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ASSISTED LIVING: INTERNAL COMMUNICATION TO  
ALIGN IDENTITY AND IMAGE

By  
Katherine Pittman Govito

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree  
of  
The Graduate School  
at  
Rowan University  
2003

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_  
Professor

Date Approved 10/18/03

## ABSTRACT

Katherine Pittman Govito  
Assisted Living: Internal Communication to Align Identity and Image  
2003  
Dr. Suzanne FitzGerald  
Public Relations

Accomplishment of the mission of any organization relies on relationships developed. Key to these relationships is an internal communication program. As a function of public relations, the value of an internal communication program must be recognized as a requirement and implemented to achieve objectives set forth in an organization's mission statement.

This case study established the core elements of the mission statement of Meadow Glen, an assisted-living facility. The researcher evaluated its internal communication program by conducting surveys of Meadow Glen's three central internal relationships to measure alignment of its identity with its image. The three groups surveyed were: employees, the first line of communication; the residents; and the families of the residents.

This study demonstrates the reliance of organizations on employees as first-line communicators. Therefore, an effective internal communication program cannot be an option.

## MINI-ABSTRACT

Katherine Pittman Govito  
Assisted Living: Internal Communication to Align Identity and Image  
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Dr. Suzanne FitzGerald  
Public Relations

As a function of public relations, an effective internal communication program is essential to the success of an organization. Alignment of an organization's identity with its image requires successful communication of its mission to employees, first-line communicators.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.  
- R. Frost

To the memory of my son, David (Rusty) Gregory Govito, who is remembered for taking "the road less traveled." It is for you, Rusty, that I saw this to the end.

To my family, thank you for believing in me, especially my husband and friend, Raymond, who made this journey possible.

To my professors in the Public Relations Graduate Program, please accept my deepest gratitude for guiding me down "the road less traveled" and providing the expertise needed to climb an unforeseen mountain and reach the top.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Significant changes in demographics, technology and societal trends in the United States directly impact the growing long-term care sector of corporate America. It is the position of this researcher that internal communication programs are an essential component in the development of long-term care facilities. These organizations must recognize and implement communication programs in terms of public relations strategies and techniques to address current trends.

Simply put, people patronize companies they know, like and trust (Harris, 1998). Public relations serves as the only function that can uniquely build consumer trust. Davis Young, public relations counselor stated:

Public relations relates to enhancing perceptions of trust. That's our business – getting people to have trust in products, services, other people, companies, institutions, governments and so on. Nobody really makes important decisions in this life without having some measure of trust. If ours is a business that influences decision making, then enhancing trust gets to the real core of public relations....The only real objective of a communications program is to enhance trust – trust in a product, trust in a service, trust in the integrity of a company, trust in its quality and its service....The winners will earn trust. The losers will be perceived as unworthy of trust (Harris, 1998).

Trust stems from the identity and image of an organization. All companies have an identity and project an image of some sort, whether they are aware of it or not.

Management has the responsibility of building the company's identity and then

projecting that image to its customers (Garbett, 1988). Employees serving as front-line communicators play an essential role in an industry's image-building process, particularly in a service industry like long-term care. Consider the communication effect exponentially each time an employee is added.

<u>Number of Employees</u>	<u>Possible Interactions</u>
2	4
3	27
4	256
5	3,125
6	46,656

Strategic designer, Mark Rowden (2002), states that the overall strategy of an organization is directly connected to its identity. Therefore, every marketing or communication element must be purposeful and effectively spring from that central point. Unquestionably, success for a long-term care facility depends on its ability to establish a positive brand identity. Furthermore, brand reputation must be secured by customer satisfaction, and supported by employee satisfaction and loyalty.

A company's brand identity has significant internal value. A strong corporate brand generates and sustains internal momentum. Employees have proven to be more committed to the brand's promise if it is understood and followed by every key player. To be effective, the brand must be understood by all audiences-consumers, prospects, business partners, the media and employees. All corporate communications should work together to make the brand more familiar and favorable (Mangini, 2002).

Expression of an organization's true identity is ideally represented in its mission statement. Mission statements emphasize the corporation's focus on issues such as quality, growth, employee relations, profits and customers. It outlines a company's priorities (Garbett, 1988).

Grahame Dowling (2001), a leading market researcher, emphasizes communicating the company philosophy, the business description, the mission statement and standards of conduct which constitute the profile of a company and its values. Management expects employees to uphold the mission statement, but to effectively accomplish this goal requires strong internal communication within the organization. Business leaders must think of their employees as a first-line media resource. They uniquely represent the company with the highest credibility in face-to-face contacts on a daily basis, Dowling stresses. Therefore, employees should be thought of as an effective communication resource.

Historically, senior care has been provided at home or in nursing homes where skilled services were available. The past twenty years witnessed the growth of new long-term care options, ranging from continuing care residential communities, assisted-living facilities to adult foster care programs. Many choices now make long-term care far more responsive to the growing needs of seniors.

“By 2030, 20 percent of the U.S. population, or 70 million people, will be over 65 and the need for institutions and businesses that help individuals redefine this life stage and utilize their untapped talents will become substantially more pressing,” (Gardyn, 2000). According to the University of North Carolina Institute on Aging, the elderly population will more than double between now and the year 2050. Currently those aged 85 and over are the most rapidly growing section of the population. However, much of this growth will be attributed to the baby boomer generation. By the year 2050, Americans 85 and older will increase from one percent to five percent.

In 1900, the U.S. Census Report documented 49.2 years as the national average for life expectancy. Technological advances have resulted in substantial increases in life expectancies. A century later, the 2000 U.S. Census Report reflected an increase in the life expectancy of 27.7, with the national average at 76.9 years.

What was traditionally defined as the nuclear family has experienced dramatic changes. Personal care from a family member may no longer be an option with increasing dual-income families and a far more mobile society.

In her article, "Home Away from Home," Ellen Zions (2002) discusses the emergence of a new industry.

Assisted-living and continuous care facilities now dot the landscape of affluent communities all over the country. They provide a combination of housing, personal care services and health care designed for individuals who need assistance with normal daily activities in a way that promotes maximum independence.

Assisted-living has many advantages. Most assisted-living communities are new and have amenities much like that of a luxury hotel. Residents have their own rooms or mini apartments or suites, most with kitchenettes. Most communities offer three meals a day, an active social calendar, with trips to local restaurants and casinos, rides to doctors' appointments and more. Cleaning services, laundry and whirlpool bathing are provided at an inclusive or a la carte rate. Assisted-living is not cheap. The range is from about \$2,800 to \$3,500 per month, or more, depending on the level of needed care. Full nursing home care is even more expensive, about \$65,000 per year for basic services.

### **Problem Statement**

Consumers expect and deserve good service. Moreover, they demand better of their healthcare providers. One of the sectors of long-term care maturing and flourishing in the new millennium is the assisted-living industry. "However competition abounds,

and the time has come for the industry to focus less on expansion and more on operational issues,” (Jones, 2001). Key to addressing these issues is a stellar employee communication program. Assisted-living employees must be viewed as front-line communicators for whom an effective internal communication program is not considered an option.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

This study was limited to Meadow Glen, an assisted-living facility in Leesburg, Virginia. It analyzed all aspects of internal communication at Meadow Glen with the assumption that it will serve as a benchmark and case study for other assisted-living facilities with respect to their internal communication program’s direct impact on corporate identity and image.

This study will not research any financial limitations associated with the cost of assisted-living care. It is assumed that the audiences under consideration have the means to consider long-term care.

### **Purpose**

This study offers an evaluation of an assisted-living facility’s alignment of its identity and image with respect to its internal communications program. This researcher will focus on the identity of Meadow Glen, an assisted-living facility in Leesburg, Virginia, based on the objectives expressed in its mission statement.

## Mission Statement of Meadow Glen

Meadow Glen of Leesburg, is an adult care residence whose mission is to provide excellent and secure, twenty-four hour assisted-living care for ambulatory and non-ambulatory elderly in Leesburg and the surrounding community.

Meadow Glen is built on a strong foundation of experience providing service and care to older persons within an assisted-living environment. Meadow Glen enables residents to either remain in a setting near where they have established connections or to move to a home-like residence near their adult children.

This analysis will benefit Meadow Glen, a relatively new facility or other long-term care facilities; in optimizing the impact of employees as the first line of communication to achieve identity and image alignment.

The findings of this study will be provided to the management of Meadow Glen together with recommendations of additional public relations strategies and techniques to assist in further attainment of its mission statement.

## **Hypotheses**

This study will test the following hypotheses.

### **Hypothesis I:**

**It is expected that employees do not consistently reflect the true identity and image of the facility.**

Internal communication plays a critical role in communicating a company's value. Organizations send messages in many ways. Their behaviors and the behaviors of the personnel will always be critical in dealing with stakeholders (Brody, 2002).

## **Hypothesis II:**

**It is expected that more expansive use of public relations strategies and techniques could produce better alignment between the identity and image of the facility.**

“People will form opinions of what organizations do whether or not those organizations try to interpret their own activities. Interpreting activity is a chief job of public relations,” (Fulginiti, 1988).

## **Methodology**

Following an extensive review of secondary data, the researcher initiated this study with an examination of Meadow Glen’s mission statement. Based on key components of its mission statement, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview with the managing partner of Meadow Glen.

Other key audiences of study included Meadow Glen’s employees, residents and the residents’ families. Data was secured through surveys distributed by Meadow Glen management to the identified audiences.

Analysis of the data was documented through the use of statistical analysis software, SPSS.

## **Summary**

With an increasing mobile society and a significant trend toward formalized long-term care, an established internal communication program within an assisted-living facility must be a priority of management. An effective employee, cognizant of the



purpose of the organization and able to successfully communicate that mission cannot be unique for an organization to experience success. Rather, employees must be integral parts of the organization. With appropriate use of public relations strategies and techniques, this objective can be realized. It is essential for management to think of its internal communication program as a primary resource with the employees as a key communication resource (Garbett, 1988).

## **Terminology**

**Assisted-living** - Healthcare facilities that provide a coordinated array of supportive personal and health services, available 24-hours-a-day to residents who have been assessed to need these services; promotes a resident's self- direction and participation in decisions that emphasize individuality, privacy, dignity and home-like surroundings; sometimes found in combination with skilled nursing facilities or as stand alone establishments.

**Communication** - (relative public relations) Interchange of information; transaction of conveying thought from one party or group to another.

**Employee Relations** - Activities designed to build sound relationships between an organization and its employees; critical element in fostering positive attitudes and behavior of employees, as representatives of the organization.

**Front-line/First-Line Communicator** - Employee whose behavior can be interpreted by other stakeholders as a representation of an organization.

**Identity** - Actual characteristics of an organization that define it.

**Image** - Cumulative perception a public has of an organization based on its publicity efforts together with its behavior, including that behavior unintended for public consumption.

**Internal Communications** - Communication efforts performed within an organization.

**Long-term Care** - Varying types of care required for individuals who can no longer perform activities of daily living by themselves, such as eating, bathing or dressing; can include kind of care needed when there is a severe cognitive impairment like Alzheimer's disease; available in a variety of settings, including an individual's own home, continuing

care residential communities, assisted-living facilities, adult day care centers, hospice facilities or nursing homes.

**Mission Statement** - Formal declaration of what a company is and what it strives to accomplish.

**Public Relations** - Distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communications techniques as its principal tools (Harris, 1998).

**Public Relations Strategies and Techniques** - Plan of action based on specific goals and objectives of an organization.

**Residents' Families** - family members of residents of Meadow Glen who are directly involved in overseeing the care of their family member.

**Seniors** - Individuals born prior to 1945

**SPSS** - Computer oriented statistical analysis program for the social services.

**Stakeholder** - General term referencing all groups or individuals who have an interest in or are dependent on an organization or enterprise including employees, customers, suppliers, dealers, government, communities and investors.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

To outline the research results, this chapter is divided into five sections: public relations, internal communication, mission statements, identity and image, and assisted-living.

#### **Public Relations**

Relationships are an essential component of both public relations and the assisted-living industry. To successfully accomplish development of relationships, good communication is crucial. The practice of public relations provides organizations with methods that will assist with both the cultivation and the nurturing of winning communication programs.

For the purposes of this study, it is important to first understand public relations in terms of internal communications.

Traditional communication channels will always be part of the mix, but relationship-building requires much more. Organizations send messages in many ways. Their behaviors and the behaviors of their personnel always will be critical in dealing with stakeholders (Brody, 2002).

Thomas Harris (1998), public relations management consultant and visiting associate professor in the Integrated Marketing Communications Department in Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, defines public relations in terms of marketing.

Marketing public relations is the process of planning, executing and evaluating programs that encourage purchase and consumer satisfaction through credible communication of information and impressions that identify companies and their products with the needs, wants, concerns and interests of consumers.

Anthony Fulginiti (1995), APR and Fellow PSRA, defines public relations as a management activity that contributes to the management process. His list of public relations functions and its role in the management process include:

- Public relations is responsible for establishing and maintaining relationships between an organization and all its publics, both internal and external.
- Public relations serves both a counseling and communication function in an organization.
- Public relations must be both proactive and reactive.
- Public relations first counsels management about proposed organizational activity, then interprets that activity to gain positive public opinion.
- Public relations must contribute to the formation of the organization's goals and be present at the management table.
- When public relations contributes communication to the organization, it has a specific and distinct role in the organization's marketing strategy.

Al Czarnecki (2002), president of the consulting firm of Al Czarnecki Communications states, "Building good relationships with important publics is an investment. Managing this is the job of public relations." To accomplish this objective, Mr. Czarnecki outlines the differences of marketing and public relations. Marketing is

interested in the market – consumers and demand. Public relations is interested in relationships – reducing conflict and improving cooperation. Therefore, public relations provides a healthy environment for marketing. The bottom line is a balance of receivables and payables. Marketing adds value by increasing income. Public relations adds value by decreasing the expenses that are necessary when issues are ignored.

### **Internal Communication**

As a function of public relations, internal communication is a central factor of any successful organization.

The most valuable constituency of an organization is its employees. Therefore it is essential to gain the understanding and support of this internal audience (D'Aprix, 1982).

Management must commit to the development of a strong internal communication program based on two-way symmetric communication strategies (Grunig 1992). Key to a successful internal communication program is building a strong foundation. This includes all members of the organization from the CEO down. A relationship must exist between senior management, middle management and the employees.

The development of a well-designed communication program begins with research and evaluation of the current communication program. It cannot assume just because they are employees that they know, understand and accept the organization's goals, objectives and strategies. Critical to an evaluation is a clear definition of all the internal audiences.

At the 1994 IABC Conference, Lester Potter, communication account manager for the American Red Cross said, “It’s is not just doing things right; it’s also doing the right things.” According to James Grunig (1992),

In less than excellent communication programs, communicators often do things right: for example, an award-winning photograph or an attractive annual report. The Excellence Study shows that communication excellence will not be achieved by simply improving how you do things right. For example, new desktop publishing software may help a less than excellent employee communication program get the newsletter out faster, but that alone will not make a less than excellent employee communication program excellent. Excellent programs integrate “doing things right” with “doing the right things.”

### **Mission Statements**

Internal communications plays a critical role in helping others learn to communicate the value of your company. However, first employees must grasp the mission of the organization.

The two toughest questions for people in organizational communication have been these: “Who am I?” and “What am I expected to do around here?” (D’Aprix, 1982). These questions need not be stumbling blocks to an organization if there is a well formed mission statement that has been successfully communicated to all employees.

Thomas Garbett (1988) defines a mission statement as “...somewhat analogous to the product positioning statement in product marketing. Its importance lies in developing communication that is consistent over time and among the many voices emanating from the corporate body.”

“Before the strategy, before the communication planning, even before communication objectives can be set, there must exist an understanding of what the

company is and what it is striving to become. Set down and agreed to be management, this is the corporate mission.”

Organizations have a vision/mission that represent the ideally shared values to which the organization aspires. Since one style of mission statement does not fit every company, Grahame Dowling (2001) offers the following summary of essential components for a mission statement:

- Motivate and focus all employees on a guiding philosophy or set of corporate values
- Define the boundaries of the business (in terms of enabling technology, business processes, and market(s))
- Provide an overall unifying theme for the key stakeholder groups
- Help differentiate the organization from its competitors

In terms of internal communication, Garbett (1988) discusses how a mission statement needs to relate to employee development and work practices. Further he emphasizes that the majority of companies ignore this factor despite the extreme importance of this linkage that creates a “contract” between an organization and its employees.

Eight features were found to be part of mission statements from 61 Fortune 500 companies – customers, product or service, location, technology, concern for survival, philosophy, self-concept, and concern for the public. An analysis of mission statements from 75 *Business Week*’s 1000 firms found evidence of the concern for employees. From these categories, Campbell and Tawaday proposed a general model of mission statements



to include: why a company exists, senior management beliefs, company policies, behavior patterns and commercial rationale (Mazza, 1999).

Based on these mission statement evaluations, University of Navarra, Italy, Professor Carmelo Mazza (1999) suggests incorporating of the following five categories into a mission statement: (1) purpose, (2) strategy, (3) company values, (4) standards and beliefs and (5) formal character.

### **Corporate Identity and Image**

Employees are unique in representing an organization and have the highest credibility in their daily face-to-face contacts. They are a communication resource. Therefore, they must be fully aware of who the organization is and be given the tools to communicate that identity effectively.

The identity of the corporation must be so clear that it becomes the yardstick against which its products, behavior and actions are measured. This means that the identity cannot simply be a slogan, a collection of phrases; it must be visible, tangible and all-embracing. Everything that the organization does must be an affirmation of its identity. The product that the company makes or sells must project its standards and its value. The buildings in which it makes things and trades, its offices, factories and showpieces – their location, how they are furnished and maintained – are all manifestations of identity.

The corporation's communication material, from its advertising to its instruction manuals, must have a consistent quality and character that accurately and honestly reflect the whole organization and its aims. But – a further component which is just as significant, although it is not visible, is how the organization behaves: to its own staff and to everybody with whom it comes into contact, including customers, suppliers and its host communities. This is especially true in the service industry where there is no tangible product. Here too consistency in attitude, action and style underlines the corporate identity (Wally, 1990).

The communication of an organization's identity results in its external image.

Thomas Garbett (1988) defines corporate image through his "Corporate Image Equation": Reality of the company + Newsworthiness of the company activities + Diversity + Communication Effort + Time – Memory decay = Company Image. Garbett proposes that it is the interrelation of these six factors that create the corporate image. A synopsis of these elements is as follows:

1. Reality of the company itself – size, structure, nature of industry, products or services provided, number of employees and the degree to which they interact with society shape the fundamental nature of the company.
2. Newsworthiness of the company and its activities – both positive and negative.
3. Diversity of the company – more varied and diverse the activities of a company, the more diverse will be the messages sent out by the corporation, conversely the more monolithic a company is, the more related the messages it sends out will be, therefore a conglomerate will find it more difficult to establish a reputation than will a single product-line company.
4. Communication efforts – there is no question that companies that work at communication, those that spend money building the company's image, become better known and usually have more positive reputations.
5. Time – nothing happens overnight, a building process is involved in establishing any reputation. Good corporations wear well with time; their images, which have been built over years, will be far more lasting.
6. Memory decay – it is a constant communication effort to just stay where you are. It takes even more effort to build a company's image.

Grahame Dowling (2001) defines a corporate image as the global evaluation comprised of a set of beliefs and feelings a person has about an organization. He suggests to improve a company's image it is necessary to ascertain the images people currently

hold of the organization. First, confirm what beliefs and emotions different groups use to describe the organization and then establish how an ideal organization in the industry is characterized by each stakeholder group.

### **Assisted-Living Communities**

What is assisted-living? In 2002, the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services definition stated:

Assisted-living is a special combination of housing, personalized support services and health care designed to accommodate those who need help with the activities of daily living but may not require the type of care provided by a nursing home. Assisted-living promotes maximum independence and dignity for each person and encourages the involvement of family, neighbors and friends. Staff is available to meet individual needs.

Who lives in assisted-living communities? Assisted-living residents can be old or young, affluent or of low income, healthy or frail or disabled. Assisted-living is also appropriate for someone who is unable to live at home, but may not need the type of care provided by a nursing home.

The specific services provided by assisted-living facilities include: meals, housekeeping, assistance with transportation, assistance with bathing, eating, dressing, walking and personal needs, nursing services, social and recreational activities and staffing 24-hours-a-day.

Jim Moore (2001), author of *Assisted-living Strategies for Changing Markets*, sees the assisted-living industry as, "...offering too much and meeting too many very real needs to ever go away. It will grow...but not without a lot of savvy and hard work." In his book, Moore discusses the predictable and steady growth of assisted-living due to

demand. Further he details the over-85 age group as the fastest growing segment of the population. In summary, he acknowledges that like every product or service, assisted-living will experience market-driven business cycles and external competitive forces. But, as the internet companies are learning painfully, strong business fundamentals and prudent financial planning will clearly separate the winners from the losers in senior living.

*Health Marketing Quarterly* (Buelow and Fee, 2000) published the results of a study, "Perceptions of Care and Satisfaction in Assisted-living Facilities," that looked at two factors: determining current consumers' perceptions and satisfaction with assisted-living facilities; and current consumers' evaluation of nursing assistants. Residents listed genuine concern, kindness, respect and consistent attentiveness as primary attributes of caregivers. However, family members identified knowledge regarding aging, gentle assertiveness and commitment to staying on the job as essential qualities of nursing assistants.

## **Summary**

Communication is essential to the formation of corporate image. It should stem from the company mission statement and be constantly nurtured through a strong internal communication program to sustain an identity that is mirrored in its projected image.

Clearly the long-term care arena is a consumer-based industry. To attain a stellar image as a service industry, assisted-living facilities must not ignore the critical importance to their consumers of active internal communication programs.

Whether considered an ingredient of marketing practices or a function of public relations, the literature review confirms communication authorities are in consensus that organizations must consciously implement communication programs into their agendas.

Long-term care is redefining care for seniors. It is during this developmental stage that attitudes are being shaped by consumers. The incorporation of public relations tools into a facility's operational planning is essential to align desired identity with image as public opinion takes shape.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

This study was conducted to develop a prototype for internal communication aligning identity with image, specific to assisted-living facilities. It was based on the premise that a facility's mission statement should be at the core of an organization and that it must be actively internalized by an organization's employees to successfully align identity, the ideal state, with image, the actual state.

### **Sample**

Meadow Glen of Leesburg, Virginia, an assisted-living residence, opened in the summer of 2001. At the center of Meadow Glen is a 19<sup>th</sup>-century farmhouse that accommodates both administrative offices, and offers a formal dining room and a library for use by residents. The new, single story construction converted the original property into an assisted-living facility by adding 34 single, one-bedroom suites and 3 two-bedroom suites. The addition was laid out so that it wraps around an interior courtyard, assessable to both ambulatory and non-ambulatory residents. The 3.4 acre property borders the Washington and Old Dominion Trail.

At the time of this research, Meadow Glen had 37 residents and 22 line employees. Management included a managing partner, an executive director, a nursing supervisor and a chef.

## **Data Sources**

Following a preliminary literature review, the methodology for this case study was developed from an examination of materials provided to the researcher by Meadow Glen management. Material for analysis included Meadow Glen's current mission statement, brochure, Employee Orientation Manual, Employee Handbook, and Resident Handbook.

## **Research Method**

Initial research comprised a content analysis of Meadow Glen's mission statement to establish the primary objectives of the facility. Based on the results of this analysis, the researcher developed an in-depth interview.

The researcher conducted an in-depth interview with the managing partner of Meadow Glen. This method of qualitative research assisted the researcher in establishing the cooperation of the management at Meadow Glen and in developing the survey instrument. The researcher developed a guide for the interview consisting of open-ended questions, gauging the interview length for approximately one hour. The interview was conducted in person, at Meadow Glen, and was tape recorded with the permission of the managing partner.

Surveys constitute the quantitative research for this study. Three distinct surveys were prepared: employee, resident and residents' family surveys. Surveys did not ask any demographic questions. The demographics of the residents of Meadow Glen and their families are implied. It is the opinion of the researcher that requesting demographics of the employees might have impeded their responses considering Meadow Glen's small

size. The employee survey was distributed to all employees with the exception of the managing partner and the executive director. Distribution of the resident and residents' family surveys was determined by management, allowing them to take into consideration residents who have made Meadow Glen their home for less than six months and residents or families that were experiencing health issues.

### **Data Collection**

All surveys consisted of 10 to 12 Likert-scale questions. The last question was open-ended. The residents' survey was printed in a larger font and bold type for ease of reading by the residents. Surveys were mailed to the management of Meadow Glen for distribution. Employee and resident surveys were given a designated drop-off point for collection and return by management to the researcher. Resident family surveys were also mailed to the management of Meadow Glen for distribution: each had an attached, self-addressed, stamped envelope for return directly to the author.

### **Data Analysis**

After the surveys were complete, a coding sheet was developed for each closed-ended answer in the survey. Data codes with variable names and labels were then entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software application. After data entry completion, the data was run to evaluate the most frequent answers to the survey questions, using percentages for reporting. Specifically, the researcher looked for frequencies relative to the hypotheses stated in Chapter 1.



To tabulate open-ended questions, all descriptive comments were compiled and analyzed. Applicable comments that appeared repeatedly or enhanced the results by indicating common behavior or attitude of survey participants were referenced in the results section of this study.

Data results are reported in Chapter 4. They reflect final statistics showing the responses for each question by percent. Data is displayed in charts and graphs, as well as in paragraph format. A copy of this thesis was provided to the managing partner of Meadow Glen upon completion.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Results**

This chapter discusses the research results of this case study of Meadow Glen's internal communication program, relative to its success in aligning identity and image.

The research design, based on the author's analysis of Meadow Glen's mission statement, focused on two primary elements: to provide a safe and secure environment in a home-like setting. These objectives were confirmed through an in-depth interview conducted with the facility's managing partner.

First, this chapter outlines the results of the residents and the residents' families' surveys. These results are addressed in three sections relative to Meadow Glen's mission statement objectives: survey questions that examine the facility's provision of a safe and secure environment, questions that consider the facility's home-like environment and finally, those questions that queried a combination of these elements. Data analysis for the resident surveys had a 100% response rate, while the residents' families' surveys had an 82% response rate.

Second, this chapter will outline the survey findings of the employee surveys, respective to the alignment of Meadow Glen's identity with its image. These results are provided in two sections: Hypothesis I and Hypothesis II. The final response rate from the employees was 91%. The researcher's initial mailing only resulted in management's return of half of the anticipated employee surveys. Therefore, the researcher provided Meadow Glen management with a second mailing of employee surveys. This mailing

included self-addressed, stamped envelopes for direct return by the employees to the researcher. This approach increased the employee response rate to the reported 91%.

Additionally, included in the hypothesis section are the results of three of the survey questions asked of the residents' families that are directly related to Hypothesis 1. Results of the in-depth interview with the managing partner of Meadow Glen are also reflected in the hypotheses analysis section, as applicable.

Based on the size of Meadow Glen, this researcher is of the opinion that a total result of 60% or less in the "strongly agree" and "agree" categories for employees, or 60% or less in the "excellent" and "good" ratings by residents' families supported this researcher's hypotheses.

#### **Mission Statement Element 1 – Home-Like Setting**

Residents were asked to rate the atmosphere in the dining room at Meadow Glen.

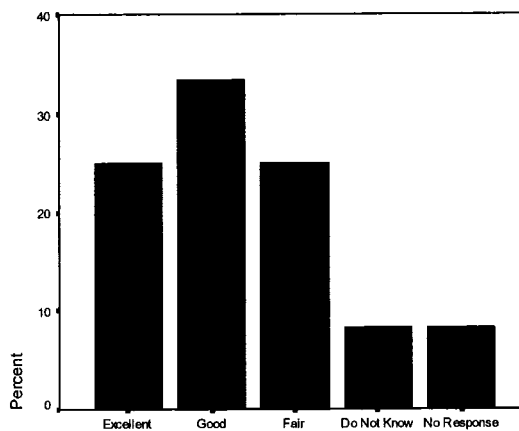
**Figure 1: Dining at Meadow Glen  
Residents**



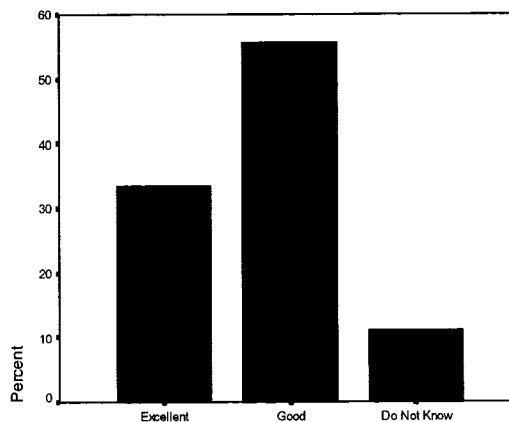
Of all the resident respondents, 83% indicated the atmosphere in the dining room is either “good” or “excellent,” with 16% rating it as “fair.” This is significant for residents of an assisted-living facility as indicated by Meadow Glen’s managing partner in the in-depth interview, “It may sound trivial, but one of the residents’ main concerns is dining. It is a focal point...an event.”

Both residents and residents’ families were asked to rate the variety of activities at Meadow Glen.

**Figure 2: Activities at Meadow Glen  
Residents**



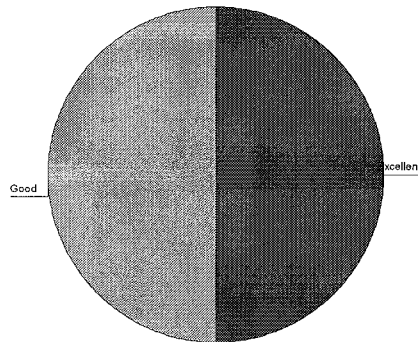
**Figure 3: Activities at Meadow Glen  
Residents’ Families**



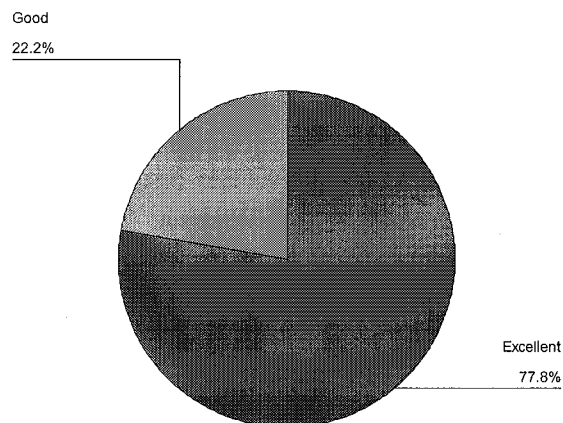
Of the residents, 58% indicated the activities were “good” or “excellent” and 25% indicated a rating of “fair,” while their families felt the activities were 90% “good” or “excellent.” It is important to consider that there may be existing health issues compromising resident participation on any given day in an activity that may be reflected in the number of fair responses.

Both residents and residents’ families were asked to rate the consideration given to residents’ privacy by the staff at Meadow Glen.

**Figure 4: Privacy at Meadow Glen  
Residents**



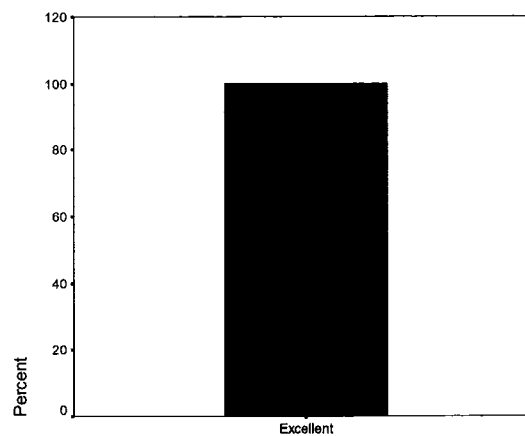
**Figure 5: Privacy at Meadow Glen  
Residents’ Families**



Meadow Glen residents ranked their opinion concerning the consideration given to their privacy at 100%, “good” to “excellent.” Residents’ families’ responses also illustrated ratings of 100% “good” or “excellent,” with 78% rating as “excellent.”

Residents were asked to rate the appeal of the buildings and grounds at Meadow Glen.

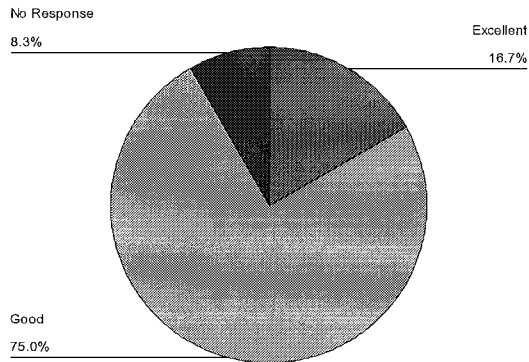
**Figure 6: Appeal of Buildings and Grounds  
Residents**



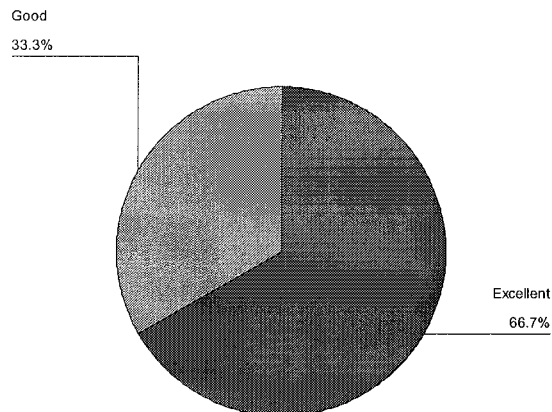
Appeal of the Meadow Glen buildings and grounds resulted in a resident response rate of 100% excellent. This reply clearly supports management’s statement, “...that when we say home-like we mean it. When you say home-like with 100 beds it is difficult to pull off. Meadow Glen wants to be able to both say and deliver it. In Leesburg, we had a wonderful old property to play off in the old farm house. We used the motif in both design and decorating. So it feels home-like, not like an institution.”

Both residents and residents' families were asked to rate the home-like setting provided at Meadow Glen.

**Figure 7: Home-like Setting  
Residents**



**Figure 8: Home-like Setting  
Residents' Families**



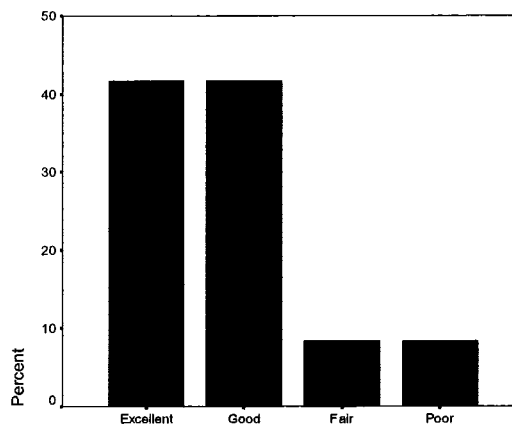
When asked to rate the home-like setting of Meadow Glen, a specific element of the mission statement, resident response ratings were 92% “good” to “excellent” and 8% did not respond. One resident commented that, “It is my new home now and I have friends.” Residents’ families indicated a 100% rating of “good” to “excellent,” with 67% being “excellent.” One family member commented that Meadow Glen is “...small,

friendly and has a home-like atmosphere.” A second observed, “The facility is very attractive, spacious and well maintained.”

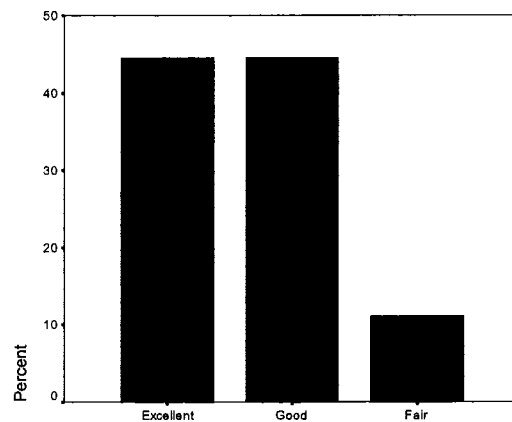
### **Mission Statement Element 2 – Safe and Secure Environment**

Both residents and residents’ families were asked to rate the level of safety and security provided to residents at Meadow Glen.

**Figure 9: Level of Safety and Security  
Residents**



**Figure 10: Level of Safety and Security  
Residents’ Families**



Forty-two percent of residents surveyed rated their feeling of safety and security at Meadow Glen as “excellent.” Similarly, 42% of the residents indicated a rating of

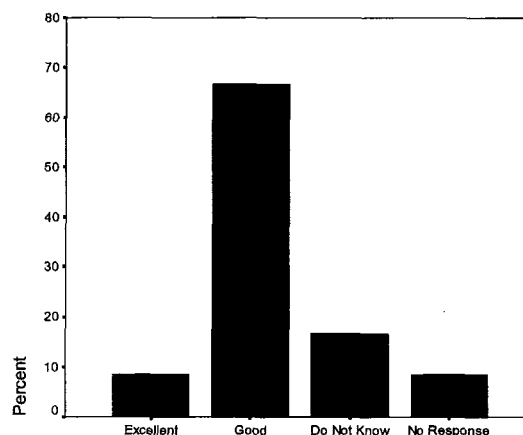


“good,” while “fair” and “poor” ratings each received 8% of the survey responses. The “poor” rating was supported by the resident’s statement that, “I cannot answer this because I resent being in a home.”

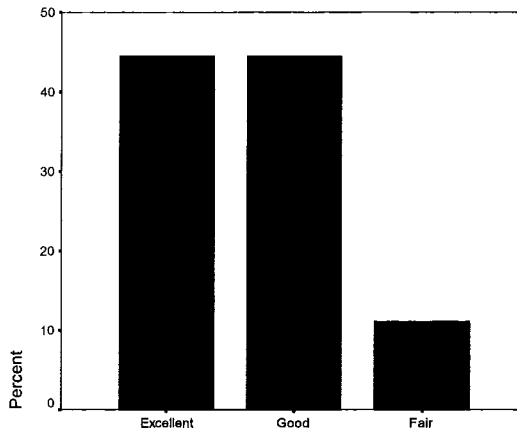
Residents’ families were asked to rate the level of safety and security provided to Meadow Glen residents. “Good” and “excellent” ratings totaled 89% with 11% specifying a rating of “fair.” One family member commented that, “...the care they have given my mother and me at a very difficult time has made a difference. Meadow Glen has a wonderful, caring, loving staff and is a great facility. It gives me great peace of mind to know my mother is happy and taken care of in a respectful manner.” Another individual remarked, “Location, location, location, one level, wide hallways and Mother is able to use her own furniture.”

Both residents and residents’ families were asked to rate how well informed they feel residents’ caregivers are at Meadow Glen.

**Figure 11: Caregivers’ Information Level  
Residents**



**Figure 12: Caregivers' Information Level  
Residents' Families**

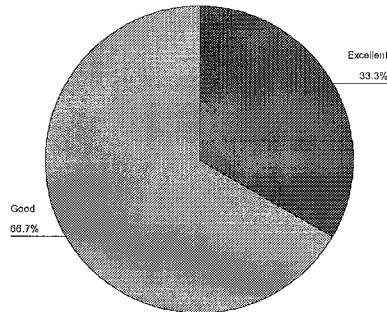


Responses by residents indicated confirmation that their caregivers know what they are doing. The resident response breakdown was as follows: 8% “excellent,” 67% “good,” 17% did not know and 8% did not respond.

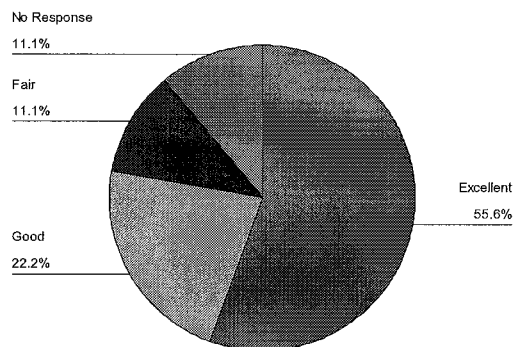
Confirmation that resident’s caregivers are informed was also reflected in the family’s responses. Of the residents’ families responses only 11% indicated “fair,” while the other 89% were evenly split between “good” and “excellent.” One family member commented, “Every staff member takes a personal interest in my family member.” An additional comment stated, “Meadow Glen, with only 40 residents, is ideal for maximum care and needs of the residents. The caregivers know each resident by name and are knowledgeable of their needs and wants.”

Both residents and residents' families were asked to rate the level of individual care and compassion received by residents from their Meadow Glen caregivers.

**Figure 13: Caregiver Care and Compassion  
Residents**



**Figure 14: Caregiver Care and Compassion  
Residents' Families**



Residents felt the care and compassion received by them from their Meadow Glen caregivers was 100% “good” and “excellent,” with 33% designating “excellent” and 67% specifying a rating of “good.” This question resulted in a number of resident comments. One resident commented, “I am here and feel comfortable and safe.” Another resident stated, “It seems like home to me because my neighbors and the staff are very loving and caring people. They are an extended family.” Notable to the nature of the facility, one

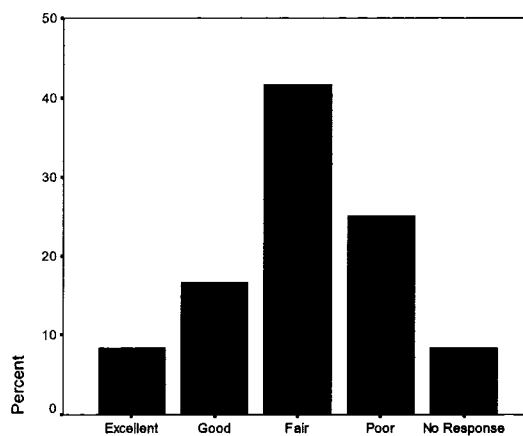
resident wrote, “Whenever I’ve had any physical set back, I have been helped quickly and compassionately. Great Job!”

Residents’ families’ responses rated caregiver care and compassion 56% as “excellent,” 22% as “good,” 11% as “fair,” and 11% did not answer this question.

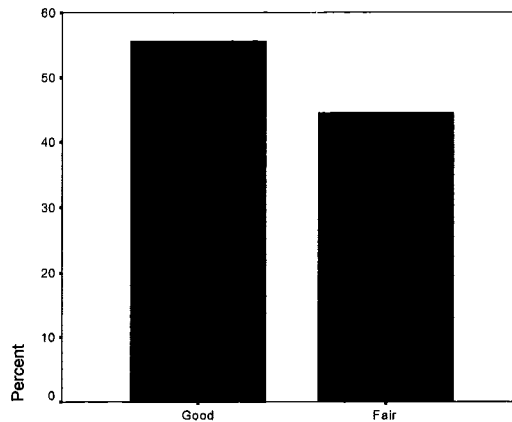
### **Mission Statement – Combined Elements (Home-like Setting in a Safe and Secure Environment)**

Both residents and residents’ families were asked to rate the choice and quality of meals at Meadow Glen.

**Figure 15: Meals at Meadow Glen  
Residents**



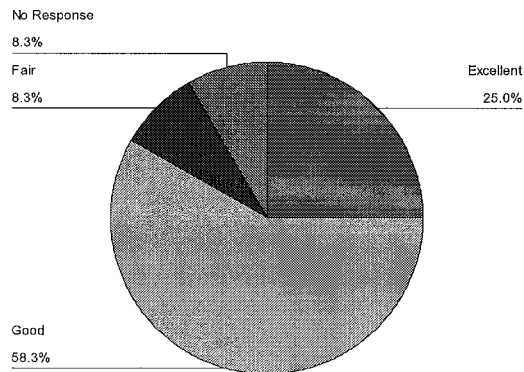
**Figure 16: Meals at Meadow Glen  
Residents' Families**



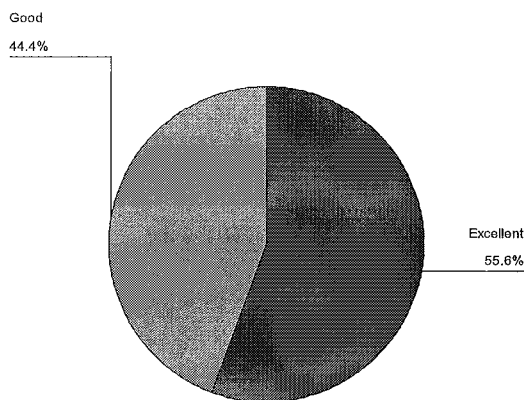
Responses from residents and residents' families were comparable in the "fair" range, at 42%, regarding the choice and quality of meals at Meadow Glen. However, residents exhibited a greater array of responses, with an 8% rating of "excellent," 16% as "good," with 42% rating the meals as "fair," 25% rating as "poor," and 8% did not answer this question. Residents' families' responses were all within the "good" to "fair" range.

Both residents and residents' families were asked to complete the following statement with a rating, "Based on my experiences at Meadow Glen, I would rate Meadow Glen as..."

**Figure 17: Overall Meadow Glen Rating  
Residents**



**Figure 18: Overall Meadow Glen Rating  
Residents' Families**



As a facility, Meadow Glen was rated overall by residents and residents' families" as "good" or "excellent." Resident responses illustrated 25% as "excellent" and 59% as "good." Eight percent of the residents rated their experiences as "fair," while 8% did not

respond. Residents' families were split between responses of "good" and "excellent," with 44% and 56% respectively.

### **Mission Statement Summary**

Meadow Glen has initially accomplished its mission statement objectives in terms of perception with respect to providing a home-like setting in a safe and secure environment. The residents and the residents' families, through their survey responses, documented a positive image of Meadow Glen on individual issues and then gave a strong overall rating when asked globally.

They confirmed Meadow Glen's projection of a home-like setting with particularly high ratings for individual privacy.

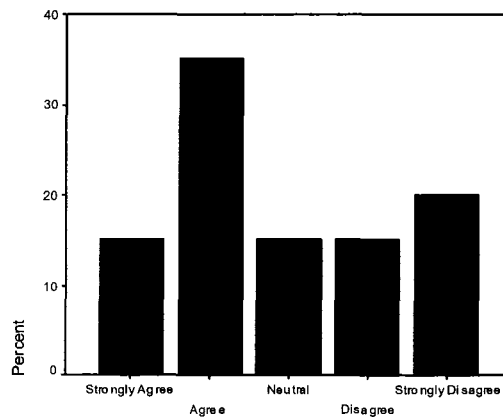
## Hypotheses

### Hypothesis 1:

**It is expected that employees do not consistently reflect the true identity and image of the facility.**

Employees were asked if they felt like valued and trusted members of the staff.

**Figure 19: Employee Feelings of Value  
Employees**



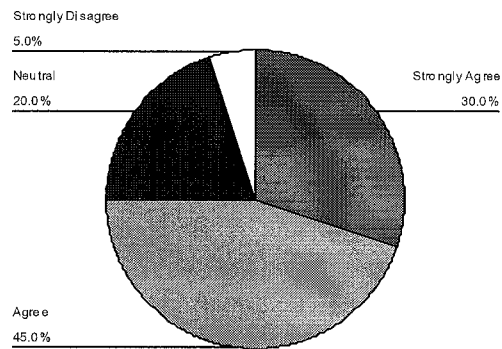
Only one-half of the employees agreed or strongly agreed that they are valued and trusted staff members. Employee response breakdown is as follows: 15% “strongly agree,” 35% “agree,” 15% were “neutral,” 15% “disagree” and 20% “strongly disagree.”

One employee stated, “Meadow Glen offers flexible hours, caring staff, and comfortable work environment,” representing employee satisfaction. However, another employee said, “The relations I have with my co-workers and the staff is OK, but my strongest one is the one I have with the residents.”



Employees were asked if Meadow Glen’s full commitment to its residents is re-enforced to them regularly.

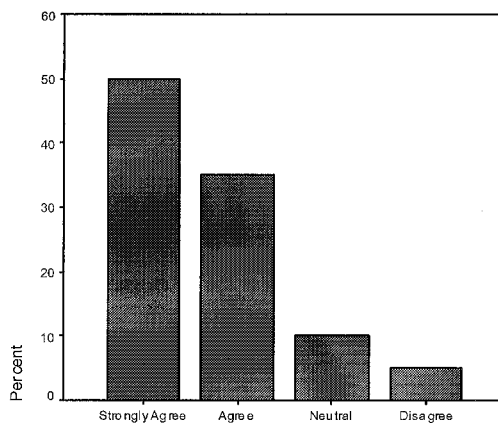
**Figure 20: Commitment to Residents Reinforced Employees**



Meadow Glen’s re-enforcement to its commitment to residents received a unified response from the employees. Employee ratings of “agree” and “strongly agree” were 75%, with 20% indicating they were “neutral” and only 5% in strong disagreement.

Employees were asked if Meadow Glen projects a home-like setting for residents and their families.

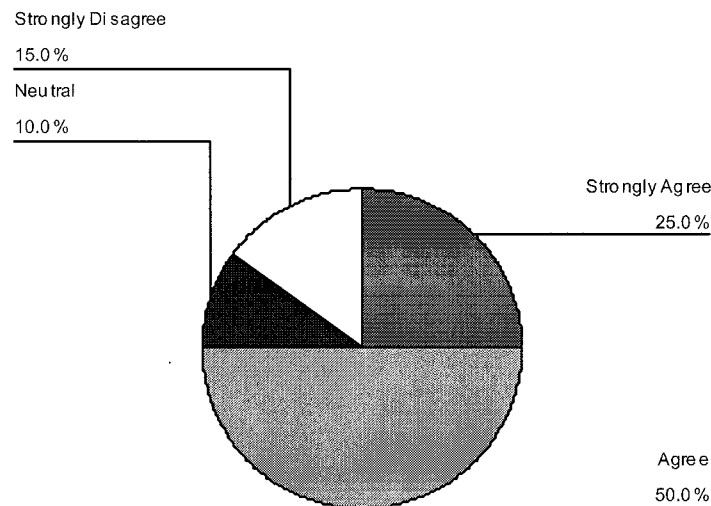
**Figure 21: Projection of a Home-like Setting Employees**



The mission statement element of “providing a home-like setting” directly responds to this question. Employees designated they either agreed or strongly agreed 85% of the time, with only 10% “neutral” and 5% strongly disagreeing.

Employees were asked if they felt Meadow Glen’s reputation in the Leesburg community is above average for an assisted-living facility.

**Figure 22: Meadow Glen’s Reputation Within Community Employees**

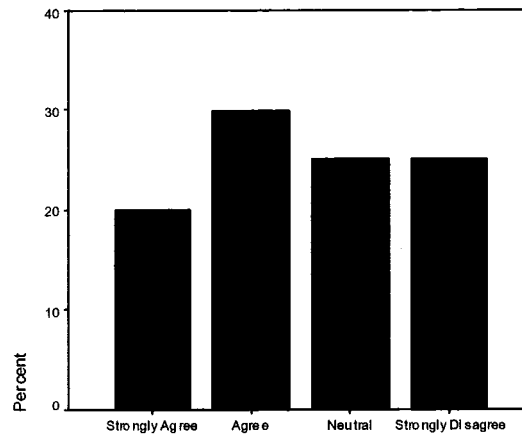


Seventy-five percent of the employees described the Meadow Glen’s reputation within its community as above average. In contrast, 15% of the employees strongly disagreed, while 10% were “neutral” in their opinions.

One of the employee comments described Meadow Glen as, “small, friendly and caring.”

Employees were asked to rate if they would recommend Meadow Glen to a friend for employment.

**Figure 23: Employment Recommendation  
Employees**

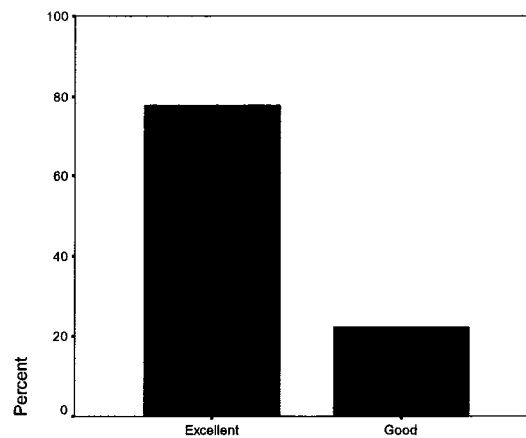


Employee answers again support a full range of responses. Of all the respondents, 50% agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend Meadow Glen to a friend for employment. However, 25% were neutral and 25% strongly disagreed.

The following residents' families' responses to three survey questions are specific to the researcher's evaluation of Hypothesis 1.

Residents' families were asked to rate Meadow Glen in the Leesburg community.

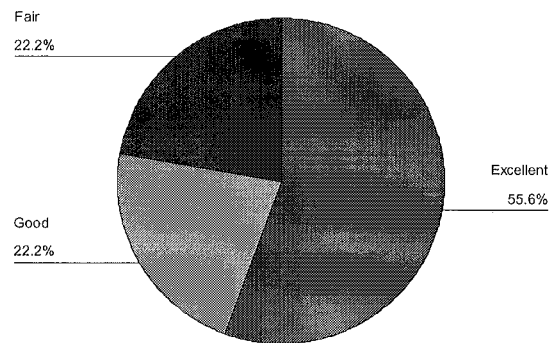
**Figure 24: Reputation in Leesburg  
Residents' Families**



Unquestionably Meadow Glen is regarded highly in Leesburg. All of the family respondents rated its reputation as “good” or “excellent,” with 79% ranking Meadow Glen’s status within the community as “excellent.” This supports the managing partner’s statement that, “Many times we are bringing in parents from out of state. They have been away from their children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and all of a sudden the family has reconnected.”

Residents' families were asked to rate Meadow Glen's efforts to keep them informed about their family member, scheduled activities and general facility changes.

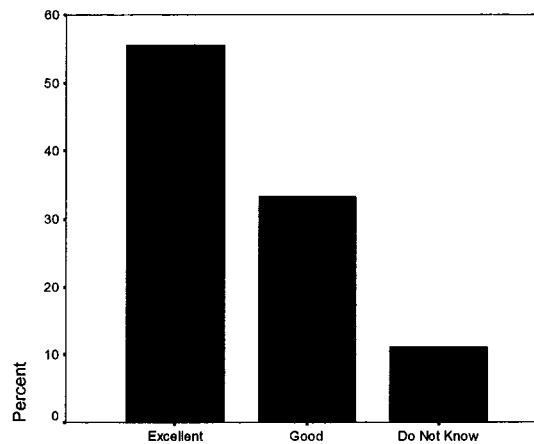
**Figure 25: Level of Information Communicated  
Residents' Families**



When asked to rate Meadow Glen's efforts to keep them informed, the majority of residents' families answers ranged from "good" to "excellent," while only 22% responded as "fair."

Residents' families were asked to rate Meadow Glen staff's encouragement for visitors and residents to enjoy the use of common areas (farm house rooms, snack area, gardens, etc.).

**Figure 26: Encouragement for Full Use of Facility  
Residents' Families**



Nearly all respondents positively acknowledged the efforts of Meadow Glen's staff to further residents' families' use of the full scope of the property. More than half, 56%, responded with "excellent."

### **Hypothesis 1 Summary**

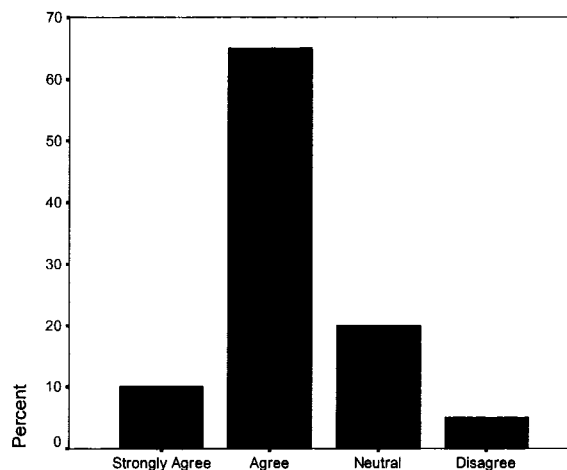
The survey results did not support this researcher's hypothesis that employees do not consistently reflect the true identity and image of Meadow Glen. Responses of the employees, together with responses of the families of the residents, established Meadow Glen as having a sound reputation through alignment of identity and image.

## Hypothesis 2:

**It is expected that more expansive use of public relations strategies and techniques could produce better alignment between the identity and image of the facility.**

Employees were asked if they felt Meadow Glen management relies on a blend of internal communication methods for staff that includes: memos, bulletin boards, in-house training and in-person conferences (informal and formal) to maintain clear and up-to-date communication.

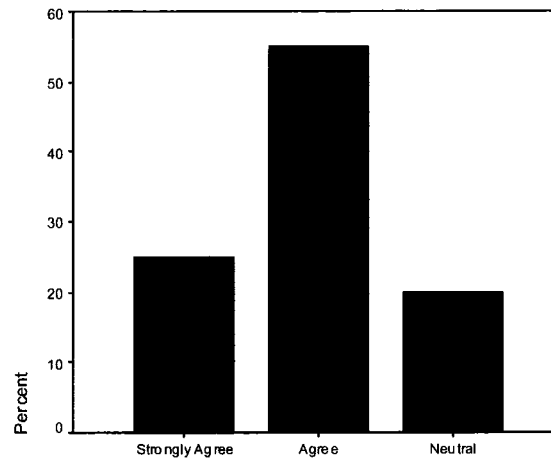
**Figure 27: Blend of Internal Communication Methods  
Employees**



The ability to communicate Meadow Glen’s mission statement through a combination of methods is both in place and being used according to 75% of the employees who either “agree” or “strongly agree.” Neutral responses came from 20% of the employees, with 5% disagreeing.

Employees were asked if Meadow Glen’s safety and security procedures are clear, well defined and readily available.

**Figure 28: Clarity, Definition and Availability of Procedures  
Employees**

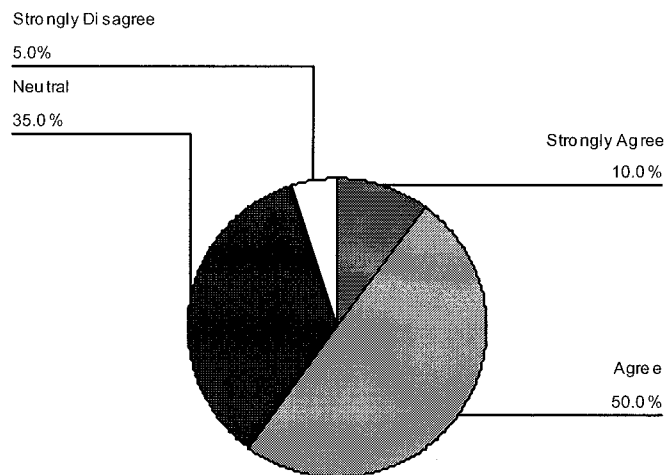


Employees responded that the procedures are clear and readily available if needed, with 80% agreeing or strongly agreeing. This supports the managing partner’s comment during the in-depth interview that, “The security is one of the things people are coming here for. Their adult children have been having feelings of insecurity about the change in environment for their parents. We are trying to give the residents’ adult children a sense of security that they know that their loved ones at Meadow Glen are secure.”



Employees were asked if Meadow Glen's use of its communication program allows employees to fulfill their duties and responsibilities effectively.

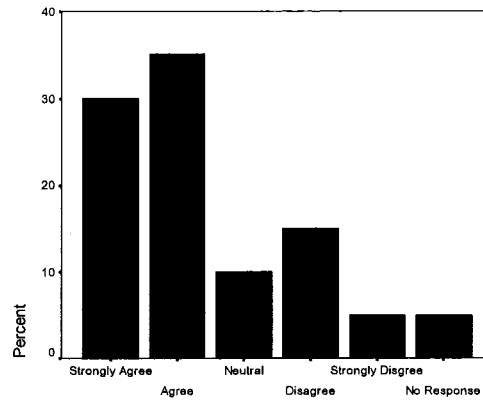
**Figure 29: Effectiveness of Communication Program  
Employees**



Employee answers demonstrate 60% feel that they have effective communication enabling them to fulfill their duties. This supports employees' positive responses that they are able to carry out their responsibilities because of clarity and availability of procedures. Only 5% of employees strongly disagreed and 35% of the respondents were "neutral."

Employees were asked if Meadow Glen's mission statement was clearly communicated to them during orientation.

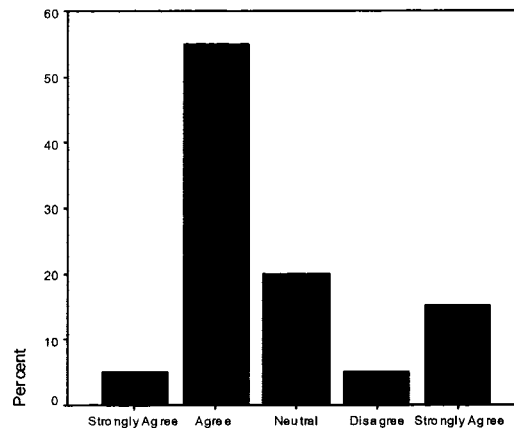
**Figure 30: Employee Orientation  
Employees**



Evaluation of employee responses to Meadow Glen's communication of its mission statement during orientation points to a discrepancy between the communication methods and actual communication. Although 60% stated they were clearly advised of the mission statement at orientation, 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Employees were asked if Meadow Glen management recognizes the value of informed employees.

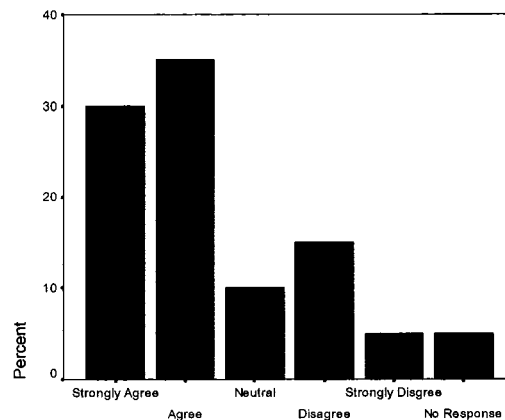
**Figure 31: Value of Informed Employees**



Again, 60% of the employees “agree” or “strongly agree” that they are recognized by management as an integral part of Meadow Glen. The remaining responses were reported as 20% “neutral,” 5% disagreed and 15% strongly disagreed.

Employees were asked to rate cross training at Meadow Glen relative to creating opportunities that result in closer bonding with residents.

**Figure 32: Employee Cross Training**



Over half of the employees, 65%, felt that cross training did result in employee and resident bonding. Employee comments on the open-ended question, “What makes Meadow Glen a unique place to work?” clearly supports cross training. One employee responded, “It’s good to know I can make a difference.” An additional comment illustrated the value added when stating, “...trying to work as a team.” However, 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed that cross training is effective.

### **Hypothesis 2 Summary**

The survey results did not support this researcher’s hypothesis that more expansive use of public relations strategies and techniques could produce better alignment between image and identity of Meadow Glen. Employee survey responses illustrated Meadow Glen recognizes the essential requirement for internal communication and is aware that their employees are important to its achievement of goals.

Chapter 5 will discuss the author’s research results together with a discussion of public relations relative to assisted-living.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

This case study of Meadow Glen developed from the researcher's desire to establish the extent of the incorporation of public relations tools by long-term care facilities to achieve their mission. This chapter discusses conclusions of this case study of Meadow Glen. The researcher outlines the relevance of this study to the field of public relations and provides recommendations for further study within the public relations discipline.

Based on both personal and professional experiences, this researcher is concerned about the future care of senior citizens. In addition, this researcher is apprehensive when considering the issues of these seniors' adult children when seeking acceptable alternatives for care giving.

In a culture where an increasing majority of couples both work and where life expectancy is significantly increasing, adult children may not be able to care for parents who can no longer live independently. Long-term care, in particular, assisted-living, offers a possible resolution to an often difficult situation. Optimally, both generations will be comfortable acting on the advantages of long-term care. Public relations techniques and strategies are fundamental to reaching and maintaining this objective.

It is the opinion of this researcher that the cliché "home away from home," must apply for both seniors and their adult children to have a positive relationship with an assisted-living facility. This author's concern stems from the very nature of the assisted-living industry; its mission would be assumed, probably reflected in a facility's mission

statement, but not actively made a part of an organization's culture. According to Christopher Bart (2001),

To be effective, a mission must be a collective learning experience that creates among all employees a widely shared understanding of the organization's purpose – why it exists and what it wants to accomplish. When this is achieved, the organization is said to have become a 'mission-driven organization,' and there is a high probability that its mission will become a reality.

The assisted-living facility analyzed for this case study, Meadow Glen of Leesburg, Virginia, has the following mission statement:

Meadow Glen of Leesburg, is an adult care residence whose mission is to provide excellent and secure, twenty-four hour assisted-living care for ambulatory and non-ambulatory elderly in Leesburg and the surrounding community.

Meadow Glen is built on a strong foundation of experience providing service and care to older persons within an assisted-living environment. Meadow Glen enables residents to either remain in a setting near where they have established connections or to move to a home-like residence near their adult children.

An evaluation of Meadow Glen's mission statement spawned the hypotheses of this study based on the two central elements reflected in the statement: safety and security, and a home-like setting.

## **Evaluation**

### **Mission Statement Elements**

The survey results from the residents and the residents' families were used to establish a benchmark for Meadow Glen's current success in aligning its identity with its image.

Mary Jo Peterson (2002), a long-term care design consultant states, “Aging in place is fast becoming a selling concept...for assisted-living and even for skilled nursing facilities wanting to become more homelike for all...” With the key objectives of providing safety and security in a homelike setting, Meadow Glen has already established and documented this requirement for their stakeholders in the mission statement. The results of this case study from the residents and residents’ family’s surveys confirm Meadow Glen’s initial success in aligning its identity with its image.

With all the residents’ families rating Meadow Glen overall “good” or “excellent”, clearly a consistent sense of safety and security is being communicated in an acceptable atmosphere for residents’ family members. When asked specific questions relative to either safety and security or a homelike setting at Meadow Glen, almost all respondents indicated favorable replies, demonstrating Meadow Glen’s attainment of a positive reputation.

Activities, privacy, and care/compassion received the highest ratings from residents’ families. Activities speak directly to a homelike setting. Residents are not held captive at Meadow Glen. They are able to attend activities without leaving their home, giving them a chance to move about and interact with other people. Further, if residents have the outside coming in to them, they gain a sense of safety and security complimenting the concept of home.

Privacy, and a respect for that privacy, also reflects a sense of home, with safety and security. Privacy also speaks to the dimension of individuality.

The survey respondents, when asked to rate the care and compassion shown by Meadow Glen’s caregivers, further confirmed the positive dimension of safety and

security found by residents and their families at Meadow Glen. Essentially the facility caregivers have either replaced the independent care of residents or the care previously provided by family members. Therefore, it is notable that the Meadow Glen caregivers received such a high rating by residents and their families.

Resident survey results also illustrated high ratings overall; however, the residents rated the appeal of the buildings and grounds highest with a unanimous rating of “excellent.” There is no question that the residents are satisfied with their physical surroundings. This speaks to the initial attention to detail at Meadow Glen. An excellent example is the porch constructed to face the Washington and Old Dominion Trail. With numerous residents using assistance to move about, the porch floor was stenciled so it appears to be brick with straw throw carpets in front of the wicker chairs, esthetically attractive without obstacles.

Consistent with their families, all of the residents rated the consideration given to their privacy “good” or “excellent.” Considering the need for support by residents in an assisted-living environment, it is understandable they might rate privacy “good” verses “excellent” overall. However, it is the opinion of this researcher that respect for one’s privacy can sharply separate a homelike atmosphere from one of communal living. Meadow Glen has successfully incorporated privacy as an essential element into its culture.

Following are the researcher’s evaluation of the hypotheses relative to Meadow Glen’s internal communication program based on the employee survey results. These results assist in confirming the current perception of the staff, fundamental to the maintenance of aligning Meadow Glen’s identity with its image.



## **Evaluation**

**Hypothesis I: It is expected that employees do not consistently reflect the true identity and image of the facility.**

This researcher did not expect the employees at Meadow Glen to consistently align the identity and image of the facility. Considering the size and the prior successful long-term care experience of the managing partner of Meadow Glen, the researcher expected management to rely on the very nature of the industry rather than using the mission statement as the core of the organization. It was expected that employees were not methodically made aware of the objectives of Meadow Glen, and therefore not provided with the tools to effectively act as front-line communicators.

Six of eight survey questions did not support the researcher's premise as stated in Hypothesis I. Most employees did feel the reinforcement of Meadow Glen's commitment to its residents on a regular basis. The majority of employees indicated Meadow Glen projects a safe and secure environment in a homelike setting and has an above average reputation in Leesburg.

However, the results did outline areas of concern that require attention to better align the facility's identity and image. Employees generally supported the researcher's expectation when queried about the extent to which they feel like valued and trusted members of the staff of Meadow Glen, documenting a divide between management and staff. Additionally, only 50% of the employees at Meadow Glen would recommend the facility to friends for employment.

One employee commented, "One does not work here for the salary, it is for the residents." The residents will not be constant, but Meadow Glen management can be.

**Hypothesis II: It is expected that more expansive use of public relations strategies and techniques could produce better alignment of the identity and image of the facility.**

Based on the expectations of Hypothesis I, this researcher did not expect Meadow Glen's internal communication program to incorporate public relations strategies and techniques. Yet, the existing tactics in use at Meadow Glen have established a firm foundation to build a stellar internal communication program.

Four of six survey questions did not support Hypothesis II of this study. Employees were satisfied with the blended methods of communication and felt their tasking was clearly defined and readily available when needed. A marginal majority of employees stated the mission statement was communicated to them at orientation, but there was no reference to the mission statement in any of the open-ended responses.

There were conflicting responses between employee agreement that a good blend of communication does exist and employee indication that Meadow Glen does not effectively use its communication program to allow employees to fulfill their duties and responsibilities. Also, the staff documented a delta between management and staff when asked if Meadow Glen management recognized the value of informed employees. Once again, areas of concern were evident in employee survey responses.

### **Discussion of Public Relations in Assisted-Living**

Meadow Glen is an organization that has clearly defined its direction and has a shared philosophy within the organization that has reached out into the community. Its success rests in the maintenance and enhancement of Meadow Glen's current reputation.

It is simple: Organizations need public relations. The relationships required by a successful organization can best be formed through public relations strategies and techniques. Bart and Baetz, the first researchers to introduce the concept of mission-organizational alignment as a potentially important antecedent to a mission's influence over employee behavior, confirm that organizations must be mission driven (Bart et al, 2001). A basic model, the domino theory, illustrates the impact of a mission statement. The mission of an organization is its message. The message or mission statement imparts the desired knowledge of the organization to employees. This creates an attitude toward the organization by employees, resulting in a behavior. The challenge lies in the acceptance of the message by staff as intended by management.

Meadow Glen's management clearly recognizes the importance of its employees. During the in-depth interview, the managing partner of Meadow Glen stated, "The employees are my hands and heart. They are critical and they are anyone's Achilles heal." However, if the employees do not perceive this message from management, they are not in concert with management. Currently, although not major, gaps do exist that will ultimately compromise the alignment of Meadow Glen's identity and image.

To narrow these gaps requires the internalization of the mission statement by all employees. The residents are the glue that binds the Meadow Glen staff to their employer. When answering the open-ended survey question of what makes Meadow Glen a unique place to work, employees repeatedly stated, "the residents." Evidently Meadow Glen has hired the right people, people who are concerned about the welfare of the residents. Now management must train in terms of the mission statement. The current use of a blend of communication methods include: weekly face-to-face meetings with

management; orientation program; employee handbook; bulletin boards and in-house training. However, when there is negative feedback, the system of internal communication needs to be redesigned to address the attitude of more employees. Most importantly, there needs to be a system of checks and balances added.

It is the recommendation of this researcher that a check be implemented that ensures that every employee receives formal orientation and that specific emphasis on the mission statement of Meadow Glen be incorporated into the orientation program. The mission of Meadow Glen must then be regularly communicated for consistent reinforcement through the existing blend of communication methods. This should result in a significant impact on the corporate culture. Employees will internalize the mission of Meadow Glen resulting in even better and more consistent alignment of its identity and image.

Finally, this researcher recommends application of some basic principles of staff empowerment in terms of employee reward and recognition. This should work to increase employee satisfaction and loyalty. "A good recognition system rewards specific behavior," (Leebov, 1988). This should be varied and range from exceptional service to consistent day-to-day behavior. It might be as simple as an employee realizing the distress of a resident and remaining after hours, to someone who wears a constant smile in spite of obstacles inherent to the industry or personal concerns.

Rewards and recognition should accomplish three goals. First, they should give reinforcement after the behavior, not before. Second, the reward or recognition should be made in a timely manner. Third, it is important to reward improvement, encouragement will result in excellence. Consider implementation of a "Caught in the Act Reward" that

is given by management or “Tattle Cards” that residents can give to management for a specific employee for good behavior. Recognition might be in the form of an employee MVP of the month, nominated by employees. Additionally, give residents and residents’ families an avenue to thank employees who do not have contact with the residents, but remain invaluable to your organization. Finally, ask employees directly for their input on rewards or recognition. It is important to remember the tangible value will vary from employee to employee (Leebov, 1988).

### **Recommendation for Further Study**

Matsuoka Toshio (2002), a professor at Kanagawa University in Japan, a specialist in internal public relations and corporate citizenship and volunteerism, believes the growth in awareness of a company’s culture is deeply tied to its productivity, performance and the life of a company. He speculates that mission statements have the ability to create or change an organization’s culture, depending on the approach of the organization.

It is the position of this researcher that an organization’s mission must be the heart of a company and actively communicated within an organization to establish and maintain its identity with its image. Further, public relations strategies and techniques are essential to create or change an organization’s culture. Meadow Glen has successfully demonstrated this premise.

This researcher recommends more expansive research be conducted to establish successful alignment of identity and image within the long-term care industry, in particular assisted-living facilities that house more than 50 residents. Long-term care

facilities are not isolated from their communities. They draw both residents and employees, especially entry level employees, from their immediate locals making it essential to the culture of long-term care facilities to incorporate public relations tools to maintain and perpetuate an organization's identity and image.

The adult children of seniors, or the baby boomer generation, will be the next target audience for long-term care public relations outreach. Public relations strategies and techniques will need to be refined to parallel the perceptions of this audience. This evolving sector should be a topic of further research and study in preparation for the next generation of consumers.

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***Katherine Pittman Govito  
13 Crider Avenue  
Moorestown, NJ 08057***

**Dear Meadow Glen Resident,**

**I am a graduate student at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey, writing my thesis on assisted-living. Since you have made Meadow Glen your home, I would greatly appreciate your help. Please complete the short survey enclosed.**

**The surveys are completely confidential. No one from Meadow Glen will be reading your individually responses. I am collecting all the surveys and analyzing the results with a computer program.**

**When you have completed your survey, please place it in the envelope provided, seal it and ask your Meadow Glen staff where to drop it off.**

**Thank you in advance for your help.**

**Sincerely,**

**Katherine Pittman Govito**

## **Meadow Glen Resident Questionnaire**

**Please rate the following:**

**1. Rate the atmosphere in the dining room at Meadow Glen:**

**Excellent**

☐

**Good**

☐

**Fair**

☐

**Poor**

☐

**Don't Know**

☐

**2. Rate the variety of activities at Meadow Glen:**

**Excellent**

☐

**Good**

☐

**Fair**

☐

**Poor**

☐

**Don't Know**

☐

**3. Rate the consideration given to your privacy by the staff at Meadow Glen:**

**Excellent**

☐

**Good**

☐

**Fair**

☐

**Poor**

☐

**Don't Know**

☐

**4. Rate the choice and quality of the meals at Meadow Glen:**

**Excellent**

☐

**Good**

☐

**Fair**

☐

**Poor**

☐

**Don't Know**

☐

**5. Rate your comfort with the level of safety and security provided to you at Meadow Glen:**

**Excellent**

☐

**Good**

☐

**Fair**

☐

**Poor**

☐

**Don't Know**

☐

**6. Rate how well informed your caregivers at Meadow Glen are:**

**Excellent**

☐

**Good**

☐

**Fair**

☐

**Poor**

☐

**Don't Know**

☐

**7. Rate the appeal of the buildings and grounds at Meadow Glen:**

**Excellent**

☐

**Good**

☐

**Fair**

☐

**Poor**

☐

**Don't Know**

☐

**8. Rate the level of individual care and compassion you receive from the Meadow Glen staff:**

**Excellent**

☐

**Good**

☐

**Fair**

☐

**Poor**

☐

**Don't Know**

☐

**9. Rate the home-like setting Meadow Glen provides:**

**Excellent**

☐

**Good**

☐

**Fair**

☐

**Poor**

☐

**Don't Know**

☐

**10. Based on my experiences at Meadow Glen I would rate Meadow Glen as:**

**Excellent**

☐

**Good**

☐

**Fair**

☐

**Poor**

☐

**Don't Know**

☐

**11. Please finish the following sentence.**

**Meadow Glen has become like home to me because**

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***Katherine Pittman Govito  
13 Crider Avenue  
Moorestown, NJ 08057***

Dear Family of a Meadow Glen Resident,

I am a graduate student at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey, writing my thesis on assisted-living. I would greatly appreciate your help by your completing the enclosed short survey.

Please be assured that no one from Meadow Glen will be reading your individually completed surveys. I am collecting all the surveys and analyzing the results with a computer program; therefore all of your responses will be kept completely confidential.

When you have completed your survey, please forward to me in the stamped, self-addressed return envelope provided at your earliest convenience.

Thank you in advance for your participation and help.

Sincerely,

Katherine Pittman Govito

## Meadow Glen Family Questionnaire

Please rate the following:

1. In the Leesburg community Meadow Glen is considered:

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Rate Meadow Glen's efforts to keep you fully informed about your family member(s), scheduled activities, and general facility changes:

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Rate the variety of activities at Meadow Glen:

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Rate the consideration given to your family member's privacy by the staff at Meadow Glen:

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Rate the choice and quality of the meals at Meadow Glen:

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Rate your comfort with the level of safety and security provided to your family member(s) at Meadow Glen:

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Rate how well informed your family member's caregivers at Meadow Glen are:

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Rate Meadow Glen staff's encouragement for visitors and residents to enjoy the use of common areas (farm house rooms, snack area, gardens, etc).

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Rate the level of individual care and compassion received by your family member(s) by their caregivers at Meadow Glen:

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Rate the home-like setting Meadow Glen provides:

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Based on my experiences at Meadow Glen I would rate Meadow Glen as:

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. What makes Meadow Glen unique for your family?

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***Katherine Pittman Govito  
13 Crider Avenue  
Moorestown, NJ 08057***

Dear Meadow Glen Employee,

I am a graduate student at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey, writing my thesis on assisted-living. I would greatly appreciate your help by your completing the enclosed survey.

Please be assured that no one from Meadow Glen will be reading your individually completed surveys. I am collecting all the surveys and analyzing the results with a statistical program. Therefore all of your responses will be kept completely confidential.

When you have completed your survey, please place it in the envelope provided, seal it and return it to the location designated by your supervisor at Meadow Glen.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Katherine Pittman Govito



## Meadow Glen Employee Questionnaire

1. Meadow Glen management relies on a blend of internal communication methods for staff that includes: memos, bulletin boards, in-house training and in-person conferences (informal and formal) to maintain clear and up-to-date communication.

Strongly					Strongly
Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. At Meadow Glen, employees feel like valued and trusted members of the staff.

Strongly					Strongly
Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Meadow Glen's safety and security procedures are clear, well defined and readily available.

Strongly					Strongly
Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Meadow Glen's use of an effective communication program allows employees to fulfill their duties and responsibilities successfully.

Strongly					Strongly
Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Meadow Glen's full commitment to its residents is re-enforced regularly to employees.

Strongly					Strongly
Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Meadow Glen projects a homelike setting for residents and their families.

Strongly				Strongly
Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Meadow Glen's mission statement was clearly communicated to me during orientation.

Strongly				Strongly
Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Meadow Glen's reputation in the Leesburg community is above average for an assisted-living facility.

Strongly				Strongly
Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Meadow Glen management recognizes the value of informed employees.

Strongly				Strongly
Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Based on my experience at Meadow Glen, I would recommend it to a friend for employment.

Strongly				Strongly
Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Employee cross training at Meadow Glen gives me the opportunity to more closely bond with residents.

Strongly				Strongly
Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. What makes Meadow Glen a unique place to work?

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