

## TOP CEOs SHARE THE SECRETS TO OPERATING A SUCCESSFUL HOSPICE, PRIVATE DUTY, AND COMPREHENSIVE HOME CARE COMPANY

What are the secrets of great home care, hospice, and private duty leaders? How do they define their mission? What motivates them and the staff they lead? How do they deal with challenges that make it harder to help the patients for whom they care? Get the answers from industry leaders who stand for the best in their field. A number of them have taken time from their busy lives to respond to the question, "What are the keys to running a successful agency, whether home care, hospice or private duty?"

The answers vary but share a number of common themes. Successful agencies start with a mission that all their staff members can embrace. They hire caring staff, set high standards, and help employees to achieve them. They build trust within their agencies by fostering transparency, teamwork, and collaboration. As leaders, they provide guidance while recognizing the contributions of every employee they direct. And they believe in paying it forward so they also contribute to the communities that they serve.

As they give back and move ahead, they are driven by vision, values, and a relentless sense of mission. Granted, they confront roadblocks put up by changing regulations and economic constraints. But they face them with resilience, humor, and the grit to surmount whatever is ahead. They find joy in their work and impart it to the people they employ. Their core value is to provide high-quality and compassionate care at the lowest cost to the patients they serve. In short, they are servant leaders who are committed to the well-being of both their patients and staff. What unites them, most of all, is their belief in caring management that serves the common good. Whatever field you are in — whether home care, hospice, or private duty — this is the greatest key to success.

By Lisa Yarkony



**Carla Braveman**  
*Vice President Home & Community Services Elliot Health System*

VISITING NURSE ASSOCIATION OF MANCHESTER & SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE

Hospice is a complex health care business that manages a patient's physical, spiritual, and social needs at life's end. It teaches loved ones how to provide care and guides them through this difficult time. It has been doing so in a per diem payment system that hasn't kept up with the costs of technology, drugs, and medical advances. Yet there are many secrets to making this work, as I have learned over the years. The most important one is making decisions based on what is good for patients and their family members. The second is paying attention to the details, including staff morale, financial metrics, quality benchmarking, and overhead costs. Next is being open to the unknown and exploring it even if it is beyond your normal comfort zone. Lastly, enjoy your work and pursue your mission with passion.



**Christie Franklin**  
*President and CEO*

BRISTOL HOSPICE

The keys to running a successful hospice include leadership, strategic, and operational components. The first key is to develop a strategic plan designed to deliver quality care and fulfill the mission imparted to us by hospice founders such as Dame Cicely Saunders. Another key is to constantly improve performance through an ongoing review of outcomes, processes, and procedures. The increase in regulations means that quality reporting, development of new systems, and ongoing improvements in care are all needed for success. Equally important are a committed staff and leaders who foster education, mentoring, and collaboration. All this leads to hospice teams that are pillars of the communities they serve.



**Rosemary Hurzeler**  
*President and CEO*

THE CONNECTICUT HOSPICE

**Mission:** Our mission to honor "life on the edge" requires us to constantly dream and fight for the following values:

**Belief in love:** Our patients and their families, staff and volunteers, community and supporters are our boots on the ground. They represent love with its sleeves rolled up. Imagine what they stand for by envisioning a day when there were no precious metals or money. To foster hope, a piece of wood was made into rings for every one of them.

**Belief in education:** The endless and enduring architecture among all the constituents of hospice is ever constant and ever changing.

**Belief in humor:** A noted psychiatrist worked with many patients who had no health insurance. Some had schizophrenia; others had clinical depression as a result of their cancer. The psychiatrist would opine with a grin, "What's a neurotic? A person who builds castles in the air. What's a psychotic? A person who lives in those castles. What's a psychiatrist? A head shrinker who collects rent from the whole bunch."



**Susan Levine**  
*Executive Director*

## Hospice

### HOSPICE OF THE VALLEY

Leaders must possess a passion for mission. In addition, they must have humility, honesty, and a sense of humor. They must be open-minded, curious, and fair. It's also important to take calculated risks and to really care about the people you serve. Of course it helps to have adequate intelligence, along with technical knowledge of our field, and being lucky doesn't hurt. This isn't a secret. Neither are any of the other qualities I have noted here. It just seems to me that they need to be there — genuinely be there — in a leader of a successful organization.



**Tom Moreland**  
*President and CEO*

## Hospice

### ST. JUDE HOSPICE

Running a successful hospice is different than running any other entity I can imagine. Granted, it does require many of the same skills in operations, personnel management, cost containment, and growing revenue. But it also demands something "special" that only those in hospice can explain. I have heard it called "getting the hospice bug," "having a hospice heart," or "having a servant's heart," the term I like to use. Whichever term you prefer, this sense of calling is the foremost requirement for successful hospice leaders. Second, they must know the local demographics and competition, and they must become engrained in the community they serve. Third, they must keep track of their costs. The hospice benefit is a bundled payment for caregivers, pharmaceuticals, medical supplies, durable medical equipment, and more. If one of them is too high, it can throw the hospice into a tailspin, making it harder to help patients who need support and care.



**Betty Oldanie**  
*President and CEO*

## Hospice

### SUNCOAST HOSPICE

I had the opportunity to be mentored by an outstanding leader and CEO before assuming my current role several months ago. Since then I have strived to put in practice the lessons I learned from her. I have come to believe that running a successful hospice requires the following traits: a deep, abiding passion for the mission of the organization one is privileged to serve; a clear vision of what the organization can and should be; and the ability to communicate that vision so as to engage and inspire others. The successful hospice leader should also have an intense focus on preserving the organization's culture. They should be aware of their limitations, appreciate the strengths of their team, and, most important, they should keep patients and families at the center of all they do. Running a successful hospice requires striking a balance between being a sound business and a sanctuary of caring.



**Susan Ponder-Stansel**  
*President and CEO*

## Hospice

### COMMUNITY HOSPICE OF NORTHEAST FLORIDA

Surround yourself with people who bring diverse perspectives to your hospice and complement your strengths. Give them responsibility and authority to do their jobs. Remind your staff that your patients and their families are partners in your success, so find ways to get their input on the services you provide. Know what your organization is good at and the impact it has at life's end. Be flexible in how, when, and where you provide care. It's easy to confuse ways and means. Hospice is the way, or model of care, but the goal is to support patients and families. Put simply, as health care changes, remember you are in the transportation business, not the horse and buggy business. Successful hospices find ways to make change work for them and evolve as time goes on. Delivering consistent, high-quality care will never go out of style. Make sure your hospice can deliver on the promises it makes.



**Lucy Andrews**  
*Founder and CEO*

## Private Duty

### AT YOUR SERVICE HOME CARE

My top 10 tips for running a private duty agency: (1) Develop and maintain relationships — with your clients, community, and staff. (2) Trust your gut; if it doesn't seem right it probably isn't. (3) Your scheduler can make or break your business. (4) Treat every client as you would your own mom or dad. (5) Only hire staff members who you would trust with your parents. (6) Never hire just to fill a shift. (7) Treat your staff like gold because you have no business without them. (8) Also treat your clients like gold because you have no business without them. (9) Private duty is a labor of love; get out if the love is gone. (10) No money, no mission: manage your cash flow like your business depends on it — because it does! And finally, as George S. Patton once said, "Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity."



**Larry Meigs**  
*CEO of Visiting Angels*

## Private Duty

### VISITING ANGELS

The key to success in a private duty franchise is giving clients personalized care that allows them to live safely at home. We strive to provide the most competent caregivers at reasonable prices, and allow clients to choose the caregivers who best suit their needs. Our directors have extensive experience in private duty home care and we help them develop strong, lasting relationships with our clients, caregivers, and franchisees, too. We have a great team with terrific chemistry, and we keep it that way by constantly creating new programs. Our view is that the only way we can maintain a cohesive franchise system is for every franchisee to feel they're part of something bigger than themselves and that they're experiencing something new and different every week.



**Bob Roth**  
*Managing Partner*

*Private Duty*

**CYPRESS HOMECARE SOLUTIONS**

The private duty home care business is all about connecting to your community. In order to succeed, your agency must have a clear vision, mission, and value system that every member of your organization believes in. Be empathic and listen to your clients so you can truly understand their needs. Take inventory of your relationships in the community and get connected to the key opinion makers. Collaborate with people and organizations that share your core values so you can develop a team approach for your clients. When challenges present themselves, find solutions that reflect who you are. Hire people who have heart, possess a caring spirit, and embrace your vision, mission, and values. Finally, and most importantly, remember to care: care about your clients, care about your caregivers, care about your staff, and care about your community, too.



**Brittnei Salerno**  
*Vice President*

*Private Duty*

**LA JOLLA NURSES HOMECARE**

What does it take to run a successful private duty agency? Define your agency's place in the health care market and be sure your hiring standards fit your role. Recruit staff that share your commitment to service, and match their skills to the patients they serve. Staffing is more of an art than a science, so always aim for a masterpiece! Streamline your policies and your procedures. Once you commit to a policy, save your staff time by empowering them to handle issues in a similar manner. Make time to be involved in the many changes occurring in the home care industry. Your effort will pay off tenfold. You'll know the hot issues that are vexing providers and you'll be present to direct change as it occurs. We want to steer the ship, not ride the wake. Finally, as the owner or manager of your agency, be present. Allow your staff to feed off your enthusiasm and dedication to service. Look for ways to remind them how important their work is, whether they are a data entry clerk or hands-on caregiver. When it's warranted, take charge of a particularly difficult situation. Every organization needs a leader. Be the leader your staff wants you to be.



**Cathy Sparling**  
*Executive Vice President*

*Private Duty*

**ARCADIA HOME CARE & STAFFING SOUTHFIELD SUPPORT CENTER**

Home care is a very unique business because we, as strangers, ask customers to trust us with their most precious belonging — a loved one. Hiring compassionate, trustworthy, skilled caregivers is only one ingredient of success. Developing and honoring a strong value system is essential to complete the recipe.

At Arcadia Home Care, all associates and affiliates "live" by values that demonstrate commitment to each other and our customers:

- Always Customer Focused — Delight internal and external customers.
- Respectful and Honorable — Treat everyone with respect; do business in an honorable manner.
- Compassionate and Compliant — Provide compassionate care that is compliant with regulations.
- Action Oriented and Urgent — Have a sense of urgency, focus, and energy. Complacency has no place.
- Dedicated to the Team — Invest in your most important asset. Teamwork matters.
- Innovative — Strive to provide unique services that will distinguish you.
- Accountable and Committed — Consistently meet commitments; be accountable.



**Georgjean Sweis**  
*National Director of Private Duty*

*Private Duty*

**ADDUS HEALTHCARE, INC.**

At Addus HealthCare, we live our core value to *Just Say Yes!* This means that whatever the request or need we can find a way to fulfill it. We understand that families often make care decisions under stressful conditions, so we ask many questions and listen carefully to identify their needs. When loved ones find themselves in unfamiliar territory, they are unsure where to turn. We want them to turn to us. As a compassionate and knowledgeable resource, we explore various funding options to offer them choices for quality care at the lowest cost. Our passionate team is well trained to recognize changes in a client's condition and respond to their particular concerns. We also build firm partnerships with affiliated health care providers, have a strong involvement in the community, and work with great organizations like NAHC. In short, we *Just Say Yes* to caring.



**Laurie Edwards-Tate**  
*President and Founder*

*Private Duty*

**AT YOUR HOME FAMILYCARE**

I encouraged my staff members to participate in this discussion because there is great trust and collaboration within the agency I lead. It was a proud day for me as I heard them convey their sense of purpose and belief that they are engaged in a career, not just a job. They all embrace our mission to serve the most vulnerable within our scope of practice, and it is a mission that I strive to put above myself. Being client-centered in our policies and actions is a guiding principle of our long-term success. Another is to never give up and to persevere during the most trying times. Pursuing a vision of the future is easy during easy times, but it's challenging now as we constantly deal with the impossible, the uncertain, and the unknown. As a leader, I choose to respond by holding fast to the long-range vision I have for my agency and then working steadfastly to reach it — no matter what.



**Ellen Bolch**  
*President and CEO*

*Home Care*

**THA GROUP**

The simple secret is servant leadership that serves those who serve. Servant leaders motivate others to do heroic work and leave our world a better place. They also have the sense of vision to embrace innovations that transform the delivery of health care to our country's aged, disabled, and infirm. These vulnerable citizens deserve the best care and the best care experience at a price our nation can afford. The ensuing challenge for servant leaders is to provide the most value for the buck while the economic ground keeps shifting beneath our feet. Servant leaders must help their people develop an appetite for change and build learning agencies driven by the quest for value. Organizations like these set high standards and invest in employees so they can achieve them. And employees can best reach their potential under servant leaders. They are leaders who believe in the magic of the human heart, strive to do the right thing, and place the common good above their own.



**Mary Ann Christopher**  
*President and CEO* Home Care

VISITING NURSE SERVICE OF NEW YORK

The secret to running a successful home care organization at this time of radical change is both simple and complex. The simple answer is to enable the chronically ill to remain safely at home. The complex answer is to seize the opportunity to be the catalyst of cross-continuum care. Successful organizations will distinguish themselves as change agents by pioneering effective transitions of care and disseminating evidence-based models of clinical collaboration. They will build programs that affirm the gifts of their team members while maintaining patient and community focus. They will assert themselves at local, state, and national levels to foster important goals: disease prevention, reducing health disparities, improving public health, and honoring the journey at life's end. As they continue on their own journey to success, these will be organizations that care exquisitely, lead audaciously, and collaborate to transform health care as we know it now.



**Ruth Constant**  
*President & Administrator* Home Care

RUTH CONSTANT AND ASSOCIATES

(1) Be yourself and always remember it's the employees who make an agency successful. (2) Think with your brain, but lead with your heart. (3) Always consider other peoples' feelings. They may have had fewer or more opportunities than you, but they are all human beings with feelings and emotions. (4) Never be uncomfortable to acknowledge that you made a mistake or a wrong decision. Remember, none of us are perfect. (5) Get rid of the attitude that you're the "boss" and that you are all things to all people. You're not. (6) Seek employees' advice in their areas of expertise, and show your appreciation by publicly acknowledging their contributions to the agency. (7) Encourage honesty, integrity, and professionalism from all employees by demonstrating these attributes yourself.



**Andrea L. Devoti**  
*President and CEO* Home Care

NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH AGENCIES, INC.

I believe the key secrets of running a successful home care agency are flexibility, humility, and humor. Home care CEOs must be flexible enough to deal with the illogical decisions forced upon us by the federal government and other regulatory bodies. They must face new initiatives with a sense of humor since it can be hard to convey the many ongoing changes to the managers and staff who put them in action. Home care CEOs must also serve as role models for their organization and community. Yet they must have the humility to acknowledge their weaknesses and flaws. Admitting that you are not all knowing and sometimes need help is another key to success. So is paying it forward at all times. As leaders, we must all remember that we had assistance achieving our goals, and we must find ways to help someone else in return.



**Mary Haynor**  
*President and CEO* Home Care

HORIZON HOME CARE & HOSPICE

I believe that success in home care and hospice requires undying persistence, uncompromising standards, and extreme passion for the patient experience. If a leader has those qualities and can inspire others, they have a good chance of guiding an agency to do great things. Along with those personal traits, industry knowledge and a business background are essential to protect any organization from failing to comply with laws and regulatory standards. Finally, openness to new ideas and concepts, combined with constant study, will also increase a leader's potential for achieving success.



**Elaine D. Stephens**  
*Executive Vice President of Home Care & Hospice* Home Care

MASONIC HEALTH SYSTEM OF MASSACHUSETTS

Successful home care agencies start with a clear, compelling mission that all their employees can relate to and embrace. A successful agency has a strong, caring staff served by a committed management team. And together, they say, "YES, we can." Information on outcomes, patient satisfaction, and benchmarks are transparent to everyone so the team always knows how it is doing. Each member of the team has different weaknesses and strengths. No one person has all the answers, ideas, and information. So everyone needs to join in serving patients, helping each other succeed, and bringing each other joy. You will hear a lot of laughter in a successful home care agency. People who enjoy what they do and the people they work with have the most important tools of success.



**Tony Strange**  
*Chairman and CEO* Home Care

GENTIVA HEALTH SERVICES

A home health agency is simply an organization of individuals who are dedicated to caring for people in their homes. The secret to running a successful home care agency is hiring compassionate and caring people. Then just let them do what they do best.



**Karen Thomas**  
*President*

*Home Care*

**OXFORD HEALTHCARE AND ADVANCED TELEHEALTH SOLUTIONS**

A successful home health agency should be based on open book management and a cohesive, multi-talented team dedicated to meeting the challenges ahead. Its leaders must not only embrace the changes needed to thrive in the new health care landscape; they must also be innovative and strategically seek fresh ideas. A successful team never accepts the status quo and constantly looks for ways to excel by taking charge rather than being led. A successful agency provides its team members with training and tools that empower them to apply solid business principles while pioneering new ways to meet patients' needs. As leaders, we must continue to strive for excellence and never stray from our industry's foundation: to provide quality care and keep people in their homes.

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