

Welcome to season six of Bridge The Gap, a podcast dedicated to informing, educating, and influencing the future of housing and services for seniors. Powered by sponsors Accushield, Connected Living, Hamilton CapTel, Refera, The Bridge Group Construction and Solinity. The contributors are brought to you by Peak Senior Living and produced by Solinity Marketing.

Lucas 00:40

Welcome to Bridge The Gap podcast, this senior living podcast with Josh and Lucas. But just Lucas today because we have a small table and we've got great guests, and we're gonna have an amazing conversation. We're here in Scottsdale, Arizona. We've got great guests on. Great friend. Want to welcome Charles Mann and Kristin Ward to the show. Welcome to the show.

Kristin 00:58

Thank you.

Lucas 00:59

You guys have actually been on the podcast before. Charles, you haven't been on the podcast in the face-to-face version. We've done the Zoom calls before. Really this is an exciting time. This is the beginning of the year. There's a lot of energy here, a lot of conversations, and you even have some great new news, breaking news in the industry, you know, because you've been here a while and things change, and so tell us what the new news is.

Kristin 1:26

Well, I am the Co-CEO of the newly merged and formed newco, which is AgeWell Solvere Living. So we've come together with another amazing operator in Florida. They're on the East Coast, we're on the West Coast. So now we bridge the state and soon to be the country. And it's an exciting time. Yeah, they're great guys.

Lucas 1:46

So you bridge the gap, is that what you just said?

Kristin 1:47

Yeah!

Charles 1:48

There was a gap there that they bridged.

Lucas 1:50

Exciting times! Congratulations!

Kristin 1:52

Thank you. We're really excited!

Lucas 1:54

So what does that mean for you? It means you get long walks on the beach now.

Kristin 1:59

No, but it means I get to focus on the things I really love. You know, once we get through the transition integration, then I'll be able to focus more on the pre-development consulting, the new development and the new builds. We've got 600 under construction right now, so to be able to give more time to those.

Lucas 2:15

That's not complicated.

Kristin 2:16

No, all with different owners. So it'll be a lot of fun to be able to focus more on that as well as positioning and strategy from a marketing standpoint for the different communities and the different markets and business development. So all the stuff that back 14 years ago, we started the consulting company on, I get to get back to that now with AgeWell Solvere, and I'm really excited about it.

Lucas 2:36

Wow. That is exciting. Well, transitioning that conversation, you are an Accushield user. Accushield has been an amazing supporter of Bridge The Gap. We really, really appreciate y'all's partnership. You know, and for all of our listeners that listen every single week and really rely on our content to help in information and education. Accushield has been one of the big partners that powers us to be able to bring this content. And so y'all should definitely hit the link and reach out to them and check out their products. It's all about safety. Safety concerns in seniors, housing and age care. It has changed a lot over the years. Right? Maybe years ago anybody could walk into the building and no one even took note of that at, years and years ago, not today. How has this changed over time and why is it so meaningful?

Charles 3:29

Accushield was built on a problem that I experienced as an operator, and that was knowing who's in the building. And when you don't know who's in the building, bad things happen. Question marks arise. And I can remember as an operator, there was a resident that had lost her wedding ring, and we didn't know if it was a lost wedding ring or it was a staff member, which is usually where the blame is focused. But what we came to find out is that it was a third party care provider that was a self-employed private caregiver that took this wedding ring. And so therein lies the problem, right? And it took us a long time to figure out who that person was. And so what we've done and what we think is important is to have some form of a process of identifying and extracting the information that you need in an effort to create a safer environment for seniors.

There's a lot you can do at that front desk, right? And there's a lot of security that can be enabled there. And we feel that safety starts at the front desk. And so that's sort of what we focused on and we stay sort of in our lane and we preach that message. And so Kristin, early on, she agreed with our concept and our mission. You're one of our longer customers. And so would love to hear from you.

Kristin 5:01

From the beginning. No, it's really, it is really important. And there have been some scenarios. We've all heard about them, right? With some scary things that have occurred. And it's more important than ever. So when we were talking, I mean, we've even created trainings for the front desk to your point, because unless the whole team is trained and even residents, you know, educate them on what the sticker is, and that everyone either needs a name tag or a sticker. And if not, ask 'em, you say see something, say something. If there's no identification, then ask. And it's also a great way to shame team members into wearing their name tags too, because they get quizzed by other team members, but also the residents. You get the residents involved and they're like, who are you? Where's your name? But that's what's great safety. And I'll tell you the residents' feedback, they love it. We talk about it in town hall, we do refreshers in the town hall meetings in the communities, and they're like new residents that may not even realize it. They're like, wow, we appreciate that, that safety, we really appreciate the security. I mean, it really is meaningful for them. And it's a huge selling point.

Lucas 6:04

Well, the safety, the front desk, that kiosk, it's even evolving now. Technology is advancing so, so quickly. And I know that COVID was a big part of really people elevating the importance of safety in the buildings. And I know probably most of our listeners, they're nodding their heads right now. They're like, yeah, we're using Accushield every day and it's a big help to our industry. So what new things? What new technologies? Is there more? Can we do more with this kiosk?

Charles 6:33

Absolutely. And so, one of the newest features in sort of newest value ads which is a little different than what we're used to doing, which is sort of focused on security and senior living. But what we realized is that because we were signing in visitors, one of the things we could do is we could ask them to review the community. And so as a visitor signs in, right? They sign in and they go through the process, and then as they sign out, it asks them a question. It could be a lot of different questions. It could say, how was your visit today? They rate the building and then instantly it sends a text message to their phone asking them to leave a Google review. And so Google reviews are directly related to SEO, right? And search engine placement, right?

Where do you rank? Right? Where does your building rank? And so what we've learned through just research is that Google looks at that, right? And they don't just look at it as a pure number. They look at how often they're being reviewed, right? It's not just that you have 800 reviews, it's how often was that community reviewed? And so what we're seeing is that people that use this feature that we call Reputation Accelerator, they're getting between seven and 10 net new reviews, Google reviews per month. I mean, it's kind of hard to. I didn't realize that was going to happen. And so it's just asking the question, it's just a consistent, "Hey, leave a review. Leave a review." And then once they leave a review, they don't get that text anymore. But it's been wildly successful and it's something that we sort of just backed into, right? Sort of as that front desk kiosk and that front desk real estate, what can you do with it? So it's been a lot of fun seeing those numbers grow across our portfolio in those communities.

Kristin 8:26

And we piloted in three of our communities initially. And we had gone through all of this extra work to try to get people to leave Google reviews, creating cards with the QR code and all of this. So then we piloted it in three of the communities. And those results are absolutely true. It was amazing. And so we were able to focus marketing's time on other things and now we have it across the portfolio because it's impactful and it makes a big difference.

Lucas 8:51

You need a lot of arrows in your quiver, right? The days are gone, whereas like, we only have one source of leads, there's only one way to get leads or two ways to get leads. You need a lot of different ways to accelerate your community. You're standing on the digital marketplace to help garner and be competitive, right? And operators are always looking for that extra edge. And what a great way than real live feedback that you can get in real time. So how many operators are out using this right now?

Charles 9:25

So we're in about 7,000 communities across the country, just a few. And that's senior living, that's skilled nursing. We're probably 85% senior living, 85, 90. And then we've also got hospitals and surgery centers and really anything healthcare related that has a front desk we can work with. But we are focused on senior, because that's kind of what we know.

Lucas 9:50

Right. And go back to the leads, right? How important is this in managing a portfolio and in getting that?

Kristin 9:59

In terms of the Google reviews or just in general?

Lucas 10:01

Yeah, yea. In general.

Kristin 10:01

No, the Google reviews has been amazing. And Charles is absolutely right. It's a trust identifier, right? So people look for that first. A lot of people who search for communities now look at reviews before they look at anything else. But I was also going to mention some of the other things and I'm not remembering what it's called, but the loneliness.

Charles 10:19

The love meter.

Kristin 10:20

Yes. So the love meter, what's amazing about this, if you use this well, and we've been working on training for our teams on this, you can identify those residents that don't get a lot of visitors. And so when you're really looking for that, and then you integrate that into your programming and you understand who needs a little more attention and when you have volunteers, you ensure that the volunteers go to those residents.

So when you're deliberate and intentional about using that data, again, more arrows in the quiver there are so many tools in it that if you take the time and build a training and education around it is hugely impactful. Some buildings use it really well, some don't. So one of our initiatives is across the board, let's be sure that we're maximizing all of the benefits that Accushield offers because there's so many and you just forget about it. You think of it as safety. But even tracking the vendors and ensuring that all of their

background checks are up to date. I mean, there's so many elements of it that are so helpful. It's really great.

Lucas 11:18

Data is changing the landscape of how these communities operate on a day-to-day basis from top to bottom. Not just safety, but the love meter to be able to give that extra attention that's so meaningful obviously just in a human way. But it also helps kind of close that back door. Maybe that resident just says, I don't belong here, maybe there's another place for me. And I think that that's crucial, right? To help with occupancy and census and things like that. Are you seeing that as a factor?

Charles 11:52

Yeah. So, what's interesting is we did a study, gosh, probably five years ago, and we recognize that residents that don't have a lot of visitation, it's harder for them to feel like they're part of the community. And a lot of times those residents leave. And so it also plays into marketing, right? Isolation, depression, unhappiness, it all goes hand in hand. And so being able to through the kiosk, understand which residents are not being seen plays a big factor in not only the lives of the residents, but also in occupancy. And so it's interesting how that is all played out. Carlene Motto is actually the one who, from Belmont Village, was the one really who backed into that and helped me identify that that was a thing, right? And that those residents that weren't getting visited, you run the potential of that resident not feeling like this is their permanent home.

Lucas 12:48

And conversely, it's very eye opening when you see all of your third party vendors coming in and the private caregivers, that's a big thing. But when you actually see it by resident, so it works the other way. You not only see how many have few visitors, you also see how many people are going to see them. It also tells a story. So using that data to really understand more about the residents and an individualized approach with each one is really impactful.

Charles 13:18

Yeah. And I'll say to your point, those residents that have a lot of visits, right? The resident moves into a community and that adult child is there every day, all day, that's a problem too, right? Because they don't let that resident adjust and have their own life. And so on the other side of the equation, that can be a big issue. And so that can prompt whether it's that resident care director, executive director, whoever the leader of that building is that manages that introduction of the commute to the resident. It's a really good indicator, right? As to maybe you need to have a conversation about, "Hey, we know that you love your mom, but let's let her get acclimated. Let's let her make friends." And so being able to know that I think is important.

Lucas 14:07

Senior housing, senior living, it's complicated.

Charles 14:13

People managing people, it's very complicated. People loving people.

Lucas 14:16

But data matters and it gives you those extra tools to be able to adjust and make it less complicated. So is there anything new on the horizon for Accushield that you're able to say?

Charles 14:28

So next week we're gonna launch something and really sort of bring to the public kind of a new feature that we're adding. But I'll give you sort of what it has to do with. One of the things that the Accushield kiosk is able to capture is agency visits, agency and communities is a problem. And that's staffing agency. There's a lot of people, there's a lot of different agencies, but staffing agencies in particular. And so we can see across the portfolio of companies that we have on our platform that agency usage is continuing to go up. That's a problem. And so it's at some point gonna become unsustainable and how do we reduce the cost of agency? How do we reduce the amount of agency that is needed to run a community? And so right now we have an insight report that any operator can get that shows them, whether it's daily, weekly, or monthly, they're agency usage.

If you have a bill that - happened to me when I was running a community - came in 60 days late and I had no checks and balances, right? With Accushield, you have a check and balance, you have a picture of that person, you have a sign in time, you have a sign out time. And so there's no surprises. And so we are going to laser focus on agency and creating a platform to drive that in the other direction. And so we're excited about that. We think that that's what the industry needs and will appreciate. And so we're going to run after it pretty hard.

Lucas 16:01

Very exciting. Very exciting. Great conversation. Thank you guys for taking time with us today here on the Bridge The Gap Network here at ASHA, Scottsdale. You know, it's a very cold Scottsdale today.

Kristin 16:12

Yes, it is!

Charles 16:14

Everybody's complaining about that.

Kristin 16:14

Got my turtleneck on.

Charles 16:15

I know, I know. Even the northerners are complaining.

Lucas 16:18

People from Chicago and Seattle were complaining yesterday, but the people from Boston, they're not complaining.

Lucas [16:22](#)

I saw Matt in shorts. He's like, "Hey, this is good, it's short weather. But it's going to be a great day. I know y'all are very busy. Thanks for taking time. Very important conversation here on Bridge The Gap.

Thanks to all of our listeners. Make sure you go to [btgvoice.com](http://btgvoice.com), check out all of our content, connect with us on LinkedIn. We'd love to hear from you. And thanks for listening to another great episode of Bridge the Gap.

16:43

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