



Senior living communities turn to voice technology to solve critical challenges

Today's senior living community directors are challenged by the need to accurately and quickly communicate a wide range of important information to residents and their families. But what happens when a serious emergency requires more immediate, urgent notification?

For Oakmont Gardens, an MBK Senior Living community in Santa Rosa, CA, this situation became reality when an encroaching wildfire prompted a sudden evacuation order. Their first priority was transporting their 200-plus residents out of harm's way.

The communications dilemma

After that was successfully completed, the staff at Oakmont Gardens had another dilemma: they needed to reach each resident's family and emergency contacts to assure them of everyone's safety. The spreading wildfire was already a major local news story. Clearly the families and friends of their residents were going to be deeply worried—if not panicked—about the status of their loved ones.

Rob Henderson, the Vice President of Operations at MBK Senior Living, remembers it well. "It was a massive manual effort to reach and connect with all of those people. It took three full days to get in contact with all of the various family members and actually talk to them live—or at least through an email exchange. When we were finally done, it was very clear to me that this three-day urgent effort was 2 days and 23 hours too long."



Company

MBK Senior Living communities nationwide

Challenge

Increasing resident engagement and communicating with residents, families and staff more effectively and efficiently.

Solution

Innovative voice technology to address resident and staff communication needs.

Results

Voice technology revolutionized many of its processes for notifications and alerts, bringing unprecedented speed and efficiency to communications.



Leveraging Amazon Alexa

Bruce Baron, CEO of VoiceFriend, a voice technology solutions company, notes that the huge growth and acceptance of Amazon Alexa cloud-based service is opening up even more ways to support the safety and wellness of senior living community residents. "Voice assistance technology can now be used to more readily perform wellness checks, as well as to remind residents of activities, meal plans and even care plans."

Baron adds, "Amazon Echo devices for Alexa can also be used as an alternative, hands-free means for residents to contact on-duty staff when they cannot locate or reach their call button or phone. This not only provides additional peace of mind for families, it also extends support for hearing and visually impaired."

"Voice technology lets us communicate in ways we couldn't have imagined just two years ago."

— Rob Henderson,
Vice President of
Operations at MBK
Senior Living

Responsible for supporting over 30 MBK Senior Living communities across 6 western states, Rob Henderson knew he had to find a better way to implement urgent notifications to residents and their family members. He also recognized the vital importance of being able to reach staff members during emergency situations.

Looking to voice technology

Henderson turned to innovative voice technology to address his need. "We found a simple automated voice technology solution called VoiceFriend that was designed for senior living communities to help efficiently communicate with our residents, families and staff."

In the two years since, MBK Senior Living has leveraged voice technology to revolutionize many of its processes for notifications and alerts, bringing unprecedented speed and efficiency to communications. "Besides giving us the ability to reach residents, families and staff much more quickly and accurately for urgent situations, we're using the same voice technology to help us greatly reduce the time it takes to fill open shifts by communicating more effectively with our staff. That effort used to take hours, but now is handled in just minutes. And we also use voice technology to remind residents of meal times and activities, which has resulted in a significant increase in attendance."

Increasing resident and family engagement

At The Commons at Dallas Ranch, another MBK Senior Living community in Antioch, CA, Executive Director Alberto Maldonado was also challenged by the effort to communicate with both staff and families. Like many senior living communities, they relied heavily on manual processes to communicate to residents, families and staff. "With voice technology, we can communicate a lot more effectively with a lot more peace of mind," he notes. "Where before I'd have to create a flyer or meet with front desk staff just to ensure that a message got across, now I can just ask to have a message sent out using our automated voice notification solution. It saves me about two hours a day."

Maldonado adds that this voice technology has dramatically increased the engagement and satisfaction of families, who are quick to show their appreciation.

At The Firs senior community in Olympia, WA, Executive Director Max Rheinhardt has seen similar results using voice technology to communicate with his 150-plus residents. Besides using the automated voice notification system to inform residents of upcoming events and activities, reminders are now sent 10 minutes before every activity, in case they forget. "That short-notice reminder capability is a real benefit. We have probably had 150% increase in attendance at our activities."

VoiceFriend