



Competing for workers? Invest in their digital confidence

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In most industries, the focus of competitive effort rests squarely on attracting customers, but in the controlled aged care market, that's not necessarily the case. While the recent years have seen a burgeoning and much-needed shift toward consumer centricity in the sector, attracting and retaining a quality workforce remains the most compelling challenge for aged care providers.

And this challenge will only grow, fed by workforce shortages across the wider health and disability care landscape and the Federal Government's proposed introduction of mandatory staffing ratios. Research published by *The Conversation* found that among surveyed nursing homes, only 5 per cent have staffing to accommodate the proposed threshold for 2023. Add to that rising consumer demand, and a 46 per cent increase is needed on current staffing levels by 2024 to meet growing requirements for residential and at-home aged care.

Differentiating your organisation to attract and retain the best staff – against a backdrop of low base pay rates, workforce shortages and perceptions of high-pressure work under tough conditions – requires real structural change. It's not just about higher wages; we must also create genuine and attractive opportunities for growth, learning and development, and more vibrant, stimulating and connected workplaces. Building digital confidence and skills across your workforce is fundamental to this shift.

Rising to the challenge

The current situation in aged care staffing is complex and multifaceted. Organisations face increased scrutiny and quality surveillance requirements in the wake of the Royal Commission's findings, alongside growing expectations of clients and their families. Digital transformation, accelerated by the pandemic, has moved traditionally paper-based processes such as rostering online, highlighting digital skills and training gaps in a workforce that is largely casual, transient and migrant-based.

Workers report a lack of career path and investment in their learning and growth. There's also a significant increase in demand for home care packages in recent years. Many healthcare and social support services now require technology which means the staff and volunteers delivering these must be equipped with the digital literacy to support their clients.



Investing in building digital capability in your staff fosters an environment where people feel supported not just to meet the demands of their role but to thrive.



This can only be achieved by thoroughly understanding your starting point, assessing every employee and potential employee's digital literacy skills – something 75.2 per cent of organisations fail to do – so your training efforts can meet them where they are.

Off-the-shelf training solutions are designed with assumptions about the digital literacy of the attendees and struggle to achieve the uptake required for technology to have a transformative impact. Realising the digital literacy potential of every individual requires a tailored approach with codesign at its heart, so that the learning is tightly linked to the outcomes the organisation is striving for. Collaboratively designed training programs that connect with each member of your workforce build a willingness to engage and adopt. The best training programs take your people on a shared journey towards digital confidence, where they learn and share skills peer-to-peer and create a vibrant culture of accelerated learning together.

At YourLink, we see ourselves as enablers and partners in this digital journey with you, your people and clients, working as part of your team and invested in your success.

Building a digitally empowered workforce: Australian Red Cross

Earlier this year, YourLink rolled out a transformative partnership with Australian Red Cross to deliver its Tech Smart Seniors program. This added digital inclusion and social support to enhance their existing Commonwealth Home Support service for over-65s in the NSW Hunter and Central Coast regions.

Red Cross relies on a small team of paid staff and an extensive network of volunteers to enact its home support service, taking seniors out for weekly shopping trips and outings, running daily phone check-ins to confirm they are safe and well, and scheduling hour-long phone chats for social contact. As Covid brought digital to the fore, the organisation sought to bring the wellbeing and practical benefits of the online world to the seniors in its care.

Reaching out to us to explore possibilities, we guided Red Cross to a successful grant application for Covid funding. The funding enabled us to build a solution from the ground up, from purchasing and setting up iPads and mobile data access, to training staff and volunteers to support setup and daily use for their clients. Within just a few months, its clients have gone from absolute zero in many cases to embracing the richness of the online world.



“We’re seeing great outcomes and feedback from our clients; little things like being able to download photos, get emails from relatives, or borrow books through the library app – those simple things we take for granted but that go a long way towards a more enriching life,” says Michael Ryan, Red Cross’ Regional Operations Manager, Central Coast/Hunter NSW.

“One man with significant health issues was recently able to see his sister in New Zealand for the first time in 15 years via the iPad, while a woman who manages her own super fund has even downloaded the stock exchange app. Clients are swapping emails and connecting that way, often meeting up physically then too. It’s opening up a whole new network and world for them.”

It's also been a boon for Red Cross's workforce, diversifying options for staff and volunteers to make a difference, gain satisfaction in their work and develop their skills and confidence – all crucial ingredients in attracting and retaining the paid and unpaid workforce Red Cross relies on to undertake its vital work.

"We've codesigned the program with YourLink to take our paid and volunteer staff on this journey with our clients. Our volunteers jumped at the chance to be involved and have been keen to develop their digital confidence and skills. Our emergency services volunteers can also see the advantages of upskilling to support their work in a crisis, such as digitally tracking people in a disaster situation."

"Our staff are happy too; it's providing them with variety in their roles and another pathway to connect meaningfully with the seniors in their care. Investing in digital empowerment gives us relevance in the home care market and helps us prove our value as a provider and employer in new ways."

With YourLink's support, Red Cross hopes to grow the program into other areas, both operationally and geographically.

"YourLink has been an ideal specialist partner in this journey. It's great to be on the front foot in this space, developing innovative partnerships that grow our impact in the community and take us in the direction the government wants providers to go into the future."



About YourLink

YourLink partners with care providers and organisations to design and deliver digital skills programs for seniors, carers and the care workforce.

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