resident's perspective

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2. Identify "Best-in-Class" elements of customer service by identifying the ALs distinguishing factors
3. Review how leadership become champions of change in areas of care, services, and quality of life

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Quick Introduction: The Importance of Resident Experience

- Making the intentional decision to put your residents and staff at the center of every decision will separate you from other ALs

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- “... while it may be impossible to quantify in financial terms the impact of making someone feel good, don’t think for a second that it doesn’t matter. In fact, it matters more.” (Will Guidara, “Unreasonable Hospitality”)

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- One of the most important, if not the most important things we do on a daily basis is to make people feel like they belong
- We all have an intensely-wired desire to feel a sense of belonging to something or someone

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- We can create amazing impacts on people when we focus on their sense of belonging
- We can inspire others to work together to continually create this feeling

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- Customer service and hospitality fads will come and go, but the always-present human desire to be cared for and belong will never go away
- None of this can exist without great leadership

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- “If your business involves making people happy, then you can’t be good at it if you don’t care what people think” (Will Guidara, “Unreasonable Hospitality”)

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- Remember, great hospitality elevates the person receiving it as well as the person delivering it
- It will be difficult to rise to this level of service and become better with time and experience if you don’t love it

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- If we and our staff don't know why our work matters, we are in trouble
- Each of us should be able to name for ourselves why our work matters

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Learning Objective 1

Discuss the "Ideal" resident experience based on needs and wants from the resident's perspective

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Let's Create a Hospitality-First Culture!

- *How* you serve your residents is as important as *what* you provide in terms of care, services, and memorable moments

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- Let's be selfish about our hospitality-first culture!
- Why? It makes us feel great making other people feel good!
- Let's make magic in the AL world, because they can use a lot more of it

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- It's important to stress that great customer service and resident experience touches every aspect of care and quality of life
- Let's pretend we're all living in an assisted living community

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Ideal Experiences and Situations

- We like to hear our name
- We like feeling special
- We like having questions answered
- We like when someone asks us if we need anything before we ask

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- We don't like being ignored
- We don't like to feel like we're a burden
- We don't like people talking over us
- We do like a clean room
- We do like sincere apologies

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- We like to have fun
- We like looking good
- We like dining options
- We like consistency among staff
- We like a nice bed

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- We like animals and nature
- We like access to information and our families, friends and others
- We like to get out
- We like privacy and social times

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- We like celebrating holidays, birthdays and other special events
- We like it when people say hello, good morning, good night, how are you? And other pleasantries

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- We like human touch when we want or need it
- We like being as independent as we can and make as many decisions as we can
- We like to see people from the outside world

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- We like help with our memory
- We like assistance with care when we want it
- We like movies and music
- We like to worship in some way

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- We like drinking, eating, painting, playing cards, gardening, playing backgammon and chess, cooking, baking, knitting, watching sports, having parties and other fun things

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- We don't like to be blown off, long wait time for answers to our questions, the same food, being too warm or cold, asking for help when there aren't enough staff, or complaining because I might make them mad

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- We don't want to hear staff saying they hate working here, we're always short, administration are lazy, I have to work overtime, or I wouldn't have my loved one living here
- We don't like paying for things we don't get

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- We want friendship and companionship
- We want lectures, educational courses or interesting cultural programs
- We want personalized service and care
- We want to go out to lunch and go shopping

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- We want good care of our possessions
- We want fresh-smelling sheets and laundry
- We want to be driven to appointments
- We want help with our medications
- We want to feel safe and secure

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Learning Objective 2

Identify "Best-in-Class" elements of customer service by identifying the ALs distinguishing factors

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- To be the best, you must be present
- You also have to add value and create pleasant surprises
- Your staff must be trained and educated to deliver to your unique group of residents (dementia, diabetes, Parkinson's, etc.)

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- Best-in-class involves creating a first-class dining experience with soft music, pleasant wait staff and great food
- It involves fresh flowers and plants
- Guests are received warmly and offered refreshments

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- Leadership sends family members holiday greeting cards from their loved one in the AL
- It also means ongoing assessment for health, nutrition and social needs

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Best-in-Class Involves the Following

- Intentionality and detail so that experiences are thoughtfully created with clear purpose
- Learn to do things right at the highest end

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- You can always knock things down a little later on
- Doing it the other way – the easier way, is difficult, because we form habits that are difficult to break

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- Form relationships with local companies or suppliers (ice cream, coffee, tea, chocolate, wine, beer, bakeries, etc.)
- Creating excellence in service and care means adding up hundreds of details that have been perfectly executed

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- “It may not be possible to do *everything* perfectly, but it is possible to do *many things* perfectly. That’s the very definition of excellence: getting as many details right as you can.”
(Guidara)

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- Residents can feel intention and perfection
- You and your staff can feel it, too

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Your Distinguishing Factors

- Outdoor terraces
- Club room
- Cinema
- Plant care
- Pet care

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- Private culinary services
- Circadian lighting
- Multiple dining options
- 24/7 concierge
- Art studio
- Computer center

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- Library
- Wellness therapies
- Culinary classes
- Library
- Daily cocktail hour
- Complimentary meals for guests

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- Putting green
- Billiards room
- Sports bar
- Workshop for woodworking, mechanics, etc.
- Chauffeur

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- Teahouse
- Juice and coffee bar
- Bistro
- Creperie
- Fireside common area
- Outdoor grilles

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- There is no need to be right – it’s irrelevant
- When you correct a resident because you don’t want them to think you’ve made the mistake, you’ve just made a far bigger mistake!

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- Remember – a resident’s perception is their reality
- Instead of correcting the resident, simply say “Let me fix this right away”
- The resident isn’t always right, but saying you’re sorry doesn’t mean you’re wrong

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Best-In-Class Also Means...

- There is no nook or cranny in your community that is off limits to scrutiny and reevaluation
- Every department must be swept over for refinements

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- And speaking of all departments, service and hospitality are team sports
- There is no room for ego
- Ego will let you and your team down
- Hospitality will also suffer

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- Excellence in care is being with your resident, on time, when they need you the most
- Excellence in dining is getting something - *anything* - on the table even when you're running behind

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- Excellent hospitality is a dialogue, not a monologue
- It means treating everyone like a VIP
- Give more, not less
- Make giving more addictive

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- Since you're working hard, make coming to work fun
- Learn to become improvisational in your service, care and interactions
- Look for ways to "plus one" an experience and give people a little more than they expected

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- Provide snacks to traveling families, hand them their coats, make them a cup of coffee to go, pull up their car to the front door during inclement weather, and have an umbrella by the front entrance

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- Give people your gifts of listening, patience, and compassion
- Admissions coordinators or front office staff can keep a closet full of little snacks or gifts (lip balm, coffee mugs, note pads) to offer families and potential residents

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- Don't be afraid to be creative – nobody really knows what they're doing until they actually do it!
- Create the place you'd want to be
- Serve up what you'd want to receive

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- Hire nice people who get along and get "it", which is passion to serve
- Say "It's my pleasure" rather than "No problem"

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Use Best-In-Class Language

- I'm happy to take care of that
- Allow me to get that for you
- Happy to help
- I'll be right back with that

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- Have a great day!
- Of course!
- You're welcome
- I'm so sorry we don't have that available right now, but is there something else I may get for you?

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- Apologize
- Practice effective service recovery
- Ask better questions
- Whenever there's a choice, make sure to ask for their preference

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- Communicate frequently
- Look like you want their feedback
- Be proactive
- Listen actively
- Make them feel important

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Learning Objective 3

Review how leadership become champions of change in areas of care, services, and quality of life

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- Every leader has passion, energy and hope
- These qualities are not enough to elevate service and experience
- You must have a clear and prescient vision for a need in your community

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- Leaders are like magicians – they make magic happen
- They deliver joy and wonder and some elements of surprise
- They're also like bakers who give you the extra donut in the baker's dozen

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- They're the psychiatrist providing antidepressants that will regulate your dopamine levels
- They overdeliver

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- All of us appreciate thoughtful services, solutions and interactions
- We all want to be happy, have a nice surprise every now and then, and be delighted

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- Leaders in assisted living know how to identify your distinguishing factors
- What is your first, best, most or only?
- Are you the most admired, reliable, valuable, celebrated, safest, compassionate, genuine, classy, etc.?

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- Leaders know it's never too late for change
- According to Paula Wallace, president of Savannah College of Art & Design (SCAD) "Change is merely one practice leaders must embrace. It is *the* practice."

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- According to Patrick Ward of *Forbes Magazine*, "Through course-corrective action, a business can pivot and gain new business rather than sticking with a status quo that leads to the proverbial sinking ship".

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- Great leaders are enthusiastic about hospitality and enthusiasm can be contagious
- Great leaders have an energy that impacts other people, not the other way around

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- Leaders in AL make it cool to care
- They believe in taking care of each other first and it's everyone's job to take care of everyone

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Rule of 95/5

- “Manage 95 percent of your business down to the penny; spend the last 5 percent ‘foolishly’” (Guidara)

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- Every leader should have someone who feels comfortable in telling you when you're not acting as the best version of yourself and then have difficult conversations about it

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- Consistency is one of a leader's best qualities, throughout the AL community, department-be-department and with all staff

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- When leaders consider hiring a new employee, they should ask themselves could this person become one of the top few on my team, and if they aren't there yet, do they hold the potential to become one?

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- Another way to lead a service-driven culture is through collaboration with everyone, every single day
- To improve service and hospitality, leaders will have to thoughtfully criticize and correct staff

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- Leaders have guts and attempt new things as if they could not fail
- In terms of creating greater experiences for your residents, begin with what you want to accomplish instead of limiting yourself to what you think is realistic or doable

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The Bottom Line

- Your service culture will elevate you above and beyond competition
- You can't excel in what you don't love
- Great service cannot exist without great leadership

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