

Charles de Vilморin 0:19

Welcome, welcome everyone. This is May 10th, our Activities Strong Executive Edition. As a reminder, that special edition of our Activities Strong effort is all about elevating activities on life enrichment and resident engagement and all of the people that are in charge of helping our elders, our residents find purpose every day. As a quick pause, I want to thank you all professionals for doing the amazing work that you are doing. Also thank you for anyone of you that is not in a particular department or discipline for joining us, because that means that you understand the value of an activity professional's work. You also have respect for it, have an understanding, and want to learn, which is what we're hoping we'll achieve today with our amazing speaker, Ryan Frederick, who is actually the CEO of SmartLiving360, which I'll introduce in just a few seconds.

Before I do that, I do want to share that this particular edition of Activities Strong is done in partnership with Bridge the Gap podcast, and Activities Strong as a whole is a initiative led by LinkedSenior, but very importantly in partnership with amazing organizations that include NAB, NNCA, and Activity Connection. That's kind of the quick slide here before I get started. Also, I do wanna remind you all that as we are very busy in the chat, let's not forget to select from the drop down "everyone", because sometimes we have people talking to just the panelists. Which is great, please talk to us. We love that. But also if you want your comments to be shared with everyone, make sure that you select everyone.

As Megan mentioned, my name is Charles de Vilморin. I'm excited to be with you, especially excited to be with you, Ryan. I'm very excited for our conversations today, but like Megan shared, I am the CEO and co-founder of an organization called LinkedSenior. We're based Washington DC, and this is my quick bio. Essentially I really believe that old people are cool, and we have a few announcements about that at the end of the today's session. Obviously, I believe that our industry, this new living industry, is "activities strong".

You know, this organization that I co-founded 15 years ago in Washington, DC, we have these amazing initiatives, ways to give back, but also show things that matter to us. As I mentioned, all people are cool. This was essentially designed with the idea that we're not big fans of segregation based on age, like everyone is cool, right? That's the main message. Activities Strong, that was a result of our team coming together at the beginning of the pandemic, wondering what can we do for the industry, right? Because we love the industry. As a lot of you, if not all of you, remember how much of a crisis mode we were then two years ago, and this is our way to give back and support.

You know, it's an industry we're fully focused on. As I mentioned, LinkedSenior is a resident engagement platform. We're very lucky, today we've reached and we continue to grow, but we've touched the lives of 47,000 elders in the US and Canada. We work with amazing organizations, some of which are shown here. The most common point amongst all of them is that they care for their residents and employees, right? They are, as you can see from all sorts of shape, size and form, but the one common denominator is they believe in elevating resident engagement.

The way we help them is, again we are a resident engagement company, we have a combination of technology, education, human touch, and if you're interested in any of that, please be in touch. We're very proud of our work. It is evidence based, that's shown with this slide. Some of the research that we did was published in a peer review journal in 2019. That's a little bit about us, now onto our webinar.

Charles de Vilморin 4:36

I'm so excited because I met Ryan, years ago, when he lived in Washington DC. Ryan, I like to call you kind of a friend, we've met and interacted on so many different occasions. I think the best way to introduce Ryan is the fact that we just share so much common passions, thoughts, and values. And because May 4th was last week, I thought that's just bring you a slide about "may the age be with you" was kind of a nice way to get introduced here.

Everyone, I'm excited to introduce you to Ryan Frederick. He's a CEO of an organization called SmartLiving360. For the background, when in Washington DC, we started this chapter from aging 2.0, we had this amazing group. We were very fortunate to have this amazing group, where we at a time called wise people. People that knew a lot, were generous with the time, passionate about advancing the field of aging and also passionate about change being respectfully, but disruptive and loving new ideas, entertaining new ideas, and seeing what's taken and helping spread these ideas. Today, excited to be with you. Ryan, just as a quick note, we'll be referencing some but not all the time about an amazing book. So we'll point to that. Personally, it was one of my best reads this year. I know we're not through the year, but top three this year. That's a long intro. Ryan, take you from there. Thank you.

Ryan Frederick 6:15:

Thanks Charles, and thanks Megan. It's fun Charles, because you're right. I'm thinking back to it. We intersected around the time you started a LinkedSenior. It's fond memories because that wise people group, you talk about, we were fortunate. We had a cluster of people passionate about ways to make an impact on the lives of older adults and in a variety of different ways. Yeah, blessed that we cross paths. It's awesome to see the development of LinkedSenior and the impact that you personally have, and the organization and Megan and others, on a daily basis on something that, I believe, is among the most important things here for senior housing organizations and communities, which is really helping residents and elders embrace all that's possible in these additional chapters in life. You know, making every day count.

It's exciting to be reminded of the history and then catch up real time here in May of 2022. Excited to be here, as Charles mentioned, I've been in the field around the same time as Charles. I've worn a number of different hats prior to SmartLiving360. I think it's helpful. I've been on the investment side, I've been on the operations side. I actually lived in a community in Atlanta for a summer as part of a summer internship, I've got some good stories there. I've developed new communities, some intergenerational, actually one outside of DC. I've been the board member of some organizations not for profit and otherwise in our field. A lot of the work I do today with SmartLiving360 is on the strategy consulting side to a variety of different clients, ranging from health systems like Hopkins and investment firms and quite a number of providers, multi-family and then senior living of course here.

Ryan Frederick 8:16

But the latest, I guess, misadventure has been with the book, which Charles alluded to. Which has been really a thrill I would say because I started down this path because with *Right Place Right Time*, because I have a brother-in-law, who's a really successful author and he's a psychologist and he was getting a lot of questions related to aging. And he said, Ryan, people don't know what to do, go help them. I studied engineering in college in large part to avoid reading and writing, so there's a lot of irony in this. But he broke me down, and one thing led to another, got a book agent, and John's Hopkins press is the publisher, came out mid-October last year. It's really, it's been a thrill in part because just like Charles said, I mean, there's so many of us, in our field here, that we're just oriented towards impact. It's been really fulfilling to me to see people really raise on people's radar screens, like why place matters in the context of long life. We're gonna get into that in more detail here in our conversation. I do wanna say

that this book, it's not a senior living book. It's not a book for industry professionals, although quite a number of industry professionals have found it valuable for a number of reasons, we'll get into later. But one of the key things here is, we have an amazing story to tell, and it's really important that we tell that story as best we can.

I think this book, as it actually was on a workshop earlier today with some consumers in Rochester, New York, doing a workshop for them. It's interesting just to see how people are processing. They don't necessarily understand the role of place as well as they could. In some cases they don't necessarily understand how the right senior housing place can be helpful if that's where they are too. So a key thing in it, which we'll get into later on too, is I got some feedback. There's a self assessment in the book, just helping people understand why where their current place may fit relative to purpose and social connection, physical wellbeing, financial being, and so on. That assessment, based on the feedback, I created an online version of that. So that might be something that would be valuable to some of you, as well as I've actually had a number of sales and marketing teams that have reached out looking to use that, to help people in their journey of finding the right place. Yeah, we'll talk more about that here shortly with Charles.

Then in terms of word of context just next slide, similar to Charles. I guess I should have taken a moment to see where there's overlap, but with a strategy consulting practice of SmartLiving360, we work with a lot of groups, and it's for groups that are really interested in digging deep into the right set of questions. I believe to position the organizations to succeed over the long term. Typically the work is almost similar to McKinsey in consulting, where it's working with CEOs, boards investment firms typically over a six month timeframe to help people really unpack, where are they, where would they like to go, and then how to get there. Invariably, this subject of making an impact, the subject of truly understanding how to orient your programming and culture, to have the most profound impact on residents and their families, is a core piece of where we spend time on. As you can see here, work with a wide range of groups from small to big, from not for profit to, for profit, it's a wide group, but eager at to have our conversation, Charles.

Charles de Vilmorin 12:12

So where do we start? Right. We have this origin that I'm sure would enjoy most of your book, if not all of your book. Absolutely. But I thought that one place we could start is with one key element, which obviously drives us all, but you make a reference several times in this book, which is purpose, right? As you know, all of our origins has either a good understanding or a very good understanding of what it is to collaborate with the elders, so they find purpose. In your book, you talk about purpose as something, as a goal to the place, some place. Can you unpack, a little bit, how as you were writing this book and after that idea of purpose from there into your book?

Ryan Frederick 13:06

Yeah, for sure. Charles, one of the fun things about writing a book, and I should say before I do that, I thought writing the book based on, well I got, I'm sure just like you Charles, you know, questions from friends. What do I do? How do I do this? I thought I would save myself time by writing a book. Now that probably was a bit foolish, you know in retrospect, because a book takes a lot, took as much time to edit it as to write it. But also it's led to a lot of conversations, which I've really been enjoying, which is spending more time with people understanding their journeys. I've also had an opportunity to think about where are we as a country, and I'm gonna tackle purpose on a few different fronts.

Charles de Vilmorin 13:51

Yeah.

Ryan Frederick 13:52

So when we look at purpose, you know, it's a challenge right now across our society. It's a real issue for young people today. How do they find purpose? When I define purpose, I see it as, you know, something that motivates you each and every day that is larger than yourself. Purpose defined in that way is one of the strongest elements that correlates to overall happiness and wellbeing. I think it's important to start off by saying purpose is really foundational for our lives at any age. The challenge that we face individually, and then of course for many of us in our professional lives, is how can we help translate that purpose into later stages of life? You know, I know you're similar on this Charles. We were in a period of transition in our field because a lot of what's been created was really based on the greatest generation, and we need to modify our brands, our delivery systems, our cultures that work in today's world and appeal to, you know, baby boomers and then increasingly, you know, gen X and others over time.

Ryan Frederick 15:12

One of the terms I just wanna raise for a moment, which is the term retire. I remember, we used to watch a lot of baseball growing up, not as much now, but I tuned in during the playoffs. Back in the fall, when the playoffs were happening, there was a batter that hit a ball to left field and the outfielder caught the ball. And the play by play announcer said, the batter has now been retired, like wiped off the field, no longer exists. So we have this term that often is embedded in some of our communities, that certainly is embedded in our broader culture, that effectively means to withdraw and disappear. And that is the exact opposite of what the research is around having, you know, really successful aging. It's about having this deliberate purpose now. In a lot of the work that I've done with people related to this book, I've found that a number of people don't have a compass of how to figure out the best way to identify purpose in this retirement stage. You know, some people find it in grandkids, sometimes the grandkids aren't necessarily quite as excited to have their purpose be found in their grandparents, not always. There are things they go through. I found that you know, one of the roles, I think it's important for senior living communities is to help unpack people's stories. You had a story before you moved into senior living, like, how can we think of it as what's that next chapter?

Ryan Frederick 16:59

By understanding those stories and, and then prodding instigation of what those next chapters can look like, we're also recognizing that it's not a solo journey. There are ways that we can find purpose in collaborating together. I think there's a key role that senior living communities have to come alongside residents along with families in some instances to provoke people, in a positive way, around what purpose can look like, recognizing its customized individual. Last comment on this, you know, activities as a part of that, but it's broader than that. As people find their elements of, of purpose and we can encourage and create cultures where that's possible, then that often channels the activities, and uses of time and energy that are aligned with that purpose. It's foundational at any age, but it's particularly hard as we get older and I've run into quite a number of people as I've been speaking around this book where that's a key challenge they have.

Charles de Vilmorin 18:10

My mind is obviously in all sorts of directions, giving what you just said, which is cool. You know, I like what you said about the word retirement. I remember, you know, when we initially came out with old people are cool and we still have today, a fair amount of people say you shouldn't use the word old

because of reason X, Y, Z. Well, we think that the problem is that we, as a society, have let the word old build some kind of deficiency into it. So we're all about reclaiming that word old, I mean, that it is a beautiful word, right? I agree with what you said about this idea of retiring, you know, what would we replace it or like, what's the problem with that particular word and how do we "brand it".

The other thing that you said here, which is, it starts with a life story. I love to hear this because as an activity professional you know, it starts by with a resident, right? Like the first thing that an activity professional is going to do with a resident is to get to know them. There are different methods at the very basic aspect. It's some kind of assessment, like a life story gathering preferences and so on. I also like, because you repeated it twice, this idea of collaborating, right. I think the old way of doing activities is I'm going to do four, right. The new way. And something that you advocate also in your book is collaborating. How can we, as an industry collaborate with the individual. So I definitely love that, but let's get into something kind of one step below, which is more actionable granular, which is something that we've referenced several times already, which is this, this idea of assessment.

So let me just choose. Ryan, if you don't mind, I wanna explain to everyone that obviously the book that Ryan wrote, I believe in it. Oh, wholeheartedly of actually Ryan, I'm sure you've seen on your Amazon account, probably of your sales. In the past few days, I've been walking around and recognizing this book, but regardless whether you consider the book or not, I would at least recommend all of you to check out what we reference as the assessment. So thanks for, thanks for your patience here, Ryan. Would you mind helping us understand the background of that assessment, which I think is really one of the fundamental piece in your book. Also tell us from, and Beth Dell just that she purchased it, one more for doing that, but take it from the angle of again, people in the audience, mostly from this senior living industry. You know, you reference the fact that the book was not written for them directly, but ultimately it's super interesting and helpful for them. If you don't mind, start with the assessment.

Ryan Frederick 21:08

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, I think I should take you on the road with me more often, Charles. I think that, so part of it, you know, big picture, very rough math. We have about 10% of people, 75 and older are in some form of private care, senior housing, very rough math. So the vast majority, are not in senior housing today for a variety of different reasons. So we have to recognize that when we're focusing on how to thrive as we age, most people aren't in senior housing. The question is then, they may be there over time, a number of them. But one of the key questions is they're making decisions about place, by virtue of where they're living or choosing, you know, not to move from. One of the key things that I spend time on the book is to help people appreciate, like basically, why place matters.

It's you know, I had a number of ideas in terms of wanting to write the book, but then you, I learned in the research that my ideas became more nuance and deeper as I learned more. Like I thought I knew a subject and then you spend 40,000 words like, oh gosh, now I know this a lot better. One of the areas, again, it's actually not necessarily the link just to age, but place just makes a huge difference. Oftentimes, I wanna unpack a couple things related to that feeds into the assessment.

Ryan Frederick 22:37

First one is, when I say place, I don't mean just like the four walls. While often that's what we think about, that's our physical place, but it's also what neighborhood are we in? What, metropolitan area are we part of? Are we in a rural, suburban, urban area, or what region of the country, even what country we're in and our lived experience is a composite of those different elements of place. For example, if you might have a beautiful house, but in a, in a dangerous or struggling area, your place isn't necessarily great at the same time, you may be in a great metropolitan area that has a lot of opportunity, but your physical place may not be appropriate, so it's not aligned. So we have to look at these different channels,

and then we also have to recognize going back to the purpose and social connection, the physical wellbeing, the financial wellbeing, that place has a very important influence in these other areas.

Ryan Frederick 23:40

So the Gallup Healthways, they created a wellbeing index several years ago, where they broke wellbeing into five areas. It was purpose, social connection, physical wellbeing, financial wellbeing, and then place. What's happened is that, when we think about place only as our physical dwelling, we miss a lot about its impact, in our life. We have to recognize, I encourage people then to think about, as I look at the life stage I am, do I have the purpose that I should have, or I'd like to have. Am I as socially connected as I'd like to be? Now, we know our society was struggling with elements of loneliness, before the pandemic. So it's a bigger issue now, you know, am I as physically active as I like to be, and then not insignificantly am I financially set up to really live over a longer life, cuz it's not just our lifespan. It's also a correspondingly long healthspan and wealthspan.

What I've done with this assessment tool is created a series of questions. Initially in the book, but then, you know, a month or so ago added an online version, just based on how it seemed to be so helpful for people. Just to help probe a little bit to say, Hey, how are you doing, do you think, on purpose and how do you think you're doing in social connection, and so on. And allows people, through these set of questions, to get a dashboard view on kind of where am I on this? There's been some interesting stories that have come out of this actually in senior living where some sales and marketing people have used the book, actually also this as assessment tool, to help people think about where they are in their journey, to say is this perhaps a time to think about something different?

Ryan Frederick 25:43

Then one last piece of this, Charles, I think one of the questions that a lot of communities have to balance is, all of us have challenges with, well not everyone, but a number of people, a number of organizations like occupancy is top of mind for a lot of folks. So in some sense, if we have anyone interested in coming in, like that's a good thing, but there's another side of that, which is, there are some people that are really well suited to thrive in our communities. If there's a way that we can track more of those people, they come and they understand how the gaps in their life, our communities can help solve. Then they're all the more likely to jump in the engagement, in the activities, see the benefit. Last piece on this, if they're making that decision on their own, like they're owning that, they're less being pushed by family or friends. I believe those are the types of people, also, that do get more engaged more immediately, you know, into the communities. So if we can help people understand where they are in their journey, and then effectively self-select into the communities that we have, I think that could be a really good outcome. It becomes, ideally, more than 10% of people. Out there say, this is the right thing for me.

Charles de Vilmorin 27:07

Yeah. But you know, Ryan, actually, I would love us to go one step further in that direction. You know, we know that many activity professionals are great at working with other departments, including the marketing and sales department. Sales, ultimately, it's all about what you can do to accelerate the sales at a lower cost type of thing. Right. So actually, if you don't mind, let's talk about this. Like some of the tools that you talk about, you know, when we were preparing for this, you mentioned the word accelerating sales, right. So it's not like forcing people through a process that never works. Right. But it's quite the opposite, which is, it's a balance between education being slightly prescriptive, but also kind of listening to the individuals. Walk us through that path if you don't mind.

Ryan Frederick 28:00

Yeah. So you know, as previously a senior executive at one of the largest senior housing companies. I've seen this through the lens of an operator. If you go through your sales and marketing budget, both a marketing budget to be known, but I would say even more so, the sales time that's taken with coordinating visits, with spending time when they're there, and a lot of that's important. Okay. A lot of that's important because you wanna understand their story, and they need to understand yours. The challenges, if those visits are not a couple, but they're 5, 7, 10, there's a huge opportunity cost associated with your sales people's time. So if there's a way in which people can accelerate their learning, accelerate their understanding of fit, is this the right thing for me, on their own, so that they're able to better say this is either right or not, it's, it ends up being, I think, better for, for everyone.

So that's what I've seen a bit with some of these tools, Charles, is that I've seen some situations where people have taken the assessment, for example, or have dove in a bit more into the book. I'm in the process of taking more content from the book and digitizing it. But there's ways where, if they can see something that's like an objective third party, they get to see the pros and cons of what's out there and accelerates this sales cycle. It minimizes the opportunity cost of people's sales and marketing budget, but also there's real value in having higher occupancy faster. There's a lot to kind of consider that. I think there's a challenge. I mean, since you and I have first met 15 years ago, like there's an ongoing education that our field has relative to consumers. Still a lot of people when they hear senior living, they're thinking skill nursing, and that's still, you know, very much true today. So, I think, there's a real value as this plays out around helping people understand what's out there.

Ryan Frederick 30:14

Last piece on this, just to be super clear, you know, the book is a consumer book and it's not a senior housing book. The senior housing is just one chapter in it. In fact, frankly, it was the hardest chapter for me to write, because maybe I knew too much, but what allows people to do is to go in an optimistic, non-judgmental way, kind of choose. Hey, this thing really matters. Make sure you make a good choice. And it, and it probes people to be, I think, more thoughtful in their decision making.

Charles de Vilmorin 30:44

Yeah. I think it's also, I think it's always great for one to be reminded that one is an option, right? Like senior living sometimes doesn't. Seriously, it helps for introspection, kind of self learning, and also, constructive feedback. I'd love, if you don't mind, let's take one step, even deeper in all of what this means for activity and life enrichment. I think I have at least two ideas that we could do this. In your book, for example, you remind us that one can go and visit a community. The good visits are when the professional that is touring tells us, yeah, we have other people like this. In the chat right now, a few minutes ago, somebody by the name of Stacey was saying, my peeps love to learn all about culture and sample cuisine, teaching about cultures and so on. Like that is very valuable, right. If every prospect of Stacy's community would know about that, that would accelerate sales. Wouldn't it? So give us that example because you do do a good job in the book, also referencing to that.

Ryan Frederick 31:58

Yeah, so a couple things on that. I know a number of you are here, on our session, have backgrounds in activities or levels of resident engagement. Two things I wanna point out, one piece is we need to be really mindful, and I suspect some of you have run into this from time to time, what our sales teams say and that lived experience, they're not always the same. It's really important for sales and marketing to understand how engagement and activities and so on truly happen to the betterment of residents, so they can convey that. It's important, so the conversation isn't too much solely about, I'm being

somewhat facetious here, but about the features in the unit, for example. On the other hand, it's also important that the engagement and activity folks understand how things are being conveyed by the sales and marketing team, so they're delivering on the promise.

Fundamental in this, I believe, is that place is this driver. If people care enough about watching what they eat or exercising, the decisions about place should be on that same pedestal, it's a really significant decision. We should make sure in this process that like how we say we're doing it actually is how it's being done, and it's making a measurable impact. Then the second twist on this is, I know you previously have had Jill Vitale-Aussem on as a guest, and she's awesome. I mean, I guess, literally and figuratively. We're part of a think tank together, and I really, I just so treasure her book on the mind shift that needs to happen. Her point is this idea that is that we need to empower people as more citizens.

I think as we shift more to the baby boomers, and we think about it, it's just, like you said earlier Charles, how can we, as part of the ethos of these organizations, how can we truly partner with our residents? There's one organization I'm working with now where we're actually rebuilding how they do resident engagement. We're redoing it, are focused on this level of citizenship and empowerment, and then making sure that the brand and the sales and marketing teams are aligned that way. When I think about the promise of what place offers, particularly for senior housing, it is here in the engagement teams, the activities teams, like that is the secret sauce. It's so important that people understand that and are using the best possibilities to help people live that best next chapter.

Ryan Frederick 35:15

I do wanna say one more thing, Charles, cuz we skipped over this a little bit earlier and that is to go back to the old is cool piece. We're all subject to ageism. This belief that tomorrow promises to be a lesser version of me than today.

Charles de Vilморin 35:39

Yeah.

Ryan Frederick 35:40

We're all impacted by that.

Charles de Vilморin 35:41

Yeah.

Ryan Frederick 35:42

Part of our role is understanding that that's not all consistent with the research. There's something called the U-shaped happiness curve. I go into that in the book, and it's actually global research supporting this, that shows that you have a certain level of happiness in your twenties. Then you kind of go down this fairly steep negative slope for a while and then around age 50 or so, I like to think of as when you have kind of teenagers in the house, you kind of hit this Nadar and then you go back up again.

So in your seventies and eighties, and really late sixties, you're happier on average than you were any other part of your life. The important thing to understand is that we actually, not only is old age or is longevity beautiful, but it's particularly beautiful if we embrace the fact that people actually do have higher levels of reported well-being on average. And when the research around longevity it's less about our DNA, Our DNA accounts for about 20% of our longevity, it's more about lifestyle environment. These are like foundational things that we need to know as individuals, but also people in the field. Whether you're running an organization as a CEO, or executive director, or if you're sales and marketing team, or



on the engagement, these are foundational things that we all need to understand and then articulate to people we run across.

Charles de Vilморin 37:01

I smile when I read that part of your book, cause I first encountered it in Ashton Applewhite's book.

Ryan Frederick 37:10

Yeah.

Charles de Vilморin 37:11

I think, I mean both of, you and Ash's message is also the fact that one of the limiting factors into this happiness is anti ageism. Like if we don't see yourself being in such good conditions, we might unconsciously limit ourselves. I think that for me, what that was, sorry to do this, but getting back to your book, Ryan, that was one of the key elements that I thought about, you having us, as a reader, think about place because place could be displaced for this potential, right? Whether it's this team living industry or now, but why don't we consider that as full of potential.

Actually that was my second piece because it really speaks about the uniqueness of senior living. I think this huge advantage that our industry has, that was the second piece that I wanted to get kind of rather granular for activity in life enrichment professionals. You know, I'm not gonna ask you which page it is in your book. Cause I'm not gonna assume you remember by heart, but you know, like for reference, in page 84, you spoke about something really important, which is this idea of developing friendship, right? You talk about the fact that it takes time. I think this is essential for activity professionals. I know organizations where the title of activity director is actually social connection or social connection managers where their role is yes, to put up an activity calendar and so on and so forth, but also to think about every single day, how can you create friendship between Ryan and Charles and Charles and Megan and so on and so forth? I went through the initial part of activity training at the time, and it wasn't so much about that, right? It wasn't so much about, Hey, we have this community, this social network that is waiting to be unlocked. Unpack that a little bit, if you don't mind, because I think that's a crucial element for the origin and for the industry.

Ryan Frederick 39:21

Gosh, there's so much here. When I wrote this book, given my background in our field for the last 15 or 20 years, naturally, the lens was people in the second half of life. What I found is, and I got a lot of feedback from this, from readers. I've had readers in their twenties that have picked it up, which I was surprised by. Some of the feedback has been, the part of the principles in the book and societal observations are true across a number, if not all age groups. We're at a point right now where, frankly, it's harder to make friends than it's perhaps ever been. Paradoxically. We've never been more connected, but people don't knock on doors. Half of older adults don't know any of their neighbors.

Charles de Vilморin 40:13

Yeah.

Ryan Frederick 40:14

I've seen some data recently that nearly 40% of our society now is clinically either anxious or depressed. There's heavy stuff in our society right now. Having relationships, feeling that sense of belonging and connectedness, is so foundational for finding home. As you reference in the book on page 84, I happen to have a copy of the book near me. It talks about how there's a lot of hours that are necessary. I mean,

one particular piece, it talks about how it takes about 50 hours to move from an acquaintance to a casual friendship, about a hundred hours to call someone a friend, and over 200 hours.

Charles de Vilморin 40:58

Wait, Ryan. Ryan, if you don't mind, let's just pause here. So if we have people, so what does it mean? Right. It means that in a senior living community, if we have neighbors, these individuals need to spend 50 hours to go from neighbor to acquaintance. Right. And then 100 hours to become friends. Right?

Ryan Frederick 41:18

Yes.

Charles de Vilморin 41:19

Sorry for interrupting. But I think this is so important for all of us that work, and some of us like a lot of people in these locations, in these spaces every day. Consider this is where the potential of creating connection happens. Right. Sorry for interrupting. Go ahead.

Ryan Frederick 41:37

That's exactly. No, that's exactly right. Yeah. And then 200 hours to become, you know, a close friend. In fact, I had a workshop I mentioned earlier today, and one of the questions was from someone I think probably in her seventies, she's like, is there a time where it's too late to move into senior living? The comment I said was one of the benefits of senior housing that I've seen done well is it has a lot of what I would describe as social capital. So social capital is a term that sociologists use to put some value to our relationships. There's bonding social capital, where you have similarities and you get close, and there's bridging social capital, where you have relationships with people different than you.

What I said was, there are benefits, no matter where you are in your life journey. However, if you do move into a community, when you're a little bit healthier and more active, where you're likely to have a longer length of stay when you're there, that gives you more possibilities, like you point out Charles, to have those hours with people to build those relationships, build that social capital. I think there is an element of that, where if we have communities where people are only there for three months, let's say it doesn't mean that we shouldn't aspire to create as best a community we can and make those connections. But as a practical reality, there's a bigger benefit if people are there for a longer period of time.

Also, last point on this, some of the research is more recent. I wasn't able to include the book, but there is research around not just purpose, but also if you have a negative view of yourself and aging, you're likely to not live as long. So there's that piece too. Like if you're, if you have an optimistic view of aging, you're more likely to live longer. So there's something about moving into community, investing in purpose, social connections. So on it, it seems like probabilistically you'll live a longer, healthier life when you're there. If those lifestyles are promoted.

Charles de Vilморin 44:02

Yeah. We had a question in the Q&A, Ryan, about, well question and a comment about multi-age connection, like intergenerational, I know it's a big thing for you, but yeah. That actually should be the number three, right. Like in the really in the weeds type of common discussion point. Yeah. Tell us more about that whole thing.

Ryan Frederick 44:30

Yeah. Well, I'll try to be brief. I think just going back to the retirement word before, we've also kind of defaulted as a society oftentimes have age segregation that happens. Particularly when we turn corn fields into senior living communities, or they're up on the hill and you maybe see 'em, but you largely forget about 'em. I use the adage, I did a Ted-like talk for the NIC conference a few years ago, and I called it shady acres. And in my book, I'm very careful, I lay out the pros and cons of every option. It's really up for people to choose what's best for them. But the research is pretty overwhelming. Intergenerational relationships are valuable for both the old and the young for a variety of different reasons.

But what can happen or I think is emerging, fortunately, is you're seeing some new developments where there's more, I would call age friendly design. I helped create an apartment building in the greater DC area, Rockville called The Stories at Congressional Plaza, partner with a public company. And we created an apartment building that had age friendly, designed throughout. And we had people move in as old as 90 and all the way down to young families and millennials. We created more of this opportunity for people to get to know each other, an invitation in certain ways. Another way to do it is to be more mindful of, can we co-locate senior living buildings or age restricted apartments or different things in places that are, even if that building is age restricted, it's adjacent to other uses. Then of course, are there ways to, from a programming perspective, to be more intentional about bringing people of other ages to the same living community, or just as important finding opportunities for people to be more engaged in their broader community, and that can especially help with purpose.

Charles de Vilmorin 46:40

I know that many of our communities hopefully are continuing knock on wood here are reopening. But I hear that some places we unfortunately have are COVID, but obviously one of the devastating impacts has been to close and not have help through our volunteers or younger generations and so on. So definitely see why it's been important, but also, we've seen the devastating impact of not having it. I think, now I want to use this to go back to one of your earlier points, which is this idea of secret sauce, right? What is this secret sauce? Obviously again, in your book, you do a fantastic job at explaining that this industry historically is a healthcare industry, right? I mean, that's initially, but where there is so much potential is in this social model, the social determinants of health.

I think the angle that I sometimes like to say is that people might spend too much time thinking what's the balance, when you never get to balance, right. It's always a balancing act. Because you know what I mean? Like it changes over time, especially as we go through our different life stages and so on. So I know that it is also something that you and I could speak with some time, but in a few minutes, like tell us from the vantage of your book, what is the potential that all of these professionals here, in our industry, carry as they are the one that enable this human right of purpose, right? Like this potential, that this social model.

Ryan Frederick 48:23

Ah, yeah, it's a key question. Charles, by the way, when you say balance, unfortunately I don't know how it happened, but I had an ice skating birthday when I was like in third grade, and I spent the entire time on the ice. So, balance is not one of my strong suits, at least physically. I gotta work on that, I guess, as I get older. But, I think in a way, we've got this amazing story. We might in a way have the magic pill here. Sometimes we hide it because like, to the extent that what we do is seen as a healthcare only thing, when you've got physical needs, and we'll serve them, I'm not saying that's unimportant.

It is important, but it can be so much more because the real value here, the secret sauce, the thing that could unpack more demand, is to say that our place helps you increase the odds of living your best

version now. That means that we come alongside people. I know it's a little bit countercultural, in some respects, but we come alongside people, understand what their story is, like we talked about earlier, help be an encourager for them to find greater areas of purpose. We touched on some examples moments ago, like we can do these subtle curation, like you're talking about in the stories, in congressional Plaza, we had a lifestyle ambassador, and sometimes we called him like a storyteller. We had people, when they come in, they fill out their story in some measure, and then we connect people subtly. Hey, you might be interested in getting in that and then kind of back away in certain ways.

I think there's this opportunity to like nudge people through place in these very meaningful, research driven attributes. It's hard, but if we're able to do that, it can't be folks in life enrichment and engagement alone, because it might be the best kept secret. We don't want it to be the best kept secret. We wanna make sure that the executive director and the CEOs understand why this is important, understand that it involves investment. We gotta make sure that our sales and marketing team and the ambassadors that they understand where this fits in, so that when they allocate time during a tour, or when we talk on the phone that we ask the right set of questions to unpack people. I'm not trying to be pollyanna here. I mean, I recognize sometimes there's urgent things, but it's important that we have the opportunity to slow it down where we can and say, here's what this is about, here's why it matters.

To some degree to Martina's other question in the Q&A, we can be countercultural. Hey, in our community, it's not all about productivity, right? It's about being. It's about belonging. It's about envisioning what you want it to be. So I think there's important stuff, and it's big, but I think it matters. I think it ties back into some of the messages that Jill Vitale-Aussem talked about before. I think I work with several communities right now, on the strategy consulting side, where they've been wildly successful because they've effectively turned this paradigm of life engagement upside down. In fact, there's one community I'm working with in Seattle right now, where we recently did a focus group. We're gonna do an expansion. It was crazy. They're a number of communities in that geography that are struggling with occupancy. It looks like they might have four maybe four times oversubscribed for demand. It's not because the price point, it's not because the design, it's because people want to be in that culture.

Charles de Vilmorin 52:24

We're almost at time here, Ryan, but that last piece was really cool. Like, you mentioned the title CEO, we like to think of activity professionals as CEOs, right? The chief engagement officer, and it like solicits space in the comment says, love your message about best version of yourself. I mean, I wholeheartedly agree with you that we have this clinical pill, which is activity, life enrichment, resident engagement professionals. But sometimes we just hide it. We don't show it. We don't advertise. We don't have power, and we're not proud of it. Sometimes, unfortunately, I talk to executives, right? Like I asked them, what are you proud of from your activity professional? And it's a rightful question. And the person goes, pauses, and doesn't know what to say. When I'm like this should be the one thing you should respond. Boom! Like that. So, anyway, I love this. Thank you. Best version of yourself. That's amazing. As we wrap up here, Ryan, a question for you. What excites you like in the rest of 2022? Like, what's the one thing that you're the most excited about, when you think about our industry and some of the things that you might be doing?

Ryan Frederick 53:55

Well, I mean, I know all of us are, I'm not sure we're gonna be done with Covid, but I'm excited to be at a stage where, people have largely been vaccinated to those who choose to be, and we're in a spot where

we're gonna hit a bit more of a new normal. And you're seeing that, I think with some of the public announcements with occupancy improving and so on. So I'm hopeful that now's the right time for, you know, my world. It's kind of two different things. One is I'm hopeful that more groups will be thinking hard about these, I would describe them as strategy questions, who do I really wanna be known as, and how can I have the biggest impact and how can I align my organization in a way to fulfill on that vision?

I've seen a lot of groups, very busy right now, so a lot of groups saying, now is the time to kind of dig in this in a meaningful way. That's one thing I'm excited about. I think there's a timing piece. I would say on the other side, I'm excited about the ripples from this book. I'm excited to be seen as helpful, as really an objective broker here to say, 'Hey, place matters'. I'm eager to take more of these messages and kind of digitize them and make them more available for consumers to process it. If there's ways to partner with senior living organizations too, as we mentioned earlier, to like help people advance their knowledge and advance the sales cycle, eager to help there. I'm really encouraged on both sides, both helping organizations improve kind of what they're all about, but also helping connect more people to a better housing option.

Charles de Vilmorin 55:37

I'm excited too. Thank you so much, Ryan. I have to say that it's a pleasure to have spent more than a hundred hours with you and call you a friend. If anyone in the audience, again, please consider Ryan's work. Starts with some of the online tools that he mentioned. I would strongly recommend the book. Ryan, thank you so much for being with us.

Ryan Frederick 56:03

My pleasure. It's so fun in so many different ways, Charles. I really appreciate it.

Charles de Vilmorin 56:08

Yeah. Many of you, thank you again for joining. Many of you, thank you for joining and respecting and valuing and dignifying this profession, which Ryan and I, and all of us agree is amazing. And is this secret pill, if you wanna kind of take home some of these findings, Ryan was kind enough to collaborate with us in a tip sheet. And so the link is shared here in the comments. We'll send you an email afterwards as well. And also Ryan was kind enough to share his details. So please, take this, like Ryan said, as a first step or a second or a third, wherever you are in that process, because the more you do this, obviously the better for you, the industry, and also for the elders you serve today, their family members, and also the ones you serve in the future.

One of the key elements of Ryan's ideas today and in his book is, how can we help people make the right decision with the right education and understanding why place matters? So, Ryan, thank you so much for all of these amazing insights and in the time that's left, just a couple minutes, wanted to do a few announcements. Which is that we are super excited with Activity Strong. We just released our full schedule for our biggest event of the year. I'll walk you to the website here. It's our virtual summit on June 21st, which also happens to be the longest day this year, on every year. But it's just that we always do Tuesday and this year's on June 21st, but as an invitation, I'm kind of queuing into some of these ideas that we discussed with Ryan, which is how can we enable this social prescription.

I can't tell you how excited we are. The day starts with leaders in the activity profession from NAAP, NCCAP, and Activity Connection. We then have a session with Lynne Katzmann, and somebody that is about to be announced, which is kind of more our executive panel. The third session is true international experts in the field of resident engagement and dementia care. And these are Dr. Cameron Camp, David Troxel, and Dr. Stelter. Session four, I'm very excited about this one. It is all about physicians that are

actively in their work, thinking today, how can we connect with prescribe engagement? Right. Very important. What is that connection? That balancing act like we discussed with Ryan with the medical, but really important, the social connection, the social psychosocial aspect. Session four is all about the leaders in the field of person centered care, Eden Alternative, Green House, and the Pioneer Network. Our last session, really cool, all about creative arts, creativity in our field.

Charles de Vilmorin 59:08

So that is an amazing event. Hope that all of you will be able to join us. We, to have funds towards that particular event we are having, like we did last year, a senior living's got talent competition. Some of you know, because we shared it with our clients first, last week, where you can have video submission for a senior living's got talent competition from now till June 10th. Then we're gonna have a week of vote. At the end of our summit, we will have a judging panel that will include residents, include different members of our industry, and will have a vote on the winning. And all of that will be live, very exciting, like we did last year. The last, I think the last, oh, no, sorry. I should not forget about that one. Like we did last year, we're having fun also with the game of bingo. There's a bigger card, you can download it now, and we're giving free prizes to anyone that participates, and it's all about Activities Strong and activity profession.

Charles de Vilmorin 1:00:21

Then the last thing I wanted to share is a quick story, super quick. There's this amazing professional called Edward Craft that was hosting an event on March 9th in his community. And it was all about old people or cool. And what he did is that he went to the city of Houston and he managed to get the city of Houston to vote March 9th, as old people are cool day. And that was an inspiration for us here, in DC, where we, with the help of our friend, Tina, we were able to get last week, Washington DC to vote May as "Old People Are Cool Month." So I just wanna share with all of you, because I love that kind of thing. For me, it's kind of fighting ageism one step at a time, and it's, again, the idea that we are all cool, including people of all ages. So with that, thank you everyone, Ryan, thank you so much again for joining us today. A pleasure, till next time.

Sara Mitchell 1:01:29

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