

Brookdale Senior Living CX Innovation Award Nomination

Innovation Title

Brookdale's new VOC used Data and Leadership to Exceed Customer Expectations, Change Culture, and Drive Results

Describe the Innovation: Why and What was the idea that this organization was trying to change or create to bring value or resolution to a customer's pain point?

In terms of background, Senior Living is the only category where the Customer lives with the brand: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. We have to always be on. In addition, Seniors are one of the fastest growing demographics in the United States. It is commonly known as the Silver Tsunami. In 2015, Brookdale, the #2 Senior Living Company in the United States acquired Emeritus, the #1 company in the U.S. Brookdale has over 1,000 communities in 46 states and 70,000 associates. But at Brookdale, our leadership mandated that it isn't about being the biggest, it is about being the best. Our mission is "enriching the lives of those we serve with compassion, respect, excellence, and integrity." But how did we know if we were delivering on that? How did we know what story our residents and their families were telling about us? Through feedback. And more importantly, taking action based on that feedback. Our rallying cry is "Feedback is a Gift." Our journey began in 2015 when we launched our Customer Experience Strategy, focused on Voice of the Customer. That is when we set our benchmark--our starting line. Brookdale chose NPS as the key metric and measured it from the Resident and Family Survey. Senior Living is an emotional category where referrals and recommendations are a major lead source. That's why we landed on NPS. Through insights and analysis, we learned very clearly what the two biggest drivers of NPS were: Resolving Issues Timely and Showing that Community Management cares. We also learned that those are the most basic expectations our customers have of us. If we do those two things right, NPS will take care of itself. More importantly, we owe it to our customers--it is the right thing to do.

Describe how this organization did things differently as part of identifying, testing and implementing the idea considering the following:

Methodologies and tools used

As a result of detailed data analysis:

- 1) The organization recognized the direct correlation between NPS and income, occupancy, associate engagement, controllable moveouts, staff turnover, and leader turnover. NPS has become a major business goal and component of the bonus plan. ALL bonus eligible leaders are paid on it.
- 2) Brookdale developed a Customer Experience Center of Excellence (COE). This is a small but mighty team consisting of just 3 people charged with influencing every other leader in the company. This group built an internal consultation model. They consult with District field leaders and tie in data from the survey to business results. With only 3 people, they have no choice but to lead through others. Leading the leaders, we called it.

3) The COE, with input from a cross-functional team, developed the Brookdale Experience. What are the three most important behaviors that all 70,000 associates must understand and demonstrate:

- Say "Yes" (yes is the default answer to everything)
- Say "Thank You" (appreciate them for choosing Brookdale)
- Ask "Is There Anything Else I Can Do For You?" (opportunity to resolve any issues)

Every new associate is mandated to take this training. The COE also developed a Resident & Family Experience Playbook--a brief but powerful resource for field and community leaders to follow.

4) Implemented Qualtrics. This was a game changer. The Qualtrics platform is a leadership tool that the CX consultants use with Executives, Corporate Department leaders, Field leaders, and local community Executive Directors. It facilitates an easy to understand leadership conversation: we showed them what we are doing well and what we could improve upon. It enabled clearly defined action plans and took accountability and performance management to another level.

5) CX moved from Marketing to Operations. This has enabled close partnerships with the folks that can actually impact the Experience.

Describe how innovative the idea or solution is considering the following:

- How unique or different the idea or solution is across the industry***
- How has it advanced CX and awakened others inspiration and interest in CX?***

-To our knowledge, having a dedicated Customer Experience Center of Excellence is innovative in the senior living category. In addition, using a sophisticated research platform such as Qualtrics is not very common among senior living companies (to our knowledge).

-Having CX live in Operations is innovative, as most CX groups live in the Marketing or Brand departments.

- Brookdale has been asked to share its success story at CX conferences across the country, including the 2017 Customer Expo, 2017 Experience & Loyalty Forum, and the 2018 Qualtrics Insight Summit.

- At the 2018 Qualtrics X4 Summit where Brookdale presented, three residents were part of the presentation. What better way to present Voice of the Customer than to hear it directly from the voices of our actual customers!

Describe the benefits achieved and/or CX improvement of the innovation considering the following:

- What factors were used to quantify and measure the improvement success?***
- What impact did the product or service have on the customer and how was this measured?***
- What impact did the product or service have on the employees, and how was this measured?***
- As a result of the innovation how did it change the business operating norms?***

IN JUST 2 YEARS:

NPS and the 2 key behaviors that drive it are now a focus area for the more than 70,000 associates at Brookdale. We have changed a culture to one that is focused on resolving issues timely. Whether it is someone at a community resolving a customer's issue, or someone in the corporate office resolving a field associate's issue, the entire organization understands NPS and that we MUST resolve issues timely. Our two highest NPS Divisions have consistently eliminated unresolved issues from the weekly report. Not coincidentally, these same Divisions had the largest increased in NPS for the company. Our CFO has recently mentioned our Customer Experience work and NPS success on quarterly earnings calls with

Wall Street Analysts. With just 3 people to lead this for a 70,000-person organization, we are very proud of the results so far. We like to say that this isn't a project or an initiative. It is a journey and we are off to a great start. The best result is that two years into this we have more residents and families who are more satisfied.

Please describe the 'before' and 'after' success metrics that were used to determine this newly innovative approach was successful:

From 2015 when we started the VOC journey to 2017, Brookdale increased NPS 20 points. Over that time, we now have more Promoters and less Detractors:

- Promoters increased 12 percentage points.
- Detractors decreased 8 percentage points.
- Passives decreased 5 percentage points.

Success also comes from the Voice of the Customer. At Brookdale, we have what are known as Culture Moments. Actual comments from residents and families whose lives have been enriched by the Brookdale Experience. I would like to highlight one of those culture moments from a resident that dispels the myths and stigmas associated with Senior Living. It is the Brookdale Experience that sets Brookdale apart:

"Living here has given my life reason & purpose. I will live out my remaining days here happily & with contentment. Great care givers & mgmt! I may be in a slightly different situation than other residents of assisted living. When my wife died 2 years ago, we had been together for 60 of the happiest, closest, most wonderful and productive years of both of our lives. We were joined at the hip. When she passed the trauma pushed me very close to the edge of life. What was the point of my carrying on without her by my side and within my touch? This depressed attitude because my daughters to find an assisted living facility as an alternative to death. I resisted, until I entered Brookdale. There I found solace, friendship, and a pleasant life style that eased my emotional pains and allowed me to consider this as a productive way to glide along to the end of the voyage. The management, the caregivers, the milieu, the whole package came together to form a wonderful new page to the end of the book... an epilogue to a full life. Assisted living. A most welcome home port."

Which types of work is the innovation focused on? (select all that apply):

- Customer-Centric Culture
- Voice of the Customer, Customer Insight and Understanding
- Organizational Adoption and Accountability
- Customer Experience Strategy