

01:03 - 03:55

Lucas McCurdy

Bridge gap three two. Welcome to Bridge the Gap podcast, the senior Living podcast with Josh and Lucas. We have a great guest on today, one of our wonderful partners at Procare HR. We got Matt Strange, the CEO Procare. Welcome to the show.

Matt Strange

Hello. Great. Great to be here.

Oh, it's so good to see you. And you know, I talk about this often to our audience, to our listeners that are just wonderful followers of the Bridge the Gap platform is that Josh and I, we can't do this without people to come alongside the mission to say, hey, we support this. We want this educational content out in our industry. We want to make a difference. And Matt is one of those people over at Procare. So thank you for your support and helping us bring this content every single week.

Matt Strange

It's my pleasure.

Lucas McCurdy

Yeah. We're going to be talking about workforce, not a little topic. It's a big topic. And y'all are, you know, in the weeds on this. You know, as we sit here, you know, Q1 going Q2 of 2026, what are the changes? What kind of what's the state of the Union for workforce right now?

Matt Strange

I think we're seeing a big shift from, you know, it's it's post-Covid people that feels like forever ago. It wasn't that long ago. But the shift is really happening. Occupancy is ticking back up. I would say that the job hunting market is getting more compressed. We're just seeing kind of a changing of the tide. But with that we're also seeing increased demand, increased supply, kind of a lot of things moving at once. And the workforce piece is the one that I think has people scratching their heads that they're feeling like, what's our new norm, if you will, and what's next?

Lucas McCurdy

I know you've talked about some statistics around, I would guess, some sweet spots on helping drive workforce and culture. And, you know, what we're trying to do is keep people happy. We'll keep people engaged. Keep people happy. Can you talk about that?

Matt Strange

We found that there's this whole preconception that nobody wants to work full-time. That's a gig economy. People want to work whenever they want to work. And and we have found, at least in our industry, that there is certainly some of that. But what people need is predictability and reliability to be able to afford their bills, to afford groceries, all the things like that. And so we found that really the secret number we believe is 14 days.

That's what we find longer than that. People don't realize what engagements or commitments they have coming up shorter than that. They don't have that reliability that in two weeks I'm going to be able to make my car payment or whatever the bill might be. So we found when you schedule at that 14 day mark, there's something magic about it where people show up, the call off number goes down, and that turnover actually decreases as well because people know I've got a place here.

03:55 - 07:18

Josh Crisp

Wow. So you're talking about scheduling. Yes. And you're saying out of all the various schedules that senior housing does, you have found through your data serving all these communities and senior housing that the two week is the the ideal schedule mark?

Matt Strange

Absolutely. And we actually did a little research of our own. And we found 74% of our clients said they would be likely to look for work elsewhere if they didn't have a predictable schedule, because, you know, the bills come every single month.

And if you have the kind of job that's more gig based or I work when I want to, you don't have that predictable paycheck. And I think people have seen, especially over the last few years, that the price of everything has gone up. And so the need to be able to afford things is also gone up.

Josh Crisp

Well, that makes a million questions pop into my head around other data points, which you may not want to speak to or you may not have arrived at a conclusion yet. And that's absolutely fine. But it makes me think about stuff of, okay, is there pay periods? You know, because I know a lot of these workers are they're looking for predictability. Some of them may be working paycheck to paycheck. So even on pay periods is it better to do it on every other week? Is it better to do weekly? Is it better to do like is there anything you're learning around that?

Matt Strange

I think you have to do whatever is the norm in your market. So we have some areas like particularly in the northeast, it's a weekly pay. So every Friday people get paid. That's the norm. If you don't do that, you're going to be competing against people who do. Oh, we have a number of people that do daily pay as well. But generally speaking it's a biweekly thing for the most part. But it really does change based off the geography.

Josh Crisp

You know, Lucas, I think that's some big implications because senior housing is greatly growing. We've talked with many of our other guests. There's so many new operators emerging, and they're crossing geography into areas where they've not been before. So how important is it to really know the market and the geography and the nuance that you're in? It seems like that's mega important now with the labor market.

Matt Strange

One size doesn't fit all and you have to be willing to go where the market's. It's no different than supply and demand. When you go to ultra luxury versus middle market, you know you have to build something and build a workforce strategy that fits where you are.

And if you happen to be in a more urban area, you have to be more flexible, where if in a rural area where people are more consistent with, you know, once a month, twice a month, those kinds of things, it really does follow the market.

Josh Crisp

I'm curious, you know, we were talking about this before we hit record, and I shared with you, just for my own personal experience, 20 years ago when we got in the industry and really even up to ten, 15 years, the first 10 or 15 years in the business, when we're looking to acquire, we're looking to develop, you know, I'm hyper focused on occupancy and the demographic relating to residents, but now it's equal, if not more focus on what is the labor market look like in an area. And with the growing need for care and caregivers and frontline workers and really the people that make the the community work, it seems like there's this growing deficit of, I don't know, is it? Do you think it's available workers, or is it that there's plenty of workforce out there that we're just not pulling them into the industry?

07:18 - 11:45

Josh Crisp

Do you have any inclination on that?

Matt Strange

I think it's a little bit of both. There's still very much as a reputational challenge in anything, whether it be, you know, post-acute care, senior living. It's not as glamorous as a hospital or some other professions people can go to. But I think we tend to look to insular around who we're competing with.

And we forget the fact that a CNA, as an example, can go work in some cases at a grocery store or at an Amazon distribution center or other places. And we oftentimes think of those individuals as in the industry. But the reality of it is we're not competing with each other anymore. We're competing with a world marketplace, remote work, all kinds of things that that people are having choices in that they didn't used to have.

And I think really, the pandemic is what changed remote work for people because we realized how much is possible virtually. That just wasn't the case before.

Josh Crisp

It seems to me, though, when you talk about things like certainty is kind of how I interpret that on predictability. And hey, I need I need to know that the money is going to be there, that the schedule is going to be there, that I can predict two weeks out and that sort of thing. It seems

like with the growing demand of our industry and the great opportunity we have, that we have an opportunity to deliver that to people that want the work. It's going to be there. It's not going anywhere. So I mean, how much of this is us just getting better and communicating better about our value proposition?

Matt Strange

One of my favorite sayings is granite countertops don't take better care of your mom. And they don't, you know, keep her company at night. They don't welcome her in the morning. They're nice, but a lot of the esthetic things that we rely on really are for family members versus for residents. And I think as we get creative and start to figure out solutions, it really is about thinking outside the box and being innovative, and whether that be technology or looking at a more universal workforce model, really finding ways to do more with the same amount. And I think we oftentimes think the same amount as being less. It doesn't have to be less. It just needs to be different.

Josh Crisp

Well, I'm curious to know, to your opinion, like, you know, I've heard it said so many times is like, hey, you're competing with Chick-fil-A for that CNA can go. And for a quicker onboarding time, more flexibility in scheduling, you know, an easier job.

They can go make the same wage doing a lot of different things. I mean, is it just wage, do you think of wage is a big part of it. Do we need to do better on our wages? What's your opinion on that?

Matt Strange

I think that wages are the price you pay for, you know, entry but also wage at premium wage is something that you pay for lack of reputation or hazard pay, whatever the things might be.

But the people who perform the best typically aren't the top of the market. They're in the top quadrant, but the people who pay the most typically have to. And that may be that they're in an undesirable market or they don't have a great reputation. They're paying for something. And I think when you do a great job and you see people and you recognize their language of appreciation, you start to see that it's not all about money.

It has to be about money, because we all have bills. But at some point, the connection that you get with residents, with each other, with the families, and getting to care for others is really there's a value to that that you're not going to get at a drive through.

Josh Crisp

You guys have sort of at Procare. You got sort of this built in cheat sheet because you get to work with people every day. You get to work with a lot of different operators, ownership groups. So you get to see what's working, what's not working, you're making recommendations. So if you could sort of just make this a little easier for us and give us the cheat sheet version. What are you seeing working out there across your portfolio of clients in the industry?

Matt Strange

I think the people who are performing the best are focusing on employee engagement and experience. First, engaged employees really will take great care of residents, and I think we tend to think about that in reverse is if we build these communities that are great and we fill them up with people that magically, if we build it, they will come from a workforce perspective.

But the people doing the best have a strong culture. They have a culture of appreciation. They recognize that appreciation looks different in every community, and they meet people where they're at, and you can feel it when you walk in. I've been in some form of the business for almost 25 years, and when you walk into a community, you can immediately get a sense if it's a good place and that goes.

11:45 - 15:12

Matt Strange

Everyone can feel that that's not unique to, you know, me or anyone else. When you walk in, there's a vibe and the people with the best vibe have the least amount of challenges. From a workforce perspective.

Josh Crisp

Let's break that down a little bit because I want to have a good vibe, right? So what do you think are the to bake the vibe cake? I mean, like, what does it take to get there if you're if you're talking to that administrator, that regional team that's taking on a lot of acquisitions right now and they're like, gosh, we got to get this right. You talking to them as a leader, what are you going to tell them? They've got to make sure one, two three get these things right. And if you get nothing else right, this is what you got to get right.

Matt Strange

My grandmother always said you have two ears and one mouth for a reason. So I think the biggest thing that that I would advise leaders to do is listen, ask the question and be willing to hear what people say, and then not just write it down and move on.

Do something about it. When people see that your feedback matters, and I genuinely care what you have to say, and I'm willing to, you know, put my money where my mouth is, you know, literally or figuratively. They're willing to open up more and they'll tell you they know. They know what needs to happen to make the community better. But oftentimes nobody asks them.

Josh Crisp

And it seems like, you know, oftentimes, as much as we try, especially in rapid growing organizations, there could be a widening gap between the decision makers that are acquiring or developing the communities. Let's call it the ownership and the C-suite, maybe even the regionals. And then the people that are actually doing the work in the communities, those frontline caregivers, the administration team, frontline managers. Have you seen any strategies

that work to keep the continuity of like, value proposition from the top down and then back up the ladder?

Matt Strange

I think that the people who do it best think about the org chart inverted. So if you think of your caregivers as the top of the org chart, they're far more important than the CEO. They're the people that make or break your community. And I think, you know, you're only as good as your least engaged employee. And if you lead with that, it really drives a culture where that's what's first, that's what's front, and you have to show up. I think as leaders, you have to be in your community as the people who do it best.

They're on the road. They know. They know their leaders. They see them. They lead from beside them. They're not sitting behind the desk. They're really out there making a difference. They know the families. They show up and you can feel.

Josh Crisp

It seems like there has to be a lot of intentionality behind that, though, because that while it sounds awesome, I think that's sort of upside down. Like you said, from what everything we're taught, probably in business school and so forth, organizations that you see doing that well probably impact change. So looking at, you know, here we're here at NIC Spring Conference, everyone's excited as probably our listeners can hear behind us right now. Energy like I've not seen in my 20 years excitement. And it's really candidly very fun to see.

But, you know, with the the emerging deficits that we're hearing, a they're things that you're equally excited about as you're also concerned that we have to make sure we don't miss the mark on.

Matt Strange

There's a little bit of both. I think we have a really exciting opportunity to do better and do better. Can look like a bunch of different things.

15:12 -

Unknown

It could be build more engaging and state of the art communities, but could also be doing the things we've always done even better as well. And I think that there's a temptation to lean on technology to to leverage that. Everything's about we were talking about AI, everything's AI, this, AI that, and that's important. But we can't forget that these are humans and humans caring for humans, that there will be a time in which, you know, technology can help enable that.

But there's something about heart and connection and compassion that can only come from one, you know, one eyeball to another.

Josh Crisp

Well, that's that's good, because I know that is a huge topic of discussion here. So being selfish for a moment, I know you're not you're so humble. You're not. Talk about the great expertise you have and how you help the industry and things like that.

But what are you seeing that your team has some of the greatest ability to add value to this growing sector that we call senior housing?

Matt Strange

One of our signature offerings is our labor strategy offering. And what that does is it takes a schedule, something very simple. I learn to do it on grid paper with the pencil where you write the names and you check the box and you do that, but it takes that and enables technology to drive it.

But more importantly, we have people operators who are helping communities make decisions to drive that workforce in a way that's meaningful. They're looking at things like attendance. They're looking at things like making sure that we're getting that schedule published that 14 days in advance. They're looking at potential turnover risk. They're really looking at how do we make sure we have the right people in the right place for the right amount of time to take great care of residents?

And one of the pieces that makes that so valuable is when you're talking to a peer, they're not your boss. And so our labor coaches are able to have a conversation on a level playing field. And if you're an administrator and executive director, you're more willing to say, I don't know how to do this or I'm confused or I don't understand what this means.

You wouldn't feel comfortable saying that to your boss in most cases, but you'll say that to appear or someone that can help you. And so that is really, I would say, a game changer for us. And it also allows us to see, I say we move from being firefighters to fire preventers. So I told the team, you know, we put the we put the hose down, we put on our Smokey the Bear hat instead.

And we can go out and and see where problems are before they get there. And that could be everything from identifying potential risk for turnover that could be preventing workplace injuries. Things like that are really changing people's lives. But it's really about getting the data so you can action it in front of people in a timely way.

Josh Crisp

I love that, I love that. So my last question I'm right. Rapid firing here. You're doing amazing. So there's so much talk about labor. And right now there's so much tech coming into our space. It will make an administrator, a regional team, anybody that's making decisions or vetting this go cross-eyed because it all looks it all sounds great and you want it all. You really do.

Because we want to be better and we want to give our teams all the systems, support and tools that we can, but we don't have unlimited resources. And sometimes, you know what's really

cool? It may not also move the needle. What kind of tech is out there right now that you say from since we're talking about labor, specifically art, they're just essentials that maybe even being agnostic, that it doesn't matter which platform.

But if you're going to do tech related to labor, that you really need to focus on this first, because this is what's going to move the needle most for you.

Matt Strange

I would say. I mean, your largest expense is labor. So the most important thing is to make sure when you're looking at technology that you're enabling technology that works together.

So as schedule is a great example of something where everyone has to have it, you require it. But if you don't have a system where, like our scheduling platform allows, it sinks with the time clock. So you can actually see in the schedule what time that team member got to work, what time they left, and something that simple can be a game changer because if I see that a team member arrived late, I can go check if they're okay.

I can also, if they arrive early, say, hey, can you leave a little early today so we don't go into overtime? And those are the kind of things that you have the ability to action real time. But the key thing is, you know, technologies only as good as you use it. And there's still a reason people use pen and paper and it's not ideal.

It doesn't have the insights and other things, but it's what you do with it that matters and the ability to really pull the information out and action. It is what makes it come to life. That's why we like to say it Procure. We're tech enabled service because the service piece is what makes us different than just a vendor.

Josh Crisp

Lucas, you know, such a huge topic. We could sit here and talk for days about labor. It's great to have Procure as a partner to bring great information. And honestly, our listeners can just connect directly to them and pick their brain about all sorts of topics.

Lucas McCurdy

Absolutely. We've got a whole partner page on our website where they can connect with Procure. And Matt and his team. Matt, thank you so much for your time today and your support.

Matt Strange

Thanks for having me.

Lucas McCurdy

And so for our listeners, just scroll down in those show notes, hit those links and go and visit Procure HR and go to download this content and so much more. Connect with us on LinkedIn.

We'd love to hear your thoughts as well. And thanks for listening to another great episode of Bridge the Gap.