



Case Study

Ohio Presbyterian Retirement Services

Client

Ohio Presbyterian Retirement Services (OPRS) is Ohio's largest provider of continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs) and services. OPRS currently serves more than 5,800 residents in 11 communities throughout Ohio and employs more than 3,000 caregivers.

Prior to using online learning, each OPRS facility conducted its mandatory in-services and tracked compliance via sign-in sheets and data entry systems.

Business Goals and Challenges

Candice Hawkins, OPRS's Associate Vice President of Education and Organizational Development, worked with OPRS leadership to evaluate the current employee education program and how to streamline and improve the learning experience, "We asked ourselves: How do we define education? What is our key focus? How can we boost employee performance and ultimately improve resident care?" Candice, who holds a Masters in adult education, knew that educators needed time to work more closely with employees to enhance their performance.

OPRS found that it had a number of challenges and goals they wanted to address and meet:

1. *Educators spent a large amount of time preparing and delivering mandatory training.* "We thought the educator's time could be

BUSINESS GOALS/ CHALLENGES

- The role of the directors of staff development becomes focused more on skills that enhance resident care (quality assurance, leadership, and customer service)
- Streamline education process to save time and increase employee enthusiasm/compliance through self-directed learning

used more wisely," says Candice. Communities developed packets for training while others held in-person inservices; both methods required hours of preparation and tracking per inservice. "If you think of teaching only mandatories, and the time that it involves, you can't teach other skills that positively affect residents, such as QA, leadership and customer service skills," Candice says.

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*Candice Hawkins,
Associate VP of Education,
Ohio Presbyterian Retirement Svcs*

2. *Education content was not standardized.* With different educators working at different facilities, employees did not always receive the same information in the same way. An improved education system would deliver consistent content across the communities.

3. *Employees wanted convenient training.* Generally among the communities, employee enthusiasm for training was low. For some communities, in-person inservices weren't well-attended, and some critical staff—like nurses—missed inservices because they were needed on the floor. For communities with good compliance rates and employee enthusiasm for training, a lot of educator's time was still spent planning and delivering training (or makeup sessions). "Most of all, employees wanted training to be convenient for their schedules," Candice adds.

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Candice and her education team knew that online learning could help OPRS save time, standardize content, and make it easier for employees to access training. OPRS

launched Silverchair in a gradual rollout beginning in August 2009. Four communities—Dorothy Love, Swan Creek, Rockynol, and Park Vista—have shared their results and the methods they used to help employees embrace online learning.

Best Practices and Results

Dorothy Love Retirement Community, Sidney, Ohio

Dorothy Love was the first community to launch Silverchair; Brenda Bensman, Dorothy Love's Director of Staff Development, was on the committee that investigated online learning for OPRS. Prior to Silverchair, Dorothy Love employees trained via in-person inservices and large packets of information and quizzes that could be done on their own time. It was convenient (compliance was high because employees liked the method), but according to Brenda, "The packets took weeks of work to prepare, get people to turn them in, grade them, and then enter everything into the tracking system manually." There was also the issue of "I didn't know" coming from employees who insisted they never received their packet. "Our biggest training challenges were tracking and making the educational material accessible to busy employees." Dorothy Love was excited to bring online learning into the community: "We had just moved to electronic medical records (EMRs) and we were happy to bring on a technology program that seemed more flexible."

To introduce Silverchair and encourage employee enthusiasm, Brenda formed cross-departmental teams that would compete in a NASCAR-themed competition. She also asked non-management employees to become team captains: "An STNA would be the captain of a team that might have a charge nurse

on it and it was up to that STNA to lead the team," Brenda says. "That's really empowering and encourages people to forget titles and work together." Teams could win prizes for reaching the highest compliance, completing training the fastest, and other milestones.

Brenda advised that the campaign was a success, "Not only do [employees] like the system, but they've also formed relationships they wouldn't have without being on teams. One staff member, who was nervous about computers, had her granddaughter come in and help her get started. "Now she's doing great! We went from 75% compliance rate to over 98%."

Brenda can now use her time for more in-depth education. She uses the Authoring Tool to streamline STNA meetings, to communicate with staff, and with the automatic assignments and tracking system, it allows Brenda to focus on her role as an educator: "My job has evolved beyond paper chasing and making copies. I now have time to spend time with employees in order to make sure they understand what they just learned and address any QA issues."

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*Brenda Bensman,
Director of Staff Development,
Dorothy Love Retirement Community*

*Swan Creek Retirement Village,
Toledo, Ohio*

Vicki Sorgenfrei, Director of Staff Development at Swan Creek Communities, has also seen improvements in training since launching Silverchair in May 2010. Swan Creek also held in-person inservices, having to pay overtime for those who came in off-shift, and even then attendance was not where Vicki wanted it to be. "On a good day, we would have 75% compliance, after holding several sessions for one topic just to get enough people there."

For Swan Creek's launch, the staff also broke out into cross-departmental teams with non-management-level employees serving as team captains. Vicki ensured that employees had access to the online system at all times so that training could be easily done during the day. Team captains, managers, and employees worked together to become familiar with the system; captains helped those that were computer-shy become more familiar with computers, and department directors worked with team captains to help everyone get their training done. "Everyone has pulled together; it's wonderful." Vicki says. "For our employees, it wasn't so much about the competition as it was getting to know other employees they may not have worked with before. Everyone really enjoyed that."

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*Vicki Sorgenfrei,
Director of Staff Development,
Swan Creek Communities*

Vicki saw immediate benefits from the online training system: “We have 98.7% compliance for the first month we launched,” she says. “Out of 162 employees, only two didn’t finish their training for the month. I’ve never had numbers like that, ever.” Employees are so enthusiastic about training now that “some have already completed their training for the next month,” Vicki says. “I even had one employee who was sick but did her training on her laptop because she knew she needed to help out her team.”

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*Vicki Sorgenfrei,
Director of Staff Development,
Swan Creek Communities*

Online learning has given Vicki the time to focus on the community’s overall education: With Silverchair, the mandatory training is done and organized, I like that!” Vicki stated. Vicki now works with department directors to track overall knowledge of employees and enhance training. Vicki is also developing an evaluation system to formally review what employees are learning and appreciates that she now has time to pursue more education initiatives. “Silverchair is like night and day from what we did before; it’s been wonderful.”

Rockynol

Sandy Shrake, Director of Staff Development at Rockynol, took a different approach to introducing online learning to her staff: “Our employees here take a professional approach to training—most everyone

gets it done—but it’s viewed as a necessary evil,” she laughs. “I knew we needed to present this system as a way to get the training done in a faster and easier way to appeal to them.”

Sandy spent time introducing the system to employees. She formed a core team to answer employee’s questions at the employee resource center where Silverchair system is located. “I also helped those who want to brush up on their computer skills or have questions about modules,” she says. Managers also spend one-on-one time with employees who needed extra help. Sandy also likes the tracking and reporting tools that have saved her time: “I like the compliance report by department, and I’ve been using offline tracking for programs we do in person,” she says. “And as an educator, I like that the online courses actually make the user read the material and test for understanding.”

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*Sandy Shrake,
Director of Staff Development,
Rockynol*

Overall, employees like the new system. “I’ve heard employees say ‘I really learned something,’ which is great,” Sandy says. “The nurses like the free CEs, and we’ve assigned the Leadership Series to our Executive Director and nurses.” With more time, Sandy advises that she can spend more time in the nursing department working on process improvement, working with charge nurses, orientated new nurses and beginning in September teaching a front line supervisor leadership course.

Park Vista, Youngstown, Ohio

Park Vista is one of OPRS’s largest communities with one of the largest employee counts; as a result, “We had some high-risk employees who really needed to complete their training,” says Vivian Barricella, Director of Staff Development, at Park Vista. “We needed to figure out how to get them interested in training and make them successful.” Park Vista used to hold two inservices per month for all employees, with make-up packets for those who didn’t attend. “We had good compliance because I spent a lot of time on follow-up,” Vivian says.

Launching online learning could have been a challenge for Park Vista—“We had a number of employees who were afraid of computers and had never touched one,” Vivian says—but developing a buddy system helped. “We have a number of young employees who love technology and love the system,” Vivian says, “So we paired those employees up with those who were technology-shy and they helped each other out.” The buddy system paid off: “Once the [technology-shy] employees moved beyond the fear and started working in their teams, they were very proud of themselves and felt a sense of accomplishment,” she says.

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Director of Staff Development, Park Vista*

Vivian also held promotion months where employees could win prizes

for completing training, scavenger hunts, paycheck flyers—“We even had an employee design posters”—to get employees excited about training. “Team spirit was cultivated in our community in a way we hadn’t seen in other training,” she says. “You had maintenance staff helping dietary staff with the system ... it was great to see.”

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Park Vista now boasts 100% compliance in its community, and the employees have enjoyed the system. “Our Director of Nursing and Administrator have heard so many positive conversations about information in Silverchair. That shows that learning has occurred, and that’s what we want!”

Vivian has also been able to provide just-in-time training on the

floor as well as focus her attention on other educational initiatives such as QIS and our employee grief and loss training.

Conclusion

For OPRS, online training wasn’t just the solution to a problem; it was the tool that allowed them to work toward a stronger educational system. Whether the communities were rural or urban, small or large, using online learning has allowed OPRS educators to focus their time on enhancing employee knowledge while streamlining the employee training process.

“We’ve really focused on allowing our educators to be on the floor, providing just-in-time training and feedback, and increasing our employee’s attention to resident-centered care,” says Candice. In terms of improving quality, Silverchair has helped OPRS further that goal as well. The President of OPRS Communities recently said, “Silverchair was an easy decision to make, since it ultimately leads to more sets of eyes focused on quality assurance!”

A more consistent, streamlined training process has OPRS planning for more education initiatives in the future. In addition, Candice advises, “We’re looking to get our educators certified in coaching to

improve employee performance. They are now free to further our belief that supervision is about more than technical knowledge: it’s about problem solving, leadership, customer service and meeting the needs of our residents. Silverchair gives our educators the opportunity to focus their attention on those topics.”

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*Dan O’Connor,
President, OPRS Communities*



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