

Intro

Welcome to season eight of Bridge the Gap, a podcast dedicated to informing, educating, and influencing the future of housing and services for seniors. The BTG network is powered by sponsors, Aline, NIC MAP, Procare HR, Sage, Hamilton CapTel, ServiceMaster, The Bridge Group Construction, and Solinty and produced by Solinity Marketing. Bridge the Gap in three, two.

0:55 – 1:10

Lucas McCurdy

Welcome to Bridge the Gap podcast, the senior Living podcast with Josh and Lucas, a beautiful day here in Austin, Texas. Fal NIC with a great friend. Many of our listeners probably already know Jessica. We're welcome. Jessica Wesley, head of Vayyar Care North America, welcome to the show.

1:10 – 1:11

Jessica Wesley

Thanks for having me. I'm excited to be here.

00:01:11:21 - 00:01:16:15

Lucas McCurdy

I know how many NIC conferences have you attended over the years?

1:11 – 1:16

Jessica Wesley

I can't even start. I can't even count.

1:16 – 1:18

Lucas McCurdy

I'm hitting you with the hard questions first.

1:18 – 1:20

Jessica Wesley

This is a great event, where we all come together, and we're reminded of our mission as well as all of our friends in the industry. So I come to every NIC event that I can.

1:30 – 1:46

Lucas McCurdy

Well, and you attend at a lot of conferences, you speak at conferences. Many people know your background and you are now, but that's not where you started. Where has your learning and your passion for older adults and senior housing generated from?

1:46 – 2:11

Jessica Wesley

Great question. So as many of us in the industry, it comes from a person. It was my grandmother. My grandmother's name is Edna. And ultimately, she raised me. So I always say

this is my give-back impact project for her. It's in her memory. So I look at all the seniors that we help and think about. I make a difference because she made such a difference in my life. So that's my why.

2:11 – 2:27

Lucas McCurdy

You know, that's why it's so impactful. Because some of the best leaders in this industry have a similar story, which drives their passion. And you've been you're obviously on the product, service side, the vendor side of the industry now, but that's not where you've always been, right?

2:27 – 3:20

Jessica Wesley

That's correct. I actually started out as an operator in senior living, years ago at Atria and Sales. Then ended up becoming the executive director of head, a very fast-growing career in senior living. And ultimately, I've been a regional vice president, senior vice president, and chief strategy officer. And I love that side of the business.

I left it. My mother had a brain injury, ended up dying suddenly while I was traveling, and I realized I can't be a road warrior, so I gave that up a little bit reluctantly and thought, okay, I still want to make an impact with these folks. These are our grandparents out there.

And one day it's going to be us. So what can I do? And I decided to come to the vendor side of this and embrace what all technology can do and how it can make a difference in the lives of seniors. So here I am today on the vendor side of it.

3:20 – 3:51

Josh Crisp

Such an exciting background helps us understand your why. And, you know, several months ago, I guess it was, we were talking to one of our longtime friends, Rob Chapin, who's been on our podcast several times. And, I had heard about what you guys were doing, but he gave us a little bit more of a tease, some of the insight.

And so we had to have you come on our show and talk about it and talk about the mission behind why you're doing what you're doing now, and kind of how you made that transition and the why behind that.

3:51 – 6:04

Jessica Wesley

Well, thank you. It's an honor to be on your show. Everyone in the industry loves it, by all means. And Rob has just been such an eye-opener for us. He was a customer or is a customer? Woodbridge senior living. So, we had great results with them. Have landed and expanded that account, which has been great.

So whenever he decided to join our board and be an advisor, it was more than just someone wanting to partner with a good solution. It was someone who had seen the results of a good solution, which is the key, right? So, I love whenever he and I have conversations because we're always, along with our CEO Ravi, who's actually here with me, at this event, he flew in from Israel last night.

But we ultimately are looking at all the different needs in the industry. And how can we take the technology? Because I have the honor and privilege of working with some phenomenally intelligent engineers who know the technology space inside and out. What they don't know is senior living. So, Robin, I kind of bring that to the team, along with a couple other advisors.

We just added Pat Malloy to our advisor, Dennis. Aaron to our advisor team. We're always looking for other folks in the industry that really want to be difference makers as well. And so ultimately, we have expanded on, everyone kind of seen us as a sensor manufacturer. Initially, we started out selling our solution to other folks to implement with our software, and I was running another company.

And the CEO of I is always saying that who you work with is as important as what you do. He and I really connected. His name is Ravi Malley, and we really connected and said, Hey, let's let's go direct to customers and make an impact in this industry. And so we have, and there are lots of great things that we're doing.

It's way beyond fall detection. We've integrated in, kind of a, our own language model, not even kind of we have our own language model that allows the caregivers and staff to ask questions to, the date for the data, the sensor data, as well as the HR data, any other data source, so that they have the data at their fingertips to be able to get in front of falls, to be able to get in front of changes with these residents. We're really trying to identify those anomalies. Sorry, I rambled on. I know not at all.

6:04 – 6:20

Josh Crisp

No, it's very important. You know, we've got a very broad listener group. Many of our listeners are actually here at Nic. So, you're obviously here. You have a ton of meetings. So what is your message? To the operators, to the capital providers, with your solution?

6:20 – 7:16

Jessica Wesley

Well, first and foremost, I think this has gone from a nice to have to I have to have the industries really expecting that the families are becoming much more educated. They know what's out there. I always say we sell peace of mind with what our sensor does in a dignified way. So we're not intruding on, you know, the dignity of the resident.

And so ultimately, it is it's time to embrace what can help you, what can add value in this industry, because the folks are expecting it. And partnering with someone like us, who is actually

the manufacturer of the device, the intelligence behind that device is always going to be with us. So you get that as part of the journey, with our relationship, and ultimately, you all know this. I've known you all for years. So ultimately it's partnering with people that you know and trust that are going to make when things go wrong, and they will get it right and they're going to, you know, service you very well because that's what it's about in this industry. We never burn a bridge

7:16 – 7:21

Josh Crisp

So take us from the high-level thought leadership behind by Vayyar. Did

7:21 – 7:22

Josh Crisp

I pronounce that correctly.

7:22 – 7:22

Jessica Wesley

Vayyar.

7:22 – 7:25

Josh Crisp

Vayyar sorry. Thank you for that. That high-level thought leadership that's driving sort of the development of what you all are doing down to the practical, when you're talking to the operator of like, this is this is how you're going to see the bottom line impact of this bridge, that gap for us.

Well, ultimately it's looking at what they need and how we take the technology and make it make an impact. Right. So, depending on who the operator is, you know, some people are looking for, enhancing care outcomes. I think all of us are, but it may not be the highest priority. Maybe you've got to build some census.

7:59 – 8:58

Jessica Wesley

So we're identifying what are what's the need is, what each individual operator wants to achieve. And then we're putting together the package and the solution around that to make to help make it successful. So for example, I have some operators that say, hey, we see this as a huge differentiator. We're early adopters in this market for all of the pieces of the puzzle.

They buy our offers. So ultimately, I will come on-site. My team and I, we're training their clinical team. I'm training their sales team on actually how, whenever you're doing a tour with a family, how to articulate what our solution does without overpromising because that's where we end up failing people when we overpromise. But yet letting it be a piece of mine, adding an extra layer of peace of mind for their loved ones, and differentiating your own community that way.

On the care side, it's the same, better outcomes. You know, these residents live longer. They have. They thrive instead of just surviving, which is the key. So ultimately, that's what we're trying to do. We want to leave the world a little better than we found it. Always.

8:58 – 9:30

Josh Crisp

So from a team member standpoint, the usability of the program, obviously, resident or resident turnover can be high, but also employee turnover can be high. And so, can you speak to a little bit about the protocol of being able to onboard quickly new caregiver teams, whether it's a merger and acquisition, you're putting this into a new property or whether it's just the natural attrition of that team member that's having to learn a new software and be able to use that effectively, really quickly. How does your team address that?

9:30 – 10:39

Jessica Wesley

Great question, because we do know the staffing challenges in the industry. Ultimately, our app is very user-friendly. It's almost intuitive so that you can't, you know, I always say dummy proof, so to say in other words, meaning there's, you know, anyone could pick it up and understand, and our caregivers need and want that type of solution so that it's not, you know, another, training session that they have to sit through an obstacle and many times they are intimidated, rightfully so, by technology.

I was one of those people, so they were intimidated by it. So we've just made it super simple. And then ultimately, when you look at our platform piece of this, you know, that's typically geared toward your directors of nursing, your directors of wellness, and your senior leadership team. And so we've made that very user-friendly; we have a clinical experience director who comes on site, trains more than anything.

It's building rapport, and getting that team, you know, to reach out if they need anything. But everything is, you know, self-explanatory. So that's why we've made sure we've built with purpose for it to be that way.

10:39 – 11:18

Josh Crisp

So it seems nowadays operators are under more pressure than they've ever been in, not only to drive quality outcomes, but to collect the data points, interpret the data points, and then make all of those points to the bottom line. So when you're speaking with the operators or the capital providers, the asset managers, how do you take this, this big picture of this, the solution that you have and point that towards where they're going to see that on the bottom line is that is that a difficult, conversation of getting the dotted line to connect to the bottom line, or is it pretty straightforward nowadays?

11:18 – 13:32

Jessica Wesley

Well, there are so many wonderful things that the center can do, along with all the technology pieces. So, you know, I am really I can give you an immediate ROI today, by looking at the amount of time that your care teams are spending with the residents and using that as a guide for you to know who are the residents that we need to do, new, you know, new assessments on letting that point you in the right direction out of the gate.

Everything from that, we say our sensors verify. So it's one thing to say you're delivering great care, but for the sensor to be able to verify. Yes. The caregiver was in the shower or in the bathroom with the resident, providing a shower. And here's the amount of time that they spent on it. So that extra layer of verification definitely adds up to, in a way, along with, you know, level of care revenue, the marketing differentiator piece.

We have an operator who has had we were in six of their locations, and five of those had census challenges. And so we implement the system. They implemented all the training. We call it grow. It generates revenue with occupancy and wellness. It's a growth program. I came up with our CEO, Ruby. And ultimately, they've been able to grow the census.

And said five of the six, one of the six already had licenses. So that wasn't necessarily their challenge, but five of the six of those communities through the census, over the 92% mark, and I don't want to say it was the only thing that was the reason why the only why behind that. However, I do know they all went through extensive training with us.

We did show them again to make sure that they were whatever they were talking about. The solution that they were mentioning was our system, and being able to be able to articulate it, providing them with a lot of great marketing pieces. So we're more than just like a vendor partner that says Here, here's a solution, run with it.

We want to share in the success. So many times, it's said we're setting up a KPI that says, Okay, here's what we're going to achieve. If we achieve that KPI, we want you to grow with us. If we don't, you know, no harm done. We'll walk away. No problem. We understand so. We're yet to to not make that KPI, by the way.

13:32 – 14:06

Josh Crisp

Oh, that's amazing, congratulations. Well, sort of a, a selfish question on my, point. That may be a little bit of a personal question because you've got the unique experience of, not only a long tenure in the industry, seeing a lot of things, seeing a lot of growth and changes through the years, from the operator side of the equation to now the partnership side of the equation.

What have you learned as you've transitioned to kind of see that full circle of how partners can provide services to the operator, which is how you sort of grew up in the industry. What's been the moment for you?

14:06 – 15:20

Jessica Wesley

So many times, when we would try as an operator, when we would try to implement something new. It was such a heavy strain and lift on our community and on our teams. And so I've worked with Eve and said, like, we're taking that off of the community. I never want that to be the objection that this is going to be such a heavy lift.

We don't have the bandwidth to do this. So our team, our in-house team, comes in, does all the installation. We've already trained them. Both of them have worked for many of them have worked in senior living. So they understand the environment that they're walking into. So we're doing our own installation, our own implementation, our clinical experience director and clinical teams, they've all worked in senior living, so they understand the industry.

I'm really passionate about this industry. So I come in, I've got a few other folks that help me come in and do all of the training so that the sales teams understand, as well. And then we're doing family nights where we're educating the family. We're educating the residents at resident council meetings.

So we're really just trying to help, be an extension of that community. The best way that we can help. We know the demands on the operators have been there. Right? So we just want to make things easier for them. We truly want to be a partner, not a vendor, in this industry.

15:20 – 15:36

Josh Crisp

Does it seem like you've been taking the solution into a lot of different communities? And I'm sure over the last several years, with the lack of new developments and a lot of legacy buildings, are these properties are these teams, are they ready for the solution, or is it been a steep learning curve for them?

15:36 – 16:33

Jessica Wesley

So it always starts at the top. So if you have the folks at the top asking questions, holding accountable, excitement at the top like, hey, we're launching something new, we do a launch party, kick off, kick off, call on party. We're we're actually delivering goods to the community the day that we have our first call with them to get them excited.

So it's really about that environment. We created the accountability and the excitement that the leadership team has. So the most successful partnerships come from everyone being aligned on what that mission is. And it's like, hey, we want to show them that we're here to help. Yeah. The caregivers, you know, the people who are taking care of all of our loved ones, for sure.

So that's been our approach, and it's been very well received. And I can I can only say I knew I didn't have the bandwidth before, you know, we did an air change, and I was like, oh, I don't even know that I could survive another one of these changes. So trying to take that experience and turn it into a positive for our solution.

16:33 – 16:49

Josh Crisp

Yeah. Well, what a great opportunity for you to take your success in the lessons you learned as an operator, working in the business, to a solution provider. Lucas, speaking of leadership and top brass, we're here at NIC about top brass. A lot of the top brass in the industry is here.

16:49 – 17:16

Lucas McCurdy

That's right. And we, we have a lot of, a big portion of our listeners are on the sales and marketing side of senior housing. And you have that background just kind of as a final send-off and maybe a little off topic, but you have this, you know, experience and skill set, any encouragement or tips for that person that is just getting into the industry or looking at senior housing as a potential career for sales and marketing? What would be your advice to them?

17:16 – 18:05

Jessica Wesley

Well, I think it's to follow your passion by all means. You know, remember that, we see ourselves beyond a technology company. We're a people company first, right? So just remember kind of your why and your purpose, and that you're helping people. I always say look at it like a winning lottery ticket. So my parents are I'm sorry, my mother, and my grandmother have been in senior living.

And what people didn't realize, I'm the only child who was a lottery ticket for me to get my life back and to have peace of mind that someone was going to take care of my loved one. It's not always going to be perfect, but day in, day out, they're going to take care of my loved one and put them first, so I could just encourage people to see it through those goggles, because that's what makes a difference. That's how we go from good to great and from, you know, extra, you know, get that getting that extra from ordinary to extra. And so

18:05 - 18:15

Lucas McCurdy

That's great. Jessica, thank you so much for spending time with us today. I know that you had a busy calendar, a busy schedule here in Austin. And thanks for your tips today. Preciate it.

18:15 - 18:31

Jessica Wesley

Wonderful. Thank you guys so much. I appreciate all that you do. You really bring a lot of industry knowledge and, you know, opportunity for folks to be heard in this industry. And especially guys that have, you know, a passion for what we're doing. So thank you guys, I appreciate it.

18:31 - 18:45

Lucas McCurdy

Thank you. You are so welcome. And to our listeners who feel the same and love this content, and want to see more, go to btgvoice.com, and you can connect with us there. Hit us up on LinkedIn. We'd love to hear your story, too. And thanks for listening to another great episode, Bridge the Gap.

Outro

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