

The Pandemic Has Accelerated Technology Adoption Across Generations:

Here's Why This Is an Exciting Opportunity for the Senior Living Industry to Influence and Support Their Residents, Resident Families and Teams.



By: Sean Rowe,
CEO of MealSuite



The Change Accelerator: How The Pandemic Transformed Our Technological Habits

As humans, we have a natural tendency to resist change. Not to any fault of our own – habit forming has quite literally been wired into our brains since the beginning of time. Put simply: we form habits (i.e., things we can do “without thinking” such as brushing our teeth or driving the usual route to work) as a way for our brains to conserve precious energy.

But when our everyday routine is flipped on its head – like it was as we adjusted to a “new normal” – we’re left with no choice but to break our comfortable routines and quickly adapt.

During the developments of the pandemic, our teams, residents and their families had to program new neural pathways and break free of previous habits, while becoming more flexible in their approach to daily tasks and activities.

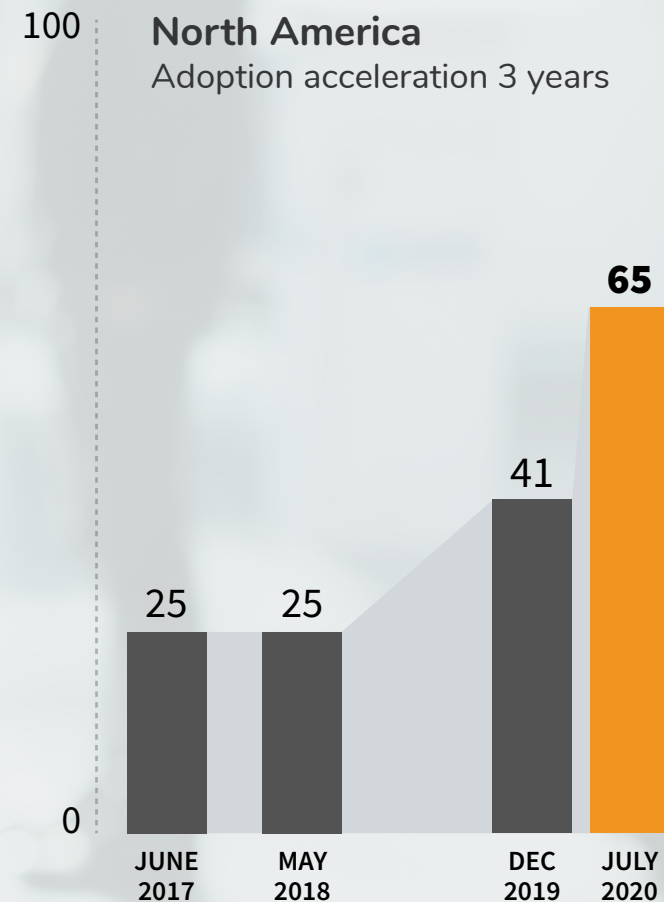
While older adults have rapidly adopted technology to keep in contact with loved ones, and their families have adopted technology to assist with grocery delivery, meals, telemedicine, wearable health monitoring and more...

We've leapfrogged forward several years in our technology adoption – and with many of these changes here to stay, the way we do business in our industry must change, too.

The COVID-19 crisis has accelerated the digitization of customer interactions by several years.

Average share of customer interactions that are digital, %

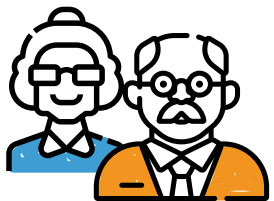
■ Precrisis ■ COVID-19 crisis



Source: McKinsey & Company

Opportunity Ahead for the Senior Living Space

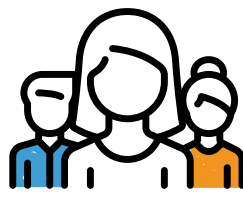
In this e-book, we'll explore why the accelerated technology adoption momentum poses an exciting opportunity for senior care leaders to embrace change and move the industry forward, so you can better support and influence your:



Current and Future Residents



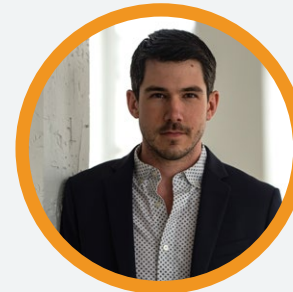
Resident Families



Team and Future Team

Because the bottom line is that your residents, families and teams have changed. And if we can adapt now and get ahead of it, this change brings us tremendous opportunity.

**So the question is:
Are you going to change,
or are you going to keep
your old habits?**



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean Rowe, CEO of MealSuite
Foodservice Management Technology

Since getting involved in the hospitality industry ten years ago, Sean has strongly believed in the power of technology to improve operational efficiency and overall satisfaction for patients and residents. That's why after acquiring MealSuite back in 2016, he made it his mission to develop an all-in-one ecosystem of software and hardware solutions to help the continuum of care achieve a whole new level of foodservice quality. Since the beginning, Sean's number one priority has been to help deliver more smiles through improved mealtime experience, while reducing waste and unnecessary administrative burdens. Fast-forward to today: MealSuite's technology helps foodservice operators serve over 394 Million meals every year, with a goal to help serve over 1 Billion annually by the end of 2021!

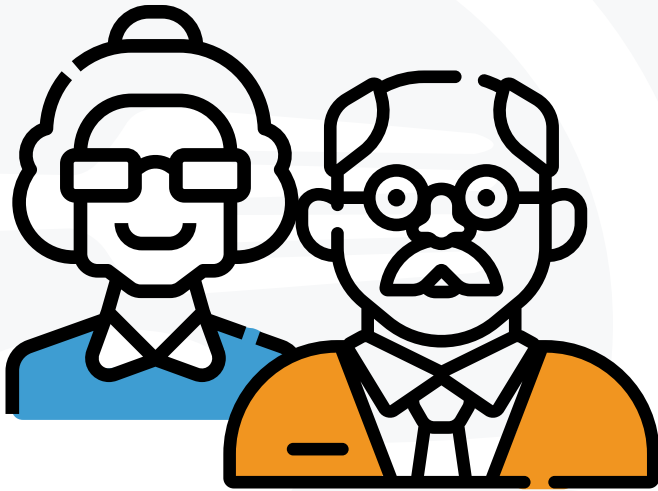
Residents & Future Residents

How The Pandemic Changed Their Technology Habits



Technology enabled older adults to better weather the isolation of the pandemic, from ordering groceries to telehealth visits to connecting with loved ones.”

Alison Bryant, Senior Vice President of Research at AARP



- **53%** of adults ages 70+ now own a tablet (Up from 40% in 2019)¹
- Ages 50+ smartphone use for ordering groceries online increased **6% to 24%**²
- Ages 50+ smartphone use for financial transactions increased **37% to 53%**²
- **44%** of older adults say they have a more positive feeling toward tech now than they did before the pandemic¹
- Instacart helped **60,000** seniors buy groceries online in a single month after offering their **Senior Support Service**³
- Tech use among the 50+ increased in wearable devices from **17% to 27%**²
- **54%** of individuals ages 50+ report wanting to learn more about technology²



The opportunity is there: if you can provide something in the realm of the ‘what I want, when I want it, at the click of a button’ experience in your own community, you can not only retain and please more residents, but tap into an entirely new revenue stream.

THE EXCITING OPPORTUNITY

When it comes to technology, current and future resident behaviors have rapidly changed – and with that comes a change in their expectations. As they continue to frequent “instant gratification” apps to order meals and groceries, older adults will grow continually accustomed to the ease, convenience and virtually endless choice that come with communicating, placing orders and making payments via their own personal device. And if they’re not going to get that same experience from your community’s foodservice, they may turn to third party apps like Uber Eats or a grocery delivery service whenever they have a desire or craving.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO EMBRACE THE OPPORTUNITY

First things first – ensure your organization is focused on Wi-Fi deployments and ensure strong connectivity for residents now and into the future.

Consider deploying an in-house mobile app (accompanied by a concierge service) that allows residents to order fresh ingredients or ready-made items that they enjoy, and align those items with your regular purchasing orders.*



Many residents will be interested in the convenience of new digital-forward options, however, some may require support getting started. The future is trending toward communities offering a ‘Resident Technology Support’ individual or team dedicated to getting current and new residents comfortable with their devices. [Click here to read recent case studies exploring communities who’ve deployed such services.](#)

*MealSuite has helped several communities across the US deploy these kinds of solutions, and would love to help you with an integrated, custom application. [Click here to connect with our technology specialists and discover the possibilities.](#)

Resident Families

How The Pandemic Changed their Technology Habits



- Work from home for remote-friendly jobs rose from 20% to **71%** ⁴
- Online media consumption rose **215%** in the US ⁵
- Globally, **49%** of consumers shop online more now than they did pre-COVID-19 ⁶
- Likely to seek wearable technology to monitor their parents' health
- Represent the “Sandwich Generation”, with high dependent to provider ratios ⁷



THE EXCITING OPPORTUNITY

Resident families often represent what’s referred to as the “**Sandwich Generation**” – meaning that they have dependents they’re responsible to provide and/or care for in the previous generation (their parents) and the next generation (their kids). With this high ratio of dependents to provider (even before the pandemic) this generation understandably seeks efficiency through technology in order to balance it all.

And with what became necessity during quarantine, demographics that represent our residents’ loved ones are doing more online or virtually than ever.

From working remotely, to shopping online to finding solutions that help them look after their parents virtually – there’s no doubt that this influential group has gotten more comfortable communicating, seeking information and making purchasing decisions online.

This shift means that even when the pandemic is well behind us, prospects may be more likely to conduct their search for a residence for their loved one mostly, or fully, online. And with this – you have the opportunity to ensure you’re providing an online experience that allows them to connect and engage with you in similar ways to visiting in person.

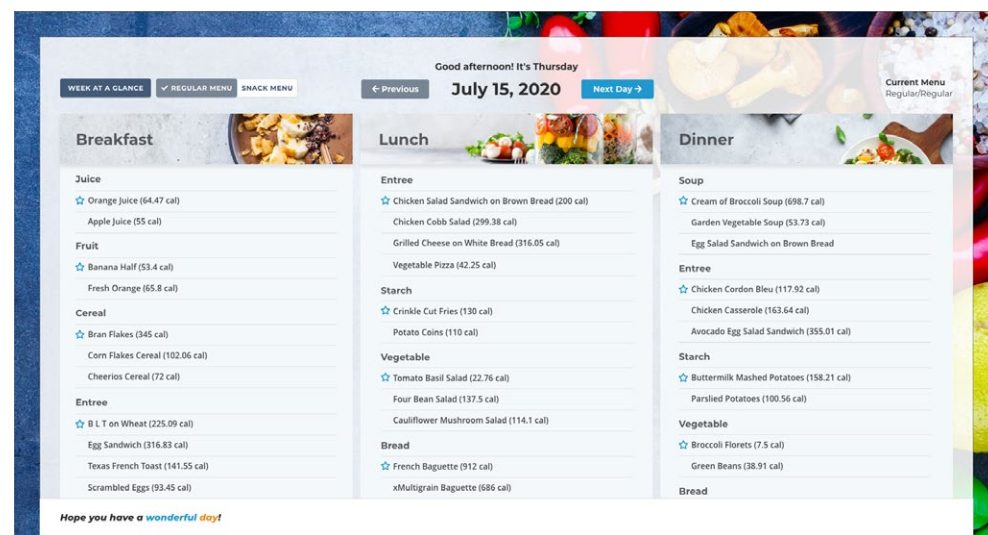
Start by asking yourself: Does my online foodservice experience taste as good as my in-person one?

With foodservice quality being a major decision factor in choosing a senior care community, ensuring your foodservice has a great online presence is the perfect place to start. And with the right digital tools in place, showing off your impressive mealtimes online can be easier than ever.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO EMBRACE THE OPPORTUNITY

Including a link to an in-depth **Nutrition Portal** on your website is a great way for families to have an inside view of your foodservice experience, virtually. The best Nutrition Portals can be custom-branded and integrate with your communities' menus, activities, catering and more, so prospective and current families can:

- View your weekly or daily menu including optional diet order details
- See any upcoming community activities or special food events from live performances to a special holiday meal
- Place special orders or catering requests such as their loved one's favorite cake for their upcoming Birthday visit
- Read stories about what makes your foodservice experience special, such as your farm-to-table initiatives or community garden



A **Family Portal** provides current resident families a view of daily menus, what their loved one is ordering, and the nutrition that's being offered in each meal. This will give them trust and confidence in knowing that their parent is always receiving a well-balanced meal; or allow them to track selections for improved choices.

Boost your foodservice web presence further with foodservice testimonials from residents, a "meet the team" featuring your foodservice superstars, and share about what makes your foodservice offering stand out from the rest.

Team and Future Team

How The Pandemic Changed Their Technology Habits



- Increased desire and availability⁸ for remote job options = more competition for top talent
- Social distancing restrictions forced many teams to adopt digital ordering and other solutions rapidly
- Increased labor shortages⁹ are likely to increase dependence on technology
- The next generation of workforce (Gen Z) spend an average of **9 hours** a day in front of a screen¹⁰



THE EXCITING OPPORTUNITY

There's no doubt that the process of attracting and retaining employees – in any industry – has been transformed by the pandemic. And with the breadth of challenges the senior living space has experienced over the past year, it's safe to say the pre-existing short-staffing challenges have gotten even harder to break.

But the good news is – there's tons of opportunity to use technology to boost workplace culture, improve our online attractiveness to top talent and, importantly, retain our valued employees.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO EMBRACE THE OPPORTUNITY

Attracting new team members

Similar to using your online presence to attract residents and families – you have the opportunity to do the same for your hiring process.

Since the developments of COVID-19, the new generation of workforce has placed even more value on having a career with purpose:



The emergence of purpose as a driving force is particularly compelling, given its overarching impact on all aspects of work and business. A sense of purpose can help employees navigate high levels of uncertainty and change and ensure that their efforts are aligned with the highest-value activities.

Via McKinsey & Company

And the good news is: purpose is naturally at the heart of our industry.

Be sure to keep this in mind when designing your online experience for applicants from your job postings to your Careers website. Don't just show them what you do – show them why you do it. Show them the real-life impact their efforts will have. Connect them to something greater than themselves.

It's no longer feasible to rely on your in-person hiring process to attract those team members – they need to know how their efforts with your company make a true impact on the lives of those under your care to cut through the clutter of their online job search.

Also, be sure to show off the innovative ways you operate your foodservice on your website, social media and more so you can appeal to the growing set of applicants that value technology in their everyday lives.

Retaining your current team members

With any job, no one likes to feel like they're juggling more than they can handle. Implementing the right all-in-one resident diet system helps your entire team – from your chefs to your waitstaff to your dietary managers – connect, automate and simplify their day-to-day tasks, so they can take stress off of their plates and spend more time focusing on teamwork, service and satisfaction.

Excellent foodservice team culture often starts with working toward common goals and core values. And it's important for your staff to not only have a clear vision of them, but also be able to measure (and celebrate!) them on a regular basis. The best foodservice management software gives you the power of data at your fingertips. Easily track your nutritional, budgetary, sustainability goals and more – so your team will always know (and be proud of!) the impact their efforts are making every single day.



[Click here to discover more ways technology can help senior living leaders build a foodservice team culture to be proud of](#)

Embracing Change Doesn't Have to Be Complicated:

MealSuite Technology Has Everything You Need to Keep Your Foodservice on the Cutting Edge

When you want to implement technologies that will exceed resident expectations and help you stand out to prospective employees and families, you can turn to MealSuite for a unified solution customized to your exact needs now, and as you grow with your goals in the future.

From our core software complete with menu & recipe management, integrated resident profiles, procurement, budgeting and service tools to our full suite of hardware solutions and Point of Sale system, MealSuite makes it easy to deliver the innovative and personalized foodservice experience you've envisioned for your community.



Schedule a no-obligation demo with one of our technology specialists to discuss your goals for your foodservice and discover the possibilities.



RECIPES



MENUS



PEOPLE



POS



PROCUREMENT



PRODUCTION



INVENTORY



SERVICE TOOLS

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