RLDatix Case Study

SwanCare upgrade to Optima for improved workforce efficiency and swift deployment

SwanCare is one of the most established not-for-profit retirement living and aged care services provider in Western Australia. Located in Perth, WA, SwanCare is home to more than 1,000 residents across four facilities in its 15 hectare site, with nearly 480 staff members providing dedicated care to the residents.

In 2019, SwanCare was awarded Silver in the HRD Employer of Choice Awards, and was recognised as a top performer in the categories of Access to Technology, Training and Professional Development, and Health and Wellbeing. Recently while combating COVID-19, they have upgraded their existing workforce management solution to Optima and successfully rolled that out to all of their facilities.

Fiona Millar, General Manager of People and culture shares how the upgrade from RosterOn to Optima has increased their agility to handle crisis and leverage technology to support resident care.

Caring and inclusive culture laid foundation for change

Attracting and retaining employees, managing staff burn out and combating the general under-developed workforce technological readiness are among the many challenges aged care providers face. How does SwanCare go against the odds and become a top performer on all these categories and ultimately the Employer of Choice?

"I think that comes down to our culture," said Fiona Millar, General Manager of People and Culture. "Our leadership team really recognise the work every employee does. There is a consensus that we are all here to do the same job, which is to care for the residents, we are all just doing that in different ways. We believe that we are working at the residents' home, rather than the residents living in our workplace."

47% of staff have been with SwanCare for over 5 years; the longest serving staff member has just reached 40 years of service this year. When asked about retention, Fiona said a caring culture is the key.

"We respect individuality - residents and staff alike. There's constant communication to ensure everyone feels empowered in their role, and that every role is important. We make sure everyone knows that it is ok for them to say something, to voice an opinion or ask questions. We always consult before making changes, and always encourage staff to share any feedback, concerns or ideas. Our team is very close, our CEO has an open door policy as do the other managers at SwanCare; the emails and phone numbers of the executive team are accessible to all staff and they are encouraged to reach out directly to any of us. It is not uncommon for me to receive a phone call from a staff member saying that here's a problem and I need help."

Education and accessibility are keys to technology roll out in Aged Care

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"In SwanCare we say IT is a life skill, not just for work. We educate our staff about the importance of technology to their daily life, so there is less resistance in learning about new technology."

Fiona Millar
General Manager of People and Culture, SwanCare

"We also have a robust training system to train all staff on the technology we use. When a new employee comes onboard, they will get at least 1 to 1.5 hour of IT onboarding where a member of the People and Culture team will sit down with them and make sure they have access to all the systems they need and can navigate within each system. That way we eliminate any accessibility issues. They will also receive a manual with details on how to login to different system onsite or remotely, as well as all the how-to screenshots of tasks they need to perform in different system. We encourage people to ask questions, our culture is if you have a question then it is a valid question; there's no dump question in our organisation. We even offer one-to-one sessions to run through step by step how staff can access their roster via their mobile phone for example, just to ensure everyone has access to everything they need and know how to use them.

Communicating the why behind technology

"We make sure everyone understands that systems are there for a reason and are as important as their job. If they do not do it properly in the system, it is going to ultimately affect delivery of care." When it comes to rolling out new technology to existing staff, communication is even more vital to ensure everyone feels comfortable about changes to the process.

When considering upgrading their workforce management system to Optima, Fiona said she brought everyone along the journey with her, "We've been very open with the conversation and consulted everyone since the beginning. From the executive teams to the frontline staff, we ensured everyone understood the reason for the change; and was included in the process including initial demonstrations of Optima."

Yet the work does not stop even when you have everyone onboard with the change. "Now that we rolled out Optima, we ensure we have regular catch up with our staff to understand what are their pain points when operating the new system. We ask what works for them and what does not work; and we follow up with RLDatix on things that are not working for them."

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"Most of the time we can get the system to adapt to what we need, if not, we make sure they understand the ultimate benefit of the change – it is a system with a lot more functionalities, to get those extra functions we have to change the way we do things a little bit."

Fiona Millar
General Manager of People and Culture, SwanCare

And the changes have paid off. Within months of rolling out Optima, the team at SwanCare has already seen some positive impact on their processes which enable more effective use of workforce and swift deployment.

Reduced hours of additional admin work relating to the new Aged Care Quality Standards Reporting

With aged care workers reported increase in workload and stress level due to the new Aged Care Quality Standard, SwanCare is able to help its staff combat that with Optima. The extensive reporting functionality of Optima has helped SwanCare saved hours of admin work when handling some of the specific quality indicators required by the new Quality Standard. "Instead of counting the number of hours care staff has worked, all we need do is to download the report and create a pivot table."

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"The demand template in Optima allow us to set the number of beds, which makes it easy for us to report on data of direct care hours per residents. We can also separate clinical and non-clinical staff hours to meet the reporting requirement of the new Quality Standard."

Fiona Millar
General Manager of People and Culture, SwanCare

Live rostering system accessible via mobile drive better staff experience

The implementation of the live rostering system has been extremely well received. "Pairing Optima with Employee Online, staff are able to check the roster and see live changes on their mobile phone wherever they are. We can then utilise reports in Optima for allocation sheets to capture any last minute absences or changes of the rosters. This has enabled us to stop printing out paper rosters in all units for staff to mark their changes, which has led to up to $120 potential savings per day in time, paper and ink." But the benefits are far more than just saving on printed roster. With the changeover to Optima, SwanCare has reduced their individual rostering areas from 44 to 20, together with the live rostering system they are able to make better use of their existing staff.

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"No change is easy. As much as you want to, you simply cannot factor in every single possible set back or obstacle. The most important thing for us though is the accessibility of the RLDatix team. They always get back to us on any questions or concerns. They always listen to us on how the system works or doesn't work for us, and adapt it to our needs wherever possible. Knowing that there's a team there to listen to us and support us through the process is what matters the most when managing the change to Optima."

Fiona Millar
General Manager of People and Culture, SwanCare

"Our agency costs are at 0.26% of wages and that includes staffing a new facility which is at 80% fill to this date. Our most recent employee survey showed an average satisfaction rate of 94%, and that's during a year where both the COVID-19 pandemic and the Royal Commission into Aged Care was happening."

Increased agility to handle crisis

The advantage of being more agile is extended to their ability to respond to crisis, "Utilising the skill profiling function in Optima we now have a COVID-19 response emergency team in our rostering system, and can notify the team in less than 2 minutes if there's an outbreak onsite. This means we can now be much more responsive to any crisis, not just COVID-19."

While the aged care sector is facing some very challenging times, the success of SwanCare demonstrated that putting resident care first and fostering a caring culture among staff can set a strong foundation. Coupling that with the right technology and right partner, there's every possibility for aged care providers to leverage technology to streamline processes, improve workforce efficiency and deployment, and ultimately the quality of care, which are essential while navigating through all the uncertainties and changes.

"More permanent employees can pick up shifts where they would like because they have access to the live roster anytime anywhere. Staff are being shared across different department and facilities means that we can keep a consistent skills and knowledge mix to ensure that staff are being supported and new staff are mentored."

Fiona Millar
General Manager of People and Culture, SwanCare