

The Dorchester

SET THE STANDARD AND IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING



IN BRIEF

BACKGROUND

The Dorchester is an independent living community for seniors that offers full-service amenities including activities, dining, transportation, housekeeping and 24/7 front desk staff. The property partnered with Signature Worldwide to enhance and sustain service levels for its residents.

CHALLENGES

The Dorchester felt customer service standards were important to establish for their existing property as well as to create a guide for training customer service when new properties are added to their portfolio. There was a need to create communication consistency, improve resident experience management, provide tools for conflict resolution across departments and make sure such an initiative stayed fresh and interesting over time.

SOLUTIONS

Signature Worldwide implemented Resident Service Edge™. A training program specifically designed to teach employees service standards for enhancing each resident's experience to emulate a hospitality environment. The program is fun, engaging and includes ongoing flexible skill development reinforcement to keep employees enthusiastic between touch points and interested over time. The dedication of The Dorchester management team, as well as resident involvement and feedback, played a big part in keeping the program a priority with long-term success.

RESULTS

The Dorchester increased their employee satisfaction scores by 11% and their resident satisfaction score by 17% in just six months. As a result of the training, employees were more confident in the importance of their roles and worked together to continually provide exceptional service. The residents went from completing an annual staff survey to recognizing staff an average of 50 times a month.

Background

The Dorchester is an independent senior living community in the New Forum portfolio of companies.

The full-service facility offers 276 one- and two-bedroom apartments. The facility provides residents with activities, dining, transportation, housekeeping, vast amenity selection, delivery services, physical therapy, housekeeping and 24/7 front desk staff in its suite of services.

The organization took great pride in already having very good service and resident satisfaction scores. The property and its management company, New Forum, have committed to maintaining, standardizing, and expanding that reputation by utilizing Signature Worldwide customer service training programs for all its employees.

Challenges

MANAGE THE RESIDENT EXPERIENCE WITH INTENTION:

When The Dorchester decided to implement a resident experience training program, they wanted a program that would emulate hospitality service interactions. In order to differentiate the resident experience from other communities, management knew they and the staff had to be intentional about their interactions with the residents. Simply being cordial was not enough. And, in difficult situations of resident conflict, staff members felt they did not have enough training to diffuse issues with confidence.

INSTITUTE THE PROGRAM WITH MANAGEMENT TRAINING:

The Dorchester has a solid management staff with very little formal management training. As effective as Signature Worldwide's program is for front line staff, the management team needed tools for long-term implementation, reinforcement and ultimate success in service skill development.

CREATE A SCALABLE PROGRAM: A hurdle for growth at The Dorchester was creating a repeatable process for use with new staff and properties. Their resident service scores were already considered good, but there was no established process, so they relied on shadowing existing employees. That meant adding staff or portfolio property expansion could not be done quickly with the same success in service levels.

The Dorchester

The Solution

RESIDENT SERVICE EDGE™ TRAINING: Based on previous training with Signature Worldwide, The Dorchester management requested the Resident Service Edge™ program to train employees on a simple set of service standards for connecting with residents to learn about their wants and needs; act in a way which adds value to the resident by enhancing their living experience, and create memorable and positive interactions.

Resident Service Edge™ training sessions were energetic, informative and fun; complete with role-play activities and significant group interaction. The property held an initial training event that included all front-line staff and the management staff. A refresher training session was conducted four months later to reinforcement the skills taught in the initial training. In between these training sessions, measurement occurred through staff recognition by their managers and residents when behaviors were exhibited that aligned with the skills trained. This encouraged the staff, making them feel confident about their interactions and maintain a high level of enthusiasm through the course of the program.

COACHING FOR PERFORMANCE TRAINING: The Dorchester knew the importance of the leadership team's involvement in sustaining a successful service culture. As with the front-line staff, many of the managers on the team had never been through formal management coaching.

A prerequisite to attending the Coaching for Performance class was attending the Resident Service Edge™ course. This ensured the management team was not only aware and knowledgeable of the service levels trained and desired outcomes but could also identify and reward the team when right behaviors were exhibited. As well as, step in and provide appropriate and timely feedback. This is a crucial part to creating lasting behavioral changes.

FLEXIBLE REINFORCEMENT PROGRAM: Signature Worldwide's program utilized a reinforcement system for both front line and management staff that featured ongoing coaching, Employee Encouragement cards, training moments and management reporting. The program supported the goals of delivering on the defined service standards to elevate the existing culture and emulate a hospitality environment.

The Signature Worldwide reinforcement program provided all employees follow-up training to keep skills fresh, as well as, address issues and questions that come up when implementing new skills. The program was also flexible so as initial trained skills were mastered, new skills and concepts were introduced for continuous employee development and engagement.

Results

EMPLOYEE AND RESIDENT FEEDBACK: The Dorchester was able to measure pre and post training feedback from the employees as well as the residents. The property used an anonymous survey that measured how likely employees were to recommend The Dorchester as a place to work. Residents were also measured on likelihood to recommend the community, as a place for their friends and family to live. For both groups, the post-training scores increased. Employees had an 8% increase in their likelihood to recommend as a place to work and residents experienced a 10% increase in their likelihood to recommend the community. Additionally, employees also rated the confidence in their skill level for four main categories of communication before and after training. All categories of skills had measurable increases post-training.

The vice president of The Dorchester noted that the training helped reinforce their culture, stating "It's incredibly difficult to work 'on the business' when you are 'in the business' day in and day out. The training allowed everyone to disengage with the hustle and bustle of a 276-apartment senior living community and reengage in something as equally important: legendary customer service. It was sincerely delightful to watch the staff interact in ways they don't normally have the opportunity for; they worked in small groups to tackle real situations we are faced with on a daily basis and observing maintenance personnel and front office personnel really talk about how best to not only solve the issue at hand, but how to do it from a customer service perspective was truly fantastic."

DEFINED SERVICE STANDARDS: The service standards created a clear and consistent program design for providing exceptional service. It also laid the foundation for a standard of training that could be easily implemented with new employees and new communities. "Learning how important we are to the residents...and how to properly make them feel like we care" was a key takeaway; one employee noted. "Real world experiences and challenges we face were discussed", which helped the staff immediately implement the tools they learned.

The staff collectively felt that the training content and skill practice would aid new staff in their ability to do a better job delivering exceptional service at the community.

ELEVATE SERVICE LEVELS TO EMULATE THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: The real test of the training was in resident feedback. The residents were given the ability to recognize legendary interactions with employees by filling out Legendary Service Cards. As part of the training program, these cards provide a powerful way to measure skill development and encouragement of the staff. There was an overwhelming resident response, with over 50 cards submitted per month.