

Ongoing Staffing Shortages Plague Senior Living and Aging Services



New Service Models Eliminate Some Labor Marketing Challenges

A recent Executive Insights report from the National Investment Center (NIC) showed that 82% of participating organizations reported ongoing staffing shortages. And although these shortages are most acutely felt in the direct care workforce, administrative and support services, from dining and hospitality services to facilities management, housekeeping and laundry can impact quality, consistency, and in some cases, safety issues as well.

Similarly, a U.S. Chamber of Commerce article from July 12, 2023, reported that the foodservice and hospitality sector struggles to retain workers and continues to experience higher than average quit rates. The reasons are many, from low wages and benefits to pandemic-fueled fears of infection, overwork from understaffing, lack of affordable access to childcare, and lack of opportunities for advancement. Plus, heavy competition and the large number of open positions make it easy

for foodservice employees to be lured away. Turnover in dining, hospitality and facilities services staff can be costly. Human Resources departments must devote time and resources to recruiting new employees, resources that are needed to find the direct care workers that are critical to core services. Onboarding and training costs skyrocket. Understaffing and high rates of turnover impact the quality and consistency of services that create some of the most high-profile and impactful experiences of your residents' daily lives. Resident satisfaction suffers, hurting brands, reputations, and ultimately, competitiveness and occupancy.

Senior living and aging services providers who continue to operate dining, hospitality, and facilities services internally can find themselves at a great disadvantage in the fierce competition for good employees. Many are turning to different service models to beat the odds, eliminate uncertainty, improve the quality and consistency of services, and position their communities to succeed in a challenging environment.



An Alternative Approach

Communities are increasingly contracting with service providers to eliminate a range of challenges and take advantage of an equally wide range of benefits, including:

- Eliminating staffing challenges
- Improving the quality and consistency of services
- Controlling costs
- Improving morale and organizational culture



Eliminate Staffing Challenges

It may sound obvious, but when you contract with a service provider, responsibility for recruitment and retention shifts to the service provider. Resources previously required to maintain dining, hospitality or facilities service staff are freed to focus on direct care employees.

But there is more to it than that. Service providers have greater leverage in the marketplace for experienced employees. Service workers that are familiar with the market are familiar with the industry's major players and seek them out, while individual senior living communities may have a harder time attracting their attention. Plus, when there is turnover, an event requiring supplemental staff, or some other staffing strain, a service provider can pull from internal resources to maintain continuity and quality.

You might think that this means you lose control over who is on your staff, but that's not the case. Most contracts will stipulate that hiring meets qualifications specified by your community or provides the opportunity for a community to approve or reject recommended hires – especially for management positions.

Improving Quality & Consistency of Services

Having the necessary staff in place is just one way in which contracting for services improves quality and consistency. Dining, hospitality and facilities services providers, like NEXDINE Hospitality, have robust onboarding and training programs, and highly developed and proven playbooks, policies, and procedures designed to ensure the safety, quality and consistency of services.

NEXDINE works with organizations like the Foodservice Wellness Institute to require Wellness Certification for all managers. A robust technology infrastructure provides tools, like resident data management, field-based audit tools, resident feedback tools, and quality tracking – tools that most communities don't have the scale to leverage on their own. And expert culinary and nutrition teams are constantly developing and refining programs to ensure that every resident receives the nutrition they require, and the exceptional dining experience they deserve, regardless of their needs or abilities.

Controlling Costs

Contract service providers have the ability to leverage their scale and purchasing volumes to control costs. But in this area in particular, it is important to note that not all service providers are alike. Unlike many service providers, NEXDINE offers full transparency into costs and the management fee we charge. For clients, that means that there is no incentive to cut corners to provide the services your residents need and expect. You continue to see exactly what is being spent on staffing, procurement, etc. If you want to increase the service level by purchasing only organic produce, or a more expensive cut of protein, it's up to you. Costs are passed through and it doesn't affect the management fee. You always maintain full visibility into the actual costs of running your business. NEXDINE also offers pay-for-performance arrangements that tie management fees to mutually agreed key performance indicators.

Improving Morale & Organizational Culture

It is a common misconception that when you bring in a contract service provider, staff are released, everyone is replaced, and organizational culture suffers. But when you partner with NEXDINE, nothing could be further from the truth. If you have high-performing employees who are beloved by the residents, we welcome them to continue with us. But there is a significant difference.

When you deliver administrative and support services, like dining, hospitality and facilities management in-house, each of those is necessarily a cost center. When those employees work for NEXDINE, we consider them a revenue center and we treat them as such, providing training, advanced tools and resources, career opportunities for growth and advancement and other benefits that many



communities are not in a position to offer. For many employees, this improves morale and the enthusiasm they have for coming to work because they are empowered to be their best for you and your residents, every day.

We find that employees who may not have been considered high-performing thrive when taught new skills like food preparation and cooking from scratch with high quality, fresh ingredients. They see value and meaning in these new skills that can't be experienced in common "heat and eat" models that use highly-processed and convenience foods.

Seamless Transitions

Change can be intimidating, but we have teams that make the transition from in-house services or from another service provider easy, quick, and seamless – both for the employees of your community and your residents. And there is no risk at all in exploring your options. Getting started is simple. Simply contact NEXDINE to schedule an introductory call or meeting. We'll learn about your community and your vision for the future, and we'll describe our approach and the services and options that are available. Then, if we both agree that it makes sense, we can build a roadmap to move forward.

To learn more about NEXDINE Hospitality and our commitment to health and wellness visit [nextdine.com](https://www.nextdine.com).