



10 Questions to Ask When Selecting a Senior Housing, Nursing Home or CCRC Management Company

The professions of senior housing and aging services are customer-service intensive. Customers vote with their feet. As you search for a senior housing, nursing home or a continuing care retirement community (CCRC) management company, ask yourself these 10 questions to help ensure that you find the right management partner for your customers and you:

- 1. What Will My Customers Think?** Too often owners sign agreements with management companies without thinking of the ultimate customer - the people who live in an assisted living community, nursing home or CCRC. Ask yourself: *Is this management company one that I will be proud to introduce to my customers and the larger community?* If you hesitate at all in answering that question, your search must continue.
- 2. How Do Their Communities Feel?** Visit communities that your prospective management company operates. Go there unannounced. Are customers happy? Are employees helpful? Does the community look good and feel good? Would you live there or get care there? Would you recommend this community to a loved one? If your answer is "no" to any of these questions, keep looking.
- 3. How Do They Measure Customer Satisfaction?** If the company says that it measures customer satisfaction, find out how they've done the last two or three years and if they measure those results against customer satisfaction levels of other senior living companies. Find out what they do with what their customers are telling them.
- 4. What is Their Financial Performance?** Learn how their current managed properties are doing financially. Are they keeping them full? Some management companies also own and manage their own properties. Ask the management company to share with you their financial performance.
- 5. What is the Depth of Experience and Resources?** Senior housing and care services can be extremely complex operations. To serve your customers at the highest level, and enhance your ownership investment, you'll be best served working with a partner that has diverse and specialized expertise on its team, especially if you're providing care services. Also, consider what expertise and resources they bring in other areas, such as human resources, clinical services, risk management, strategic planning, technology and marketing.

6. **Does the Company's Web Site Match Actions?** Go beyond the pictures of smiling people and flowery words. Look at what the organization's mission, vision and values are. Ask the organization how they are living those words. Is it real?
7. **Where Do We Want to Be in 2 Years, 5 Years and Beyond?** Think about the future. If you have a vision for adding new services, expansion or repositioning, you would be better served to partner on the front-end with a management company that has proven strategic planning and consulting services under one roof, so that you're not starting at the beginning in educating an array of new partners when you decide to make your move.
8. **What is the Care Record?** If you're seeking a management company for a nursing home or continuing care retirement community, check out that management company's care record. How have they done in surveys by regulators? The customers and family members you serve will want to know that they're getting a team with a stellar care record.
9. **What Do Others Say About the Company?** Find out if this management company is a leader in its profession. Do an online search in Google. Interview other owners who use them. What's been said about them by media? Has it been positive or negative? You can go beyond Google by doing a Lexis-Nexis or Westlaw (these are online subscription services) search of media coverage of the company.
10. **What is Their Track Record of Innovation?** If your goal is to get ahead of the curve in this changing marketplace, you need to work with a partner that is ahead of it and working to stay ahead of it. Ask the company to provide specific examples of innovation in aging services. The senior housing and aging services marketplace is only going to get more competitive. Find a partner who can help you stay in front and protect and enhance your competitive position.

This paper is courtesy of Ecumen (www.ecumen.org). Affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Ecumen is based in the Twin Cities and is the innovative leader in senior housing and services, empowering individuals to live richer and fuller lives.