

## Agency for Change Podcast: Christie Stukenholtz, Co-Founder and President, Senior Care Finder

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### **Christie Stukenholtz:**

You can wake up and think about your dreams or you can get up and chase them.

### **Announcer:**

Welcome to Agency for Change, a podcast from KidGlov that brings you the stories of changemakers who are actively working to improve our communities. In every episode, we'll meet with people who are making a lasting impact in the places we call home.

### **Lyn Wineman:**

According to Consumer Affairs, about 2% of seniors live in assisted living facilities with another 4% in nursing homes. Now, that doesn't sound like a lot, actually, the numbers lower than I thought. But when you consider that the population of adults older than 85 is going to double by the year 2036 and triple by 2049, you start to realize that the U.S. is going to need a lot more senior living facilities in the coming years. And Consumer Affairs puts this number at about one million new units by 2040. So now imagine you are the person who has to sort through each of these options to find the right one for your loved one. Let me tell you from experience, it is a monumental task with a multitude of questions that need to be answered. Which community is the right fit of features and services? How much will it cost? Will it be a good fit?

These are all valid questions made harder by the fact that many services on the web today charge referral fees to help you locate a facility while others accept sponsorship deals, advertising, and a certain facility more prominently in exchange for a fee. It kind of makes you wish there was a clear, unbiased source out there to help you. And I think you know where I'm going with this, right? Hey everyone, this is Lyn Wineman, president and chief strategist at KidGlov. Welcome to another episode of the Agency for Change podcast, where today, we're speaking with Christie Stukenholtz. Christie is the co-founder and president of Senior Care Finder, which is the only complete nationwide directory of independent living, assisted living, memory care, long-term care, skilled nursing, home healthcare, hospice providers, and more. Christie, I can't wait to hear more about your work. Welcome to the podcast.

### **Christie Stukenholtz:**

Hi, Lyn. Thank you so much for having me. I am so looking forward to our conversation today. I have to tell you; I have a seven week baby at home.

### **Lyn Wineman:**

Oh, my.

### **Christie Stukenholtz:**

This was a great excuse to get out of the house and have some much-needed adult conversations, so thank you for having me.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Oh, well, congratulations on the new baby, the expansion of the family. I love talking to women entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs who are mothers. It just really rounds out your life. But I also know you're very, very busy. So, let's just start with Christie. Can you talk us through what Senior Care Finder is and how your business simplifies that? What can be a very overwhelming process of finding senior care?

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Sure. I always like to start by asking the question, if you or someone has had to navigate the challenging process of trying to find care for a loved one, and I won't make you answer and loud, but I'm sure...

**Lyn Wineman:**

But I will. I have been involved only tangentially. I've been one person removed, so I haven't been the person responsible, but I have witnessed how big of a decision it can be and how hard it can be to find the information and just even have an idea of what am I even looking for?

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Exactly. So, either you've gone through it, maybe a parent has gone through it, and you've watched that process. And if you haven't, the reality is that you will. And we know that finding support or care for your loved one oftentimes happens during a time of crisis, and with very inadequate information. Senior Care Finder was created to really remove the barriers and relieve the burdens individuals face during this overwhelming time.

Lyn, to put it in perspective, the Baby Boomer generation is estimated at about 73 million people right now, which is, crazy.

**Lyn Wineman:**

That's a lot. Yeah.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

So, we know the need for senior care is on the rise, and we also know that 80% of people searching for options have no idea where to start. Our goal is to be the most transparent, comprehensive list of all senior living and care options nationwide. Oftentimes when I'm sharing our platform with people, their responses, oh, so you're like the Zillow, but for senior living and care.

**Lyn Wineman:**

That's a good explanation.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

It's an easy way to think about who we are and what we do.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yeah. The only thing I think of is when I go onto Zillow, I know what I'm looking for. I know if I want a single-family home, if I want a ranch, I know kind of where I want to live. I know, I think a lot of people go into senior care and they don't really know what level of care they're looking for, what type of care, and it's such a taboo topic. It's not a thing that a lot of families are really comfortable sitting down to

Thanksgiving dinner and going, hey, Mom, Dad, Aunt Sally, what do you think about senior care? I bet there's tears and yelling and a lot of awkward conversations.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Yeah, you're exactly right. I always say, because this isn't typically the topic that you're of conversation you're having at a dinner party. And so a lot of people, when they're starting this journey on searching, it's the first time they've ever been exposed to the millions of different types of care that are out there, the different acronyms. It's so overwhelming. And we've really built our technology in a way to help serve up to people what we think they're looking for, because we know that they oftentimes don't know. And we've heard from people using our platform that it's really filling that need. And I'm sure we'll get into more of the nuts and bolts of it later on.

**Lyn Wineman:**

I'm really curious. I mean, Christie, you're smart, you're talented, you're accomplished. You could have done so many things. Where did the idea for Senior Care Finder come from?

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Yes. My husband actually spent a decade of his career leading a senior living and care organization. And as you can imagine, lots of our dinner conversations revolved around the daily challenges that he would experience. But it really wasn't until I was in the position of helping my family find care for my grandmother states away, that I realized how broken the system really was. And I just kept thinking as I was navigating that process, that there had to be a better way. I could not fathom that this was what everyone else was going through and ultimately decided to do something about it.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Wow. I've got to imagine the process is even more complex when you're not even in the local market. When you're in the local market, you kind of hear things, you know people, but you're states away, and you really are reliant on outside sources for that information.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

And there's oftentimes a sibling or a family member or a person that becomes kind of the point person to gather the information and filter it down. And our experience was literally having to hop on a plane and tour places and get on wait lists and navigate all of the different types of care. And it was so overwhelming and frustrating, quite frankly.

And to your point, Lyn, that you said at the beginning of the conversation—what bigger decision in your life will you make than who's going to care for your mom, if it's not you? Who's going to do it? And that's a really, really big deal and scary. And so, as I was just going through the frustrations of that, it finally clicked all of the things my husband had talked about of the frustrating process that people go through. I just thought, oh my gosh, he's right. And we've got to change this. If no one else is going to do it, we've got to do it.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yeah, what you said just a minute ago kind of gave me chills. There's no bigger decision than determining how you're going to take the very best care for your loved one. And I mean, the reality is, many of us just do not have that capacity to be a caregiver. We have kids and responsibilities and jobs, and we're just not

skilled in that area, or don't have the facilities for that. So, it is really a big thing. I'm curious about the beginning. You co-founded the company. What did it look like in the beginning, Christie?

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Well, I had just had a baby.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Oh my.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

We tend to do big, wild things, right? All at once.

**Lyn Wineman:**

See, if you wait until the perfect time, you'll never do it. Right. There's never a perfect time.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Exactly. Exactly. There's never a perfect time. And quite frankly, after I had experienced it, the timing wasn't perfect, but I just felt like we have to stop talking about it and do something about it.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Good for you.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Or else we need to move on from the conversation.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yeah.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

So didn't know this was going to happen, but the pandemic hit. So, we were home with a little newborn. I had ironically left my job with no intention of starting this, but the way the cards fell, it just made sense. And we went out on a limb and got some support from some local organizations that support startups, and that really validated our idea and just started to go for it. I was working from home with a little newborn, pretty much all of 2020 on my own, picking up the phone, learning all of the things I needed to learn. And here we are about three years later. So, it's been fun.

**Lyn Wineman:**

That's fantastic. Fantastic. I love stories of people who use the pandemic for good or for progress. The pandemic was terrible, and we never want to go through that again, but I love hearing stories of people who made the most of it. So, I'm curious, Christie, so obviously you were living in Lincoln, and so that is where you got started. But when you think about tech startups, you know, think about Silicon Valley, you think maybe about other markets. I'm curious, what made Lincoln and or Nebraska the right place for you to found this great new company?

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Yes. Well, many years ago, if you would've asked any of my family and friends, they would have bet money that I would not be living in Nebraska at this time in my life. I was born and raised here and really had that itch to get out. And so, I traveled a lot. I've lived and worked all around the world. I've been to all the quote, unquote best places.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Nice.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

But was just constantly reminded that Lincoln's really the best place to live and to work. And we've all seen the lists. There's plenty of lists out there touting Lincoln and Nebraska as a great place to live and a great place to work. And quite frankly, the cost of doing business in Nebraska is 8% lower than the national average. It's an attractive place to be. We've been fortunate also to benefit from a number of the local and state programs that aid startups like ours, which has been really helpful.

But aside from all the economics and all the things that make it seem like a perfect place on paper, anyone that's been to Nebraska knows that it's the people that are the differentiator. And when we don't know what to do, we activate our Nebraska network. And almost always there is someone that knows a girl or knows a guy that can help, and that connection is helpful, but it doesn't mean anything if the other person doesn't respond to the email or pick up the phone. And in Nebraska, people pick up the phone.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Absolutely.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

And I love it, and I'm so happy to be here.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Christie, I'm going to tell you my experience in starting KidGlov was very similar, started in Lincoln, Nebraska 12 years ago. People were so generous to me, not with money, but with their time and their advice that I had so many great mentors that I just picked up the phone and said, hey, we met once. I'm just really curious. How did you do this? What advice would you have for me? And we've also had Tony Goins, the director of Economic Development for the state of Nebraska. And he does, I'm not going to give his cell phone out over this podcast, but he does give out his cell phone pretty generously, and if you call him, he will answer. And Jason Ball, the new director of the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce. So I'm going to share this conversation back with them, and they'll have to thank you for that plug. But Lincoln Chamber, I love.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Well, it is, and both of those organizations, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and L Ped, were both organizations that have been very supportive in our journey and helped us, provided us with some of the means we needed to really get off the ground. So, we're grateful for both of those people who have been instrumental in our growth.

**Lyn Wineman:**

That's fantastic. Let's get back to Senior Care Finder in your view, because there are other software programs out there. I see ads on television for them. What sets your work apart from similar services?

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Everything we do, our entire platform is built through the eyes of the care seeker experience. What is someone going through? What's their stress level, what's their confusion level?

**Lyn Wineman:**

It's high, high, high.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

When they land on a site like ours. And we are the only complete nationwide directory of senior living and care options. There is no one out there that has the quality that we have or the quantity that we have. The other big differentiator is that we're completely free. So, while we do generate revenue as a business, we have a premium subscription model for providers should they choose to take advantage of that. Anyone and everyone that provides any type of senior living option or care can market their services on our site for free. Likewise, if someone is searching on our site, we ask for nothing from them. They can get on, do a search, gather the information that they need to move on and be educated in their decision-making process.

**Lyn Wineman:**

That is so nice to know that all of the options are there because that is not true for other services, right?

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Yes.

**Lyn Wineman:**

You kind of have to wonder, are these only the ones that are able to afford to be on this platform? And I think a lot of people don't realize that many of those nationwide services that you see on TV are very pay to play.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Exactly. And the most traditional models in the industry today are lead generation sources or a pay per move in agency. And to your point, a lot of times care seekers don't realize that. And so, we've really disrupted how we approach the problem, and we're hearing great feedback from providers and care seekers alike.

**Lyn Wineman:**

So how do you do that, Christie? I'm curious, how do you stay non-biased and impartial in these listings, but yet still you're an entrepreneur. I mean, your kids are going to want to go to college, you got to monetize the solution as well.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Exactly. Like I said, anyone that provides senior living or care services can market their services on our site for free. So it's really a no brainer when we talk to providers to just be listed. We do have a premium subscription type model that gives those providers premium placement, sometimes access to advanced analytics and information that they might want to know about the audience of people searching for them. On the flip side, we don't provide, or excuse me, we don't ask for information from people searching for care. So that changes the experience.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Wow. Yeah.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Because when I get there, there's no one asking for my email address, my phone number, my contact information, my inbox isn't being flooded, my phone isn't ringing off the hook with even more information than I need to sort through. And so, when we approach it that way, it changes the game. And everything we do, we do it through a lens of being transparent and being unbiased and giving people the information they need to sort through to at least narrow down their options.

**Lyn Wineman:**

That's great. What a relief to know that people are not going to be filling up your email box. I think for many of us anymore have that one email address that we never respond to. That is the one that we give for online things. So that is really fantastic. So sometimes I think one way to really understand the benefit of the company is to do what would happen if you weren't there? My next question, Christie, is if Senior Care Finder wasn't an option, what would the process of finding the right senior care look like for people?

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Well, we kind of just started talking about it, right? And at the beginning of our conversation, Lyn, when I asked if you had ever been through this experience, your initial response was, I know someone that has. So oftentimes when people are faced with this situation at hand to find care for a loved one, the first thing we all do, it's natural to do, is to think, who do I know that has gone through this? Who can I call? Maybe I'm even fortunate enough to know someone in the industry that could potentially guide me in the right direction. I think that's how a lot of conversations start today. But after that, it's likely you're getting on Google. We know that there are 6,000 online searches for senior living communities in the U.S. every hour.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Oh, every hour. Whoa.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

We know people are using the internet and they're searching for their options. We talked about a lot of places that they would land on today would ask for a ton of their contact information, oftentimes providing some bias results based on who's paying the most. And again, the common solution today is really that lead generation or charging per move in type model.

If you think about it, I mentioned Zillow, but if you think about real estate agents previously using the MLS versus now Zillow being available where consumers can educate themselves before they even go to

walk through a house, that's really the way that it has changed the game. And so, I do believe if we didn't exist, it would continue to be a very overwhelming experience where people feel helpless and confused and they don't know where to go, and they don't know who to believe. We really believe, as I wake up every day and do this work, it's really easy to know that we need to exist.

**Lyn Wineman:**

That's fantastic. Yeah. helpless, confused, having to make a fast decision on a topic that nobody wants to talk about. That is a really difficult place to be. I think, too, I'm not sure how many people realize that even when you search on Google, that's not at all an unbiased search. There's a lot of pay to play on Google. There's a lot of optimization tricks that the more sophisticated, larger companies can play. And when you look for best XYZ in this area, you're not actually maybe getting the best XYZ in this area. So that's fantastic. Christie, I'm, I'm going to change gears here a bit, and I'm going to ask you my favorite question that I ask on every single podcast.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

All right.

**Lyn Wineman:**

And that is, I'm inspired by motivational quotes. As a matter of fact, I'm in a conference room right now, people can't see me, and I'm just surrounded by quotes that are framed and on the wall. I would love a Christie Stukenholtz original quote to motivate and inspire our listeners.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Well, I have to tell you, Lyn, that's a challenge because I am also inspired by quotes. And I have lists and Word documents, and I always save them or screenshot them on my phone. And so, one of those, and there's actually a through line, ironically, of something we've already kind of talked about, but really you can wake up and think about your dreams or you can get up and chase them, and there's never a good time. Everything doesn't always line up perfectly to say, and now's the time to take this risk.

It's a risk for a reason. And so, like I said, my husband and I, we spent years talking about this great idea, and there was just a moment where it was like, we got to do something. We got to move to action. And if we don't, someone else will. And a lot of people have great ideas, but we got to move. And so that's one of the things that I love, and I think about all the time, is it's scary and the timing isn't great. And now we have two little babies at home, but here we are. You just do it. You just, just keep moving.

**Lyn Wineman:**

You just do it. I love it. I can tell that one's going on the wall in the future. You can wake up and talk about your dreams or you can get up and chase them. That is really fantastic, Christie. Thank you for that. What's the future look like for Senior Care Finder next five to 10 years? What's on the roadmap for you?

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Well, it shouldn't surprise you. We have big goals.

**Lyn Wineman:**

I'm glad.



**Christie Stukenholtz:**

We hope to be a household name. So, when someone is faced with this experience, they think of us and they know that they can go and use us as a resource to find the best senior living and care options in the US and beyond. We really want to be providing the highest quality connections with the highest quality providers. We want to be hearing from people telling us that we made a really difficult time in their life so much easier. That's really the goal. And personally, I want to build a really awesome, thriving company right here in Lincoln...

**Lyn Wineman:**

Absolutely

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Full of super talented people. Passionate about we're what we're doing and our mission really making an impact every day. And that's like the ultimate. So, we're growing, we're bringing people on quickly, and it's so fun, so fun to watch, and I just can't wait to see the impact we'll make, not only in our community, but across the U.S.

**Lyn Wineman:**

That is so exciting. I do think as a business owner myself; I think we can make a difference by the work that we do, but we also can make a difference by having a great culture and helping smart, talented, great people develop and then sending them home at the end of the day, happy and mentally healthy and thriving. I think there's so many great things we can do. Christie, for our listeners who would like to learn more about Senior Care Finder, how can they find you?

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Well, the easy place is to go to [seniorcarefinder.com](http://seniorcarefinder.com).

**Lyn Wineman:**

I'm so happy that you got that URL. I'm curious, did you have to pay a gazillion dollars for that or was it just available?

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

That is crazy. It wasn't just available, but it wasn't a gazillion dollars.

**Lyn Wineman:**

That's great. So happy about that.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

That could be another podcast.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yeah, I'm sure. I'm sure. [Seniorcarefinder.com](http://Seniorcarefinder.com).

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Exactly. So go to our site, do a search in your area, see the options that pop up. We're also on all of the different social media platforms. Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, all the places, search for Senior Care Finder, and you should find us also anyone can email me.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Oh wow.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

My email is [christie@seniorcarefinder.com](mailto:christie@seniorcarefinder.com). So, if anyone has thoughts or questions or wants to learn more, feel free to email me directly.

**Lyn Wineman:**

That's amazing. I will put both of those in the show notes. For anybody who didn't get that, they can just link to it in the show notes, and we'll have them in there. Christie, as we wrap up this great conversation, what is the most important thing you'd like our listeners to remember about the work that you're doing?

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Lyn, I would love it if people walked away thinking about who they could send our way. So that can come in many different aspects, right? If you know someone looking or navigating this scary world of senior care, send them our way. Send them to our site. If you know a provider or someone that works for a care provider that would benefit from being represented on our platform, send them our way. And also, we're a growing team. So, if you know someone super talented that would thrive in a fast paced, purpose driven environment, please send them our way. I love to have those conversations and really see who might be a good fit as we keep growing quite quickly. So that's what I would love to, for people to be thinking about is who could they send our way that could benefit from the great work that we're doing?

**Lyn Wineman:**

That is fantastic. And I'll remind people, once again, we'll have those connection links in the show notes to the website and to Christie's email address as well. Ah, Christie, I have really enjoyed this conversation and I fully believe the world needs more people like you, more smart startups like Senior Care Finder. And just thank you for taking time to talk with me today.

**Christie Stukenholtz:**

Thank you, Lyn. I appreciate your time and the opportunity to share the work that we're doing.

**Announcer:**

We hope you enjoyed today's Agency for Change podcast. To hear all our interviews with those who are making a positive change in our communities, or to nominate a changemaker you'd love to hear from, visit [KidGlov.com](http://KidGlov.com) at [K-I-D-G-L-O-V.com](http://K-I-D-G-L-O-V.com) to get in touch. As always, if you like what you've heard today, be sure to rate, review, subscribe, and share. Thanks for listening, and we'll see you next time.