

Change of tune puts Whistle in charge. Reshaping its communication strategy has brought remarkable success to a leading aged care provider in Queensland.



Good Shepherd Lodge is the largest aged care provider in the Mackay region. With two distinct locations, Good Shepherd Lodge and Kerrisdale Gardens they offer a lifestyle choice for the community they serve. There is a range of living and support options from aged care through to Independent Apartments and Villa Living.

By choosing the Whistle application to replace its previous communication system, Good Shepherd Lodge Ltd has equipped its staff with a device that is both versatile and economical.

As the largest aged care provider in the Mackay region of Queensland, the Good Shepherd organisation operates the Good Shepherd Lodge and Kerrisdale Gardens communities in Mackay. Between them, the two facilities provide a range of lifestyle options including independent living, residential care, community care and Allied Health services.

Staff at both locations now communicate by means of Whistle, a smart phone application that has the dual advantage of being both multi-functional and cost effective.

In this way, in the words of CEO Athena Ermides, who has worked in the aged care industry for more than three decades, Whistle offers “the best of both worlds” in regard to its communication requirements.

MORE COST EFFECTIVE

Whistle’s price and functionality, Athena said, were two vital factors in its selection as the new communications solution for Good Shepherd Lodge and Kerrisdale Gardens.

“Good Shepherd is a large provider with two separate sites in Mackay,” Athena said. “We currently have 137 residents at Good Shepherd Lodge with a capacity for 158, and 63 at Kerrisdale Gardens, as well as about 350 staff members.

“There’s a lot of space to cover, so we need a system that enables us to communicate quickly between all our areas, rather than running around from one place to another trying to find people.

“While our previous system was a good communication tool, it was incredibly expensive to run. Whistle is much more cost-effective.”

MULTIPLE FUNCTIONS

Another major advantage Athena sees in Whistle is the fact that it is a smart phone application.

“In these days, when most people have apps for various things, it’s appropriate to choose a device that will perform multiple functions,” she said. “As well as using the Whistle app on the phones, the staff can use the phone itself for other purposes, which was also a big consideration.

“For example, our clinical records management system has a mobile app so staff can have that on their Whistle devices. Whistle also integrates with our nurse call system, so it’s like a one-stop shop for communication, which is an important benefit.”

Another advantage was that no extra hardware was required to get the Whistle system up and running at the two Mackay facilities.

“We already had good Wi-Fi coverage which was important, as we were adding a lot of connectivity,” said Athena.



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“There are always things you haven’t anticipated when a new system is being implemented, but the Whistle team was very responsive to our requests and to any issues that arose at that time.”

Athena Ermides
CEO
Good Shepherd Lodge

“BEST OF THEM ALL”

Another strong supporter of the decision to change to Whistle is Annie Thompson, who has been the Executive Clinical Manager for Good Shepherd Lodge Ltd for the past 12 years.

With a background in acute care, Annie is well aware of the crucial importance of efficient and reliable communication tools for staff in the aged care industry.

“The system we were using prior to making the change to Whistle was cost prohibitive,” she said. “So we started to explore other options, and found that Whistle was the best of them all.”

In addition to being more cost-effective, Annie explained, Whistle had the benefit of being a mobile phone application, making it a timely innovation for use by Good Shepherd in view of the introduction of a mobile app for its risk management system.

“As a smart phone app, it therefore gave us three functions in the same place: staff communication, resident information and risk management, all on the same device, which we didn’t have with our previous system,” she said.

EASY TO USE

A standout feature of Whistle for Annie is its ease of use.

“It makes it easy to understand what you need to do,” she said. “Even staff members who mightn’t love technology are familiar with mobile phones, so the transition to Whistle was easy. Our previous system was more complex for staff to learn and use. For example, it involved voice recognition, whereas Whistle is an intuitive system for communicating. It’s not hard to determine what you need to do to get it to work, and it’s also helpful for people whose first language is not English because the symbols show them what to do.

“Another problem with the previous system was that its screen was almost microscopic, which could make it hard to read, whereas with the Whistle app being on a mobile phone, it’s the same as reading the screen of a normal device.”

NUMEROUS BENEFITS

Other benefits Whistle brings to staff as described by Annie include:

- Training: “It takes 10 minutes to train someone and they’re off and running.”
- Whistle Wallet: “The see-through window on the wallet is really good because, for example, staff can see without having to pull out whether someone has picked up a call.”
- Timesaving: “Previously there was no easy way to locate someone you needed, but Whistle has the big benefit of letting you find people quickly without having to wander around looking for them.

The benefits don’t stop there, with Annie also listing the “Do Not Disturb” function and reporting/accountability feature as just two more of the many advantages of the Whistle system.

And in regard to affordability, Athena said there was no question that Whistle was the winner. “For example, the badges for the previous system we used cost about \$700 - \$800, and those badges don’t last very long,” she said. “With a mobile phone device, there’s an upfront cost depending on the device that you buy, but they certainly last a lot longer. “Whistle is much better value for money, that’s for sure.”



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