

## Gardant Management Solutions Client Success Story

### About Gardant Management Solutions

**Gardant Management Solutions** is among the largest senior assisted living providers in the U.S.. Based outside of Chicago, Illinois they have earned several “Best of the Best” awards from the nation’s largest senior assisted living association. Additionally, they are respected by owners and peers for having operating rates 10% higher than national average and operating margins that consistently rank in the top 25% nationally.



### Gardant’s Burning Need

CEO Rod Burkett hoped to see these margins improve even more and felt strongly that people growth is the key to businesses growth. His lengthy 30-year healthcare career has taught him that when people grow, they take better care of patients and customers, they are happier at home, and they make stronger employees. He knew that a large-scale culture initiative was needed to create self-accountable and enthusiastically engaged employees in their stress-filled industry. Rod was thrilled to discover that People Acuity taught Proactive Accountability and inspired employees to be responsible for their own self-created Work Joy, given that increasing accountability and engagement were two of his important strategic objectives.

### Partnering with People Acuity

Julie Simpkins, Chief Engagement and Development Officer for Gardant, was drawn to People Acuity because of its inside-out approach to creating lasting culture change. She had experienced too many individuals who couldn’t manage their own toxicity or lead themselves, and because of that, they left a trail of wounded people in their wake. This included some former leaders and managers. Rod and Julie agreed that Self-Leadership was the best starting point for all leadership and culture change.

People Acuity worked closely with T&D staff to integrate Gardant’s language, culture, needs, and challenges into the Self-Leadership experience, until it was declared “Gardant-ized” so that it could be delivered to the entire organization. A large-scale multi-year commitment began to roll out Self-Leadership to the organization. This started with their top eighty-five leaders, and then to the 600 leaders in the next tier.

Julie selected internal facilitators and coaches who prepared to lead the Self-Leadership workshops and the group coaching that accompanied it. These same individuals worked toward becoming Certified Organizational Coaches. Specific leaders were also earmarked to complete the People Leadership: Coach-like Engagement learning experience so they could become certified as Guides in support of their people. A handful of them went on to also complete the Fundamentals of Team Coaching certification. All senior leaders also received executive coaching from People Acuity’s top-rated global coaches.

## Outcomes

Anytime a large scale culture initiative is undertaken, it will be tested. And so it was when COVID-19 hit. According to Julie, their Interdependent Leadership learning became both “a lifeline and a destination” as the pandemic provided them the perfect laboratory to practice what they had been learning and reveal its impact. Gardant staff unified quickly, stepping into precautionary action three weeks before anyone else in the industry had even begun to respond. Their swift work saved hundreds of lives. Their death rate currently is 254% lower than the national average, and nearly two-thirds of their many buildings across the U.S. have seen zero cases. Interdependent Leadership literally is a lifeline!

Josh Dodd, one of Gardant’s young up-and-coming leaders described the impact of Gardant’s huge efforts to grow leaders: **“Because of what I’ve learned I’ve become way more motivated and passionate, a more willing and confident leader. I’m know how to influence others and am passing onto others I’ve been given. I’d do anything for an organization that is so willing to grow and help it’s people.”** This is one small evidence of what happens when leaders become Interdependent.

Another leader, Jackie O’Keefe, was recently presented with the coveted Malcolm Baldrige award, an honor bestowed by the U.S. President to those who meet rigorous criteria for performance excellence. No surprise that one of Gardant’s Interdependent Leaders is represented in this respected group who are known for delivering top quality. It seems that Rod’s vision of growing people who would then pass on the growth to others is a legacy that has become a reality.