

“A Model of Three Es”:

Why Careers in Senior Living Are the Perfect Match for Gen Z

Anna Ritzema

August 8, 2025

Introduction

The population of the United States is aging steadily. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that by the year 2034, older adults will outnumber children for the first time in America's history.¹ About 11,400 Americans will turn 65 years old every day of 2025.² As a result of this influx, the need for proper support and resources for aging adults grows increasingly urgent, and Senior Living is a field of work that is requiring more and more workers.

Yet while older adults retire and look to Senior Living facilities for support, members of Gen Z are stepping up and into the workforce, comprising an increasingly large percentage of the working population. As Gen Z enters the job market, they bring their own agendas and goals to the table in their search for the perfect fit.

At the beginning of this internship, I and the other R.O.A.D. interns were asked to dive deeper into why Gen Z would want to build a career in Senior Living, using our experience and observations from our time with each of the teams we were able to shadow. To answer this question, I have created a model that encapsulates what Gen Z seeks in a career. This "Model of Three Es" is comprised of three tenets: engagement, embedment, and enrichment. Through this lens, it becomes clear that Senior Living remains a career option that is not merely viable, but desirable for this new generation.

Engagement

In an increasingly fast-paced and demanding world, young people seek work that engages them—that is, work that properly utilizes their skills and passions in a productive way. They want

¹ Jonathan Vespa, "The Graying of America: More Older Adults than Kids by 2035," Census.gov, September 8, 2024, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2018/03/graying-america.html>.

² Laura Richards, "The Year 2025: Record Numbers Are Turning 65...What It Means for You," Bankers Life Blog, February 26, 2025, <https://www.bankerslife.com/insights/life-events/the-year-2025-record-numbers-are-turning-65what-it-means-for-you/>.

work that they can be fully invested in, tailored to the unique experience and talents they have to offer.

Senior Living is one of those fields of work that is truly suited for anyone in the sense that it is incredibly broad and inclusive in the skill sets it can employ. One's initial conception of Senior Living may focus entirely on the caregiving aspect of it; one may falsely assume that only those who possess those specific skills accompanying a CNA certification, for example, may truly make a difference among this population. My time at Eastmont and Carriage Glen has proven to me that this notion is entirely incorrect. In reality, Senior Living utilizes skills of all kinds in the many, many roles involved in caring for the residents well.

The rotational aspect of the R.O.A.D. internship was key in allowing me to gain a better understanding of the vast diversity of talents and experience required to ensure that all parts of this operation function. Over the course of the eight weeks of my internship, I shadowed a total of seven areas of Eastmont's facility—Sales & Marketing, Wellness & Engagement, Nursing, Dining Services, Housekeeping, Business, and Maintenance—in addition to being with the team at the Carriage Glen location for several days. I thus found myself following staff members doing every kind of work under the sun: leading tours for potential residents, planning events, coordinating healthcare, serving residents meals, cleaning apartments, sending billing statements, and fixing drains. Though differing greatly in their specializations, all these teams unite under a common goal: caring for the residents.

The diversity in the type of work that I observed helped to enlighten me to the ways in which skills of any kind can be utilized to serve a purpose in the field of Senior Living; the many different teams that work together to care for residents are all necessary pieces to the puzzle, and losing any one of them would impede the functioning of the entire operation. Those with any and every skill set can thus rest assured in the fact that there is a place for them within the field of Senior

Living and that they would undoubtedly make a difference in their workplace. Gen Z would therefore find Senior Living a highly engaging field to work in.

Embedment

Yet not only does Gen Z look for work that is engaging, but they also seek careers that offer practical benefits, such as security and longevity. Senior Living, being one of those fields, allows one to truly embed themselves in their workplace.

As mentioned previously, an increasing number of older adults are retiring and requiring higher levels of care. The demand for Senior Living services, therefore, will only increase in future years. Those entering the workforce at this stage can be confident that a career in Senior Living would provide long-term job stability, as this is work that will not be phased out.

This work is also accompanied by generous benefits. Eastmont, for one, offers comprehensive insurance, retirement plans, paid time off, and opportunities for advancement. Working in Senior Living is not financially fruitless; rather, it effectively sets one up for success for years to come.

Financial and job security are reasonable concerns, and yet Senior Living provides that stability that would sustain a young person from the beginning of their career all the way to the end and would allow them to fully invest in their work.

Enrichment

Gen Z is a generation that wants to be fulfilled by the work they do; their work must have some sort of inherent value or purpose. The field of Senior Living, fortunately, is one that is rich with meaning.

Working in Senior Living is by nature very people-centric, and it is no wonder to me that every single staff member that I have shadowed has expressed that their favorite aspect of their job is interacting with the residents. I myself have had the opportunity to experience this. Throughout my time working with the different departments—serving mimosas at events, helping host a birthday party, sitting at the front desk, listening in on care plan meetings, pouring coffee at lunchtime—I have had the chance to connect with the residents a bit and begin to get to know them. The residents have lived long, full lives, and I have found it very rewarding to be able to simply sit and listen to their stories. I had one memorable conversation with a resident up on the Skilled Nursing floor who told me about her experience living through the World War II era, as she was still just a teenager when Pearl Harbor was bombed. It was incredible to me to hear personal accounts surrounding events that I have read about in history textbooks. I had another conversation with a resident who was in the process of transitioning to the Memory Care unit. This particular resident had earned a reputation for being a bit of a troublemaker, and I admittedly did not know what to expect when I stepped into her room fifteen minutes before the end of my shift at the request of my supervisor, but I ended up talking with her about her life and her experience as a nurse for over forty-five minutes as she showed me pictures from a photo album. Special moments like these form a large part of what truly made my experience worthwhile.

This work also, obviously, makes a massive difference in the lives of the residents themselves. The residents are in a stage of life where they may require a good deal of extra support, and so providing that support while also preserving dignity is of the utmost importance. All of the work that I have observed—from cleaning apartments with Housekeeping, to serving meals with Dining Services, to scheduling appointments with Nursing, to throwing parties with Wellness & Engagement—serves the purpose of bettering and enriching the lives of the residents as they live out their last years in this facility. The impact of this work goes far beyond the work itself.

The relational nature of Senior Living provides a platform from which younger people can make meaningful connections with those of an older generation. This intergenerational mingling and relationship-building creates a culture of mutual learning and respect and benefit. This is what makes this work fulfilling—the special bonds formed through the act of caring for another, which makes one’s “clients” feel like family and their workplace feel like home. As one of the housekeepers put it, “I get to work with my hundreds of parents and grandparents here.” This is the kind of value and meaning that Gen Z seeks in a career.

Conclusion

The kind of work one finds in the field of Senior Living effectively fulfills all of the values that Gen Z looks for in a career; this work engages, embeds, and enriches those who do it.

Yet this begs the question: if Senior Living is such a perfect match for Gen Z, then why are there so comparatively few Gen Z workers in this field? Why are young people not flocking to Senior Living facilities to seek employment, and why is this work not even a consideration for many?

The answer to this question lies primarily in the subject of ignorance. Many young people are simply unaware of what working in Senior Living looks like, having had very little exposure to these communities. Others may have preconceived notions as to the nature of Senior Living facilities and disqualify themselves on this basis.

The solution to this dilemma, then, seems to be to raise awareness. To bring in young people, Senior Living facilities must reach out to them more effectively, whether by social media, experience-based opportunities (such as the R.O.A.D. internship), word of mouth, or some other form of communication and exposure. I can personally attest to the fact that, having begun this internship with no experience with communities such as Eastmont and Carriage Glen, I gained a new respect for this work and an understanding of just how important and meaningful it is. Raising

awareness, then, opens the door through which Gen Z can enter the field of Senior Living. And, in turn, Gen Z will find work that is truly made for them.

Bibliography

Richards, Laura. "The Year 2025: Record Numbers Are Turning 65...What It Means for You."

Bankers Life Blog, February 26, 2025. <https://www.bankerslife.com/insights/life-events/the-year-2025-record-numbers-are-turning-65what-it-means-for-you/>.

Vespa, Jonathan. "The Graying of America: More Older Adults than Kids by 2035." Census.gov,

September 8, 2024. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2018/03/graying-america.html>.