



## Case Study

# Sprenger Retirement Centers

### Client

Sprenger Retirement Centers is comprised of nine retirement and rehabilitation centers, located in northern Ohio. With more than 1,200 employees, Sprenger provides assisted living, skilled nursing care, independent living, and rehabilitation services.

Before launching Silverchair, Sprenger trained employees using traditional, in-person inservices. Members of the Human Resources department would travel to the facilities to train groups of employees, using a manual paper-based system to train and track compliance.

### Challenges

*Traditional Inservices Involved a Large Time and Money Commitment*  
In-person inservices involved time and money. Between developing training and materials, trainers traveling to every facility, ensuring employee attendance, and actually delivering the training, employee education demanded a large commitment from Human Resources and Sprenger as a whole.

Tracking compliance was also difficult, using a manual system. "It was a whole nightmare process," says Sandy Kaiser, VP, Corporate Training and Community Relations. "It was all manual, so trying to give people near-accurate numbers was impossible."

In addition to general training costs, Sprenger spent money on overtime

### CHALLENGES

- Traditional inservices involved a large time and money investment, especially in overtime compensation
- The timing of inservices frustrated staff who worked various shifts; many had to come in during their off hours to train
- Some employees were not familiar with (or even scared of) computers, so Sprenger was unsure of how a new system would fit in with company culture

compensation for employees who came in on their off time. "We have more than 100 employees per facility, and if each one of them had to come in for an extra hour ... there's an overtime cost in [accommodating] that," says Nicole Sprenger, VP of Human Resources.

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- Nicole Sprenger, VP of Human Resources  
Sprenger Retirement Centers

### *Timing of Training Frustrated Employees*

Trying to fit training into varied, and mostly conflicting, schedules was one of the biggest frustrations for Human Resources and employees. "We'd have 20 people scheduled for an inservice and maybe four would show up," says Sandy.

The 24/7 nature of Sprenger's business made it hard to train so many employees working different shifts. With trainers working regular 8-hour days, their availability conflicted with those who worked different hours/shifts. The sessions weren't meeting those employees' needs.

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### *Fear of Computers/Technology*

Sprenger had considered online learning for a few years, but like many senior care organizations, they had a number of employees who weren't familiar with computers/technology.

Implementing online learning would be a huge undertaking: “We weren’t sure how to implement it,” Sandy said.

## Results

### *Streamlined Training Saves Time, Money, and Employee Frustration*

Once Sprenger decided to go with online learning, they saw results quickly; training became easier as travel, preparation time, and costs were reduced. Sprenger’s education staff can now spend on their employee development rather than manual preparation and tracking.

“Silverchair has streamlined the training, made it more efficient [and] effective,” says Sandy. “We’re sure that the quality of training is hitting every individual staff member in the same way.”

The reporting function has proven useful; they even track their offline courses with the system. According to Sandy, “It’s amazing. Silverchair has brought that tracking mechanism to us, and it’s so easy ... we’re really tracking compliance one hundred percent.”

Most importantly, Sprenger has saved money on overtime compensation. With online learning, employees can train during their shifts, no longer needing to come in during their off hours. A flexible training program is now more in line with the 24/7 nature of Sprenger’s business. They’ve also used Silverchair’s tracking to save money in their payroll process.

“One of the biggest benefits, I feel, for a long term care and 24-hour business, is being able to train the staff when they’re used to being at work,” says Nicole.

Sandy understands that investing in new technology has its expenses as well, but the savings make the investment worthwhile: “I think that if

you evaluate your financials, and take a look at how much you’re spending on training, you’ll see that Silverchair is a great value ... [rather than] think ‘How much is this going to cost me?’, look at the flip side of that: ‘How much is this going to save me?’”

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### *Reducing Fear of Technology and a New Company Culture*

Knowing that some employees were hesitant to try new technology, Sandy and another member of her department developed a plan to make the transition to online learning as smooth as possible. They traveled to each facility during the launch and made themselves available to answer questions and help with basics, like handling a keyboard and mouse.

“Some of the employees, as you can imagine, were scared to death to touch the keyboard,” says Sandy. “Others just took to it like a duck to water.” Getting the employees used to the new system took less time than anticipated; Sandy discovered that once staff “felt secure with the fact that they weren’t going to break it,” everyone felt comfortable with the system. Another “unexpected benefit”

that Sandy found was the newfound “feeling of team spirit” that occurred among the staff: Those that were excited about the system and quickly adopted it helped fellow coworkers with their training.

Online training has fit in well with Sprenger’s company culture, and after the initial launch period, employees are excited about the system. Nurses appreciate that they can get CEs at no cost, with the entire catalog of CE courses made available to each nurse. Sprenger has used the availability of CEs as a recruiting tool.

“[We hear] from employees that this is the best thing that’s happened to them since the 401(k),” says Sandy.

## Conclusion

Sprenger Retirement Centers knew their current training system—including a lot of travel, time, effort, and money—could use improvement. They wanted to streamline their training process, save time and money, and improve employee morale by making training more flexible, and Silverchair was able to help Sprenger deliver consistent, effective, and efficient training sessions. They were able to help employees embrace their new training program and make Silverchair part of their company culture.

“The outcome is there, and it’s greater than what we even desired,” says Sandy. “It exceeded our expectations.”



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