



THE
THRO COMPANY

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Case Study

The Thro Company

Client

Thro Company is a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC), serving the senior care needs of southern Minnesota. The company employs about 630 employees among seven facilities.

Before Silverchair, inservices were delivered individually among the seven facilities via each facility's Occupational Health and Learning Director. Each Director offered their own training, on their own schedule; some held four meetings a year, while others held monthly inservices. All training materials and tracking/reporting were paper-based, and there was little standardization of inservice content.

Challenges

Individual Inservices Meant Inconsistent Training

Amy Jungmann, Program Director of Staff Development and Learning for The Thro Company, was brought in to evaluate and recommend improvements for the organization's training program. Her first goal was to bring about consistency in training content and tracking.

"With individual Directors providing training at each facility, there was no simple way to ensure consistency," Amy says. "When I came here, I didn't know what people had learned or what they needed to learn, because the approach at each facility was different."

CHALLENGES

- Inservices, given by different education staff members, weren't consistent
- Paper-based tracking involved multiple steps and a considerable amount of time
- Employees weren't taking training seriously and attendance was waning

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- Amy Jungmann,
Program Director of Staff Development
and Learning, The Thro Company

Multi-Step Manual Tracking was Inconvenient

The Directors were tracking attendance and compliance using a paper-based system, including sign-in sheets, and entering those records into an Access database.

Amy and the Directors could pull proof of education, but that proof involved a three-step process where employees had to sign off on every single inservice and communication to prove that they had received it. Often, the three steps involved

sign-in sheets for the inservice/communication, signing off on an information packet, and then tracking who didn't attend or receive the packet.

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Inservice Attendance/Interest was Waning

The Education Department also struggled with employee attendance at inservices. Each Director was conducting their inservices, but "some employees didn't think [training] was important at all," Amy says.

"We had fairly poor attendance, and if someone didn't come in, there would be no follow-up."

With these issues, Amy knew that she needed to find a way to streamline training so that it was consistent and easily tracked, as well as help employees become interested and engaged with training again.

Results

Consistent Training and Communication across Facilities

Bringing training online allowed Amy to immediately make all courses consistent for Thro Company's seven facilities. "We're using the [slate of] courses to develop our annual training calendar," she says. All seven facilities will now receive a standard schedule of training, and Amy is switching Thro Company's orientation training, usually a series of four training sessions, over to Silverchair as well: "We're using Silverchair to ensure consistency and timely completion [of orientation training]."

Amy's department also uses a hybrid approach to training, using the system along with other materials to enhance learning: "To review the Policy and Procedures Handbook, we give employees a worksheet with review questions, and then they take a post test on Silverchair to gauge how well they knew the policies."

She has also used the Authoring Tool to develop custom inservices and deliver instant communications to employees. Thro Company also used the Offline Tracking feature to deliver important announcements and training reminders. "We used it heavily," says Amy. "We've been better able to respond to 'just-in-time' learning needs."

Amy remembers one particular instance where having an online education system was an advantage: "There was a C. Diff (Clostridium difficile) outbreak in one of our facilities, and we needed to immediately train our staff on proper protocol. We authored a course and prepared a demo to educate staff in order to handle the outbreak." Amy and her staff have also used the system to keep employees up to date on the H1N1 virus.

Easier Reporting

Automatic reporting has made compliance reporting markedly easier for Amy and her staff. "I love being able to report on all seven facilities," says Amy. The reports have had another benefit as well; the facilities have gotten competitive over compliance. "One of our facilities was crushed because they 'only' had 93% compliance. It's great when you can say your lowest compliance is 93%!"

Freeing up the Education Department's time with streamlined reporting has benefited their instruction as well. "Now we can do more hands-on training," Amy says.

Employees are Embracing Training

After experiencing challenges with employee attendance, the Education Department was prepared for some employee resistance to online training. "Some employees did have a fear, because of lack of computer skills," Amy said.

The Education Department launched a plan to get everyone comfortable with the system. According to Amy, "We identified the departments that needed more help with adopting the system, and we focused on them." Now "students like using the system," and Amy has found a few computer converts among the formerly-worried employees:

"An employee who threatened to quit when we got Silverchair said to me, 'I might even buy a computer ... that Silverchair, I like it.'"

Having all training and reporting online also makes employees responsible for their training and gives them a sense of responsibility: "We're pushing personal accountability and Silverchair helps with that."

Conclusion

The Thro Company was able to use online learning to address several classic senior care training challenges: inconsistency in courses, time-consuming reporting, and attendance issues. Bringing training into a consistent system has allowed Amy's department to focus on hands-on learning while empowering employees and boosting compliance.

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*- Amy Jungmann,
Program Director of Staff Development
and Learning, The Thro Company*

Amy also credits Silverchair's Service Delivery Team with helping her with launch and training as well: "Everyone at Silverchair has been very helpful and friendly, and [it] continues to be great."

"It's worth every penny we've spent just for the customer service."



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