

Lucas McCurdy :00:38

Welcome to Bridge the Gap podcast, the senior living podcast has with Josh and Lucas. We got a great friend on today. We want to welcome Charles Mann. He is the founder CEO at Accushield. Welcome to the show.

Charles

Hey, thank you for having me.

Lucas 01:53

You know what, when we get three Texas guys on the same podcast, you know that it's going to go down and we're going to have a, a good time. And you know, Charles, I was reminiscing even a decade ago, watching you hustle and watching myself hustle at different state associations in Florida and Georgia and Texas all over the place. And I remember meeting you and getting to know you. You have such a deep history, even as a young man in senior living. Your family owns care homes as a business that you've been involved with, and I believe that that's part of the bridge that led you to developing the technology there at Accushield. And before we really get into that, we're going to eventually wander into how technology and innovation is affecting senior living and also the changes in the marketplace of senior care as it revolves around, I mean, look is the, this healthcare, is it hospitality? Is it, you know, what is this? Is senior living, a part of that big hub and that piece. And then how does innovation and technology play into that? Talk to us first about your early memories of being involved in senior care with your family.

Charles 2:25

Yeah. I can remember, gosh, I was probably eight or nine years old and my grandfather had Alzheimer's and at that point in time, they really didn't know what to do with individuals that had Alzheimer's. In most cases, they would either go the psychiatric route or they would go to skilled nursing. And so my dad just hated the idea of having to put his father in a skilled nursing facility, and he lived for 14 years with Alzheimer's. And so he thought that there could be a better way to age and to live the remaining part of his life in an environment that wasn't so clinical. And so he began working to create a product that would allow for an individual to age in place a with whether it was dementia or Alzheimer's or a disease that affected the mind, but not the body.

Charles 03:37

And so he got this crazy idea to, to build a, what was called a personal care home. And in that point in time he tried to build a building that was 50 rooms and the nursing home lobby did not like that. The nursing home lobby felt that what he was trying to do took from their pool of candidates that could move into skilled nursing. And at that point in time that private pay component was significant. And so my father tried to build a 50 bed, or 50 room community and the nursing home lobby basically shut that down and only allowed him to build a building that was 25 rooms. And I can remember going to that zoning meeting, and they had a number of people from Washington on a skilled nursing side come down and wanted to understand exactly what he was trying to build, which at that point was very nonclinical, right?

Charles 04:38

It was truly assisted living, not what we think of assisted living today. But very different. And so he built his first building and it was opened in 1989. And it was right next to where he lived or right next to where we lived. So he'd go back and forth. And at this point in time it was an incredible luxury to live in an environment like that. And so a few years later he built another one that was at the bottom of the hill that had a few more resident rooms. And he didn't have a blueprint. I got a lot of respect for my late father trying to imagine building a community without having to look at someone else's and what they've done. There were a few people around the country at that point in time that had sort of caught on to that same product type.

Charles 05:34

He had some folks to talk to, but really there was no blueprint, right. There was no one that he could talk to. And so you know, he created it from scratch. And so those two buildings are still open today. At least one of them is, and then he built another one in Cumming, Georgia, which is still an operation called the Mann house. One is called the Mann house. They're both called the Mann house, one in coming and then one in Sandy Springs. And so growing up in that environment, that's where I spent my summers taking care of residents you know managing the landscaping working in the kitchen answering phones, really doing anything that I could to help out. And so post-college I went to work with Johnson and Johnson and then came back into the family business working with my father. So pretty interesting as to where the industry is today, but that's sort of my background and my history. I like to think I'm sort of a coach's son. A lot of what I say, I can just hear my dad, speaking in my ear. So the industry is very special to me. It's come a long way and it's a beautiful thing.

Josh 06:52

Well, what a cool story, Charles. I remember early on in my career after you had joined back to your family business connecting with you early on. I can still remember when your current company was formed and gosh, I feel like the Texas guys here is, you mentioned Lucas are about to start sounding really old, because we're about to start telling stories about how we met, how the industry used to be and how much it's changed. I can feel that happening right now. But you know it's fun, you are the coach's son, that's now the coach. All right. And so leading teams leading a technology charge, and man, I'll tell you as an operator developer my, how our industry has changed and how technology infusion into the industry has changed.

Josh 07:52

I can still remember here I go. When in the communities, these independent assisted and memory care care immunities, we had the receptionist up front and basically all she did or he did was literally have a three ring binder and had people signing in, signing out. Residents, signing in, signing out family members. And I remember how much time even, even then when we didn't have all the requirements that we do today for resident safety and the pandemic and things like that, that we've gone through that have forced us kind of to get up to speed with technology, but that's how things...we did it and that was normal. Now there's so many better ways to do that. I would love to kind of talk a little bit from your perspective. Your company has grown so much, and it's so fun to see that, but you are literally touching almost every type of aging population type of care, and even beyond different community types, different facility types all across the country. I think you may even be in Canada now if I'm not mistaken, outside the borders of our country. But what are some of the key focal points that you're seeing that you think if the industry is not talking about it should be really focusing on?

Charles 09:20

One of the things that continues to amaze me and has really for the last 10 years is the amount of third party care that frequents communities and facilities, really anywhere where there's healthcare. And I think as we continue to evolve in the way that we operate buildings and the number of different individuals involved from an entity perspective, more and more operators are relying upon these third party care providers, as an example, home health hospice, right? Self-Employed private caregivers to augment care, right? And to help with that operational challenge, which we all know is challenging. And so the thing that I felt was missing, I think that shocked a lot of people and shocks me today are just the amount of care that's provided by someone other than your staff. Right? So as an example, I'm an operator of two buildings and there's more care from a third party perspective that is hands on with my residents than actually CNAs and LPNs or RNs that I have employed.

Charles 10:39

And that's where the model has been going. And it's growing over time, is that third party model. The challenge is knowing who they are, right? Knowing what discipline that they're providing, What healthcare they're providing are they there to change a wound? Are they there as a private caregiver on behalf of hospice, right. All of these different challenges. When creating your care plan, right? Taking into account that third party care that's coming in from the outside. And many people forget that. It's easy as an operator to say, "oh, well, I know what my staff members are doing, but what about everybody else's, right? Do they have the same credentials and credentialing that my employees have? Because guess what, as an operator, I am liable for those individuals that are providing care because it's on my property.

Charles 11:37

And so to know that information is very useful and it is something that I think shocks a lot of the customers that we work with when they see that dashboard of not just their employees, but how about everybody else's right. How about the other 40 labor codes that have come in that month? And, oh, by the way, hospice sent 10 people to care for that resident over the course of a week. So that's one of the things I think that has been really interesting from a technology perspective, sort of bridging that gap, no pun intended over from senior living operations to technology.

Josh 12:15

Well, that's such an interesting way that you put that and you're right. I mean, as long as I've been in the industry, I've considered our communities to be in a large part care coordination centers, right. Because there's only so much most communities are licensed to do, but actually because of aging in place legislation, and a lot of the changes in the healthcare system, the acuity has been pushed downstream. And so now, right? Yeah. We're hospitality meets healthcare, but we're not licensed in most places to actually do healthcare, so coordinating all of this healthcare in Lucas no out to mention you're crazy teams that are coming into these communities, right? Like you like got so Lucas gets to see this firsthand because he's going in, and now these communities, so not only the care teams, but you've got guest visitors, contractors of every kind.

Josh 13:11

And it is funny too, I think this validates a lot of what you're saying Charles, so many now of these where we're going in and helping even some very sophisticated developers that are getting into senior living.

Yeah. They always underestimate the parking requirement and it's because they think, "oh, well, these seniors don't even have cars anymore. They're not driving." And you've got this number of staff we've got ample parking lot. I'm like, "no, no, no, no, no. "Because on any given day, we've got double the cars here because of all the care we're coordinating in. So that puts us as providers, as you very well know, in a position to where, "Hey, we're not providing all the rec all the care, but we're still responsible for that resident, right? No matter who's providing the care. Right. Right. And so I love that. What you're doing has just really taken technology from an operator's perspective and actually providing a solution for operators. Lucas, I know you've been in, in touch with this and you come in contact with so many different types of communities. What do you think about this?"

Lucas 14:22

Well, and I, I think that this is the perfect example. It's kind of like the perfect and yet beautiful friction point. The front door of this cruise ship on land. It's hotel, it's healthcare, it's a restaurant, it's home and that front door it's in and out, people in and out all day long. And that's a major friction point. It's the tip of the spear that opens up for the rest of that community. Is that years and years ago, was it that friction that you saw that you were like, "there's gotta be a solution for this?" Was that the part of this?"

Charles 15:06

It was. I like to tell a story and it sort of caps off exactly your point of knowing who's in the building. I can remember my father was called by the director. And that was a term that he coined, I feel like he was the director who was the principal of the school. It was an individual that was running my father's assisted living personal care. It was called personal care at the time, called and said, "we have an issue with a resident." There was something that was stolen. My father was very upset about it and said, "well, who was responsible? Which employee was responsible, do we know? And the director said, "you know Charles, it was not an employee."

Charles 16:00

"It was a third party care provider." We think, because that was the only person that was in that room. And so, we walked down to the community and we pull up this paper sign and book and no one had used it. Right. And nobody had filled it out for a couple days. And so we lost that opportunity to create a barrier of entry and to create really something that adds safety to a building, right. Senior living in many cases is no different from a vulnerability perspective than maybe a daycare, right. With children with young children. Because if you've got a community that has a high acuity level, and they've got a number of residents with Alzheimer's, they're not going to remember who came in the room, right. They're not going to remember who came to see them.

Charles 16:51

Right. And so that's our job as operators to help there. You wouldn't be able to, if you've been in an elementary school, you can't just walk into an elementary school and go wandering around. Right. I still think in some senior living there that that might be, you might be able to do that. Right. So it's treated a little different. That was one that to me at a young age I felt I wanted to change. Right. I wanted to add that layer of security. One of the many components to security, to help operators, but ultimately to keep residents and staff safer to know who's in the building, because there's a lot that goes on in senior living as we all know. That was a story that sort of outlines kind of the thing that stuck out to me right, is what's that mission? And give me a real world example. And that's a real world example to me. And I think others have probably dealt with that in the past.

Josh 17:50

Well, I think I still believe this and this is one thing that I think probably hasn't changed over at least my short tenure as a senior living provider is I still tell people, the adult son or daughter, or whoever is making the decision for their loved ones to place them under your care and supervision into this home, which is quite honestly, for most people, it's probably one of the biggest decisions that they probably didn't want to be in a position to have to make. And it's very emotional, but they're not really going to care that person that's coming into the community who the management company is. They're not really gonna care about a lot of the things that we tout, but they are going to 100%, want to believe that they can trust that person that they're talking with that is going to take care and know what care and know who is providing care to their loved one.

And when something isn't as it should be, they want to know and be able to get answers. So what I love about this and what you're doing is it gives those that have been entrusted with the highest level of trust at the local community, an opportunity to have a tool and to have a resource, to get answers and to have a layer of security for our most precious assets. And so kudos to you for leading the charge. It's so fun to see your team. I think you've at least doubled in size over the last few years. That's super exciting growth.

Charles 19:35

It's been really fun. I think two years ago we were hovering around 45 employees and now we're up to, to close to 90 and you know, took that number from about 2,500 kiosks to, we're approaching over 6,000. Our communities, sorry, 6,000 communities using Accushield. It's sort of a partnership, right. Because in so many cases, communities share caregivers, right. So if we can help there and create that continuity of care and share that information. It's important. And so yeah, it's been a wild ride and I think that the pandemic really just shed light on the importance of knowing who's in the building. Right. And then adding that healthcare component. I think it goes far beyond COVID. I think as an operator, I would've always loved to know someone was sick, whether it's a cold or flu, like just don't come in the building, right. If you're sneezing and you're coughing, you know, to create that awareness is important. And so that's the silver lining, I think with, with the whole COVID thing, if you can look, well, what are the things that may be kind of good, which is very few and far between, but the one thing I think is that it did create a mindset of to further advance infection prevention and control.

Josh 20:58

Yeah, absolutely. And you know Lucas and I have talked about this, I've talked about this with some other folks. You, I think had such amazing, you were in a position with a solution long before pandemic ever arrived and the communities that were already forward thinking enough for all the right reasons to have you as a partner in problem solving in this technology space for understanding who's in the building, who's in the community were way better positioned than a lot of the communities that were not that forward thinking. We've seen this happen in a lot of areas. I mean, even in marketing, but you were in a great position and honestly, thankfully, I just think what would we have done in many communities if we would've not had you guys in the position you were in with technology already capable to meet the demands that the pandemic brought to us where we were forced, it was not a want to then we had to start doing the, these kind of things. So thanks for your your leadership and forward thinking. You've been as we've talked, you've been out there hustling and designing solutions for operators for many,

many years, way forward thinking so it's fun to have you on the show. And actually for our Lucas, we're going to have a party soon. It's right around the corner. And Charles' team is helping us throw a massive party for senior living thought leaders.

Lucas 22:40

We are. And also too, in addition to that, we just want to thank Accushield and Charles for being Bridge, the Gap Supporters. We put in a lot of work. There's a whole entire team behind the scenes here. And without people like Charles and Accushield, Bridge the Gap could not produce the excellent content that we do to help educate, inform, and influence people. So big thank you to Accushield for being a BTG partner with us. And we are going to be throwing a spring party, March 23rd at Gilley's Dallas. We're going to have live music. We're gonna have an appearance from the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders, the iconic American football team and iconic cheerleaders that everyone knows about what a cool event. And we want to personally thank Charles for helping us promote that and helping us pull that off. And also personally invite all of our listeners to come out March 23rd and come join us at this awesome event.

Josh 23:43

Yeah, it's gonna be super exciting. Obviously we're gonna drop all the information. You can find out if you don't know, and you haven't connected with Accushield shield with Charles, obviously in our show notes, you can connect with them there also, you can connect on BTGvoice.com for the show, all the information, including the big senior living party for thought leaders and influencers in Dallas, Texas, just around the corner. Make sure RSVP for that. Space is limited so get on that RSVP list.

Lucas 24:20

Charles, thank you so much for your time today. It was great to see you looking forward to seeing you back in Dallas on March 23rd, but thanks for your time today.

Charles 24:31

Hey, thanks for having me. It was fun. So see you in Dallas.

Lucas

See you there and thanks to all of our listeners for listening to another great episode of Bridge the Gap.