



# If Only Everyone Thought This Way

By Susan Saldibar

In an industry that does its share of hand-wringing over the future, it's nice to see an organization embracing innovation and really stoked about what the future holds.

Led by their CEO Scott Collins, Link-age has been steadily growing its footprint in the industry through its efforts to support innovation and helping to shape the future of senior care. You may know them through their group purchasing programs that help communities get better products at a lower cost. But there's a lot more happening these days with [Link-age](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner). Steve Moran invited Scott to sit down for a Conversations podcast.

## Is Link-Age a services provider, an investor, or a research organization? How about all three?

First a bit about their journey. Link-age started out back in the 90s as a not for profit managed care organization that evolved into a group purchasing organization developing contracts in the areas of food, medical supplies, and pharmaceutical products. They remain dedicated to delivering services to aging adults throughout the spectrum of care, including hospice, meals on wheels, and home care (now serving over 800 communities).

But Link-Age wanted to do more to support innovative companies with products, services, and technologies focused on the "aging" space. So, several years ago, they created Link-age Ventures. As part of that effort, they established a private equity fund in partnership with Chicago-based investment banking firm B.C. Ziegler and Company. The Ziegler Link-age family of funds have given them the ability to invest in early-stage businesses with a focus in the longevity space. "It's proven to be a great vehicle," Scott says, not just for our owners and limited partners, but as a great lens into innovation and what's coming up over the horizon."

In their role as investors, they came to realize that many of the companies they were investing in had not really been tested in terms of viability in a marketplace for older adults. They needed a strong research arm to help them focus more extensively on the 65+ market. That led to the formation of Link-age Connect.

As Steve aptly points out, communities may begin a relationship with Link-age using their group purchasing program, only to become attracted to some of the cool things they are doing with Link-age Ventures. And, finally, they'll be able to take advantage of the research Link-age is doing with Link-age Connect in the aging space to help them better understand the marketplace and what seniors will be buying over the next twenty years or so. It's a closed loop relationship that makes a lot of sense.

### **And, now there's Linkage-labs. Expanding innovation throughout the healthcare ecosystem.**

But wait, as they say, there's more! "One of the things I'm really excited about is something we're calling Link-age Labs where we are innovating throughout the healthcare ecosystem," Scott tells Steve. So, they're expanding their scope to look more broadly at innovation serving the entire healthcare ecosystem. Makes sense. "What's nice is that we've been able to create a whole new network that we've been building over the last 7-8 years, around the country, of thought leaders and innovators, not just here in the US but from Europe as well as over in China and Japan," Scott says. So, that means the very people buying services from Link-age today could also be providing input and becoming part of the development of new technologies tomorrow. We need more of that in this industry.

"What our members have found is that, while the group purchasing is excellent and a very high-touch, high-service model, it's not just about a bunch of contracts and cheap pricing," Scott tells Steve. "It's about how we can help our members better consume the things that are going to position them in a unique and different way."

I have to say, that watching the video, it's hard not to feel Scott's excitement over where he's taken Link-age so far, and where they are going. Can't wait to find out what's next!

Scott shares a lot more insight in this video. You can watch the full video [here](#).



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