

Seniors Get Hooked on Technology

The other day, I was working diligently on my computer and up popped a new instant message: “Hi Hon, it’s Grandma Anne.” That couldn’t be my grandmother, I thought. It must be some kind of hoax. My grandmother is 82-years old and struggles with the remote to her TV! We tried to buy her hearing aides and she was too impatient to adjust.

But sure enough, it was my Grandma. My Mom had bought her a new [Telikin](#) computer for her birthday complete with video chat so they could stay in touch. It’s a computer built especially for seniors, with a large screen and easy set up.

I always knew my Grandma Anne was one-of-a-kind, but I was quite impressed that she has embraced technology!

What the Statistics Say

Apparently, she is not alone. According to a report by the [Pew Internet & American Life Project](#) approximately 53% of seniors use the Internet for either surfing the Internet, checking email or posting pictures.

And it’s not just the Internet. About 70% of seniors own a cell phone, which is up from 57% two years ago. More seniors are accessing social networking sites than ever before -- approximately 34% of Internet users age 65 and older use sites such as Facebook and Twitter — and 18% of this group do so each day.

Did you know that Golden Girl Betty White re-launched her career using Facebook? That Jerry Mathers, (better known as The Beaver) is tweeting about how to live longer with diabetes? There’s fascinating things to find out if you hang out in the senior sites.

Keeping in Touch

And then I began to think about all the other devices that are making it easier for seniors to keep in touch. My Mom (in her mid 60s) and I both have an iPhone, so we are often found on FaceTime. My Mom loves the Kindle I bought her for the holidays, because she can adjust the size of the type and the backlighting makes it easier to read books in the dark. She’s a night owl but my Dad is a morning person and he used to growl at her for leaving the light on!

Today there are a lot of cell phones on the market aimed specifically for seniors. For instance, my Dad has an “[Old Faithful](#)” cell phone that has large keys, text to speech time information and an SOS button on the back that is preset to his emergency number (the local hospital). And the whole family is glad he has [TV ears](#) so we can all watch a movie together without the volume being set at an ear splitting level!

One of my favorite gadgets my Dad has is a [mailbox alert](#). Because it is difficult for him to walk down our steep driveway, the mailbox alert saves him from unnecessary trips ... it tells him when the mail is delivered.

What The Future Holds

There are some very cool products in production for seniors. Accenture is developing an Online Medicine Cabinet which uses face recognition software to identify what pills you should be taking and will even order refills for you. Walkers that help you steer away from obstacles and come back to you when called (so you don’t fall) are quickly evolving. And my personal favorite is a robot that can help caregivers get immobile seniors get in and out of bed.

My home for the future? When I'm 82, I hope I am as cool and adventurous as my Grandma Anne!