

# The Importance of Online Marketing for Assisted Living Residences

## Resources:

**Pew Internet and American Life Project** "Wired Seniors," 9/01

**eMarketer** "The Golden Age of the Web," 1/01

**Jupiter Media Metrix**

**Mediamark Internet Demographic Research**



## The Changing Face of the Internet

As you well know, the aging of America is a real phenomenon, the nation's average age is in the early 40s, and the Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) continue to dominate American culture and the economy. With one every 7.5 seconds, 300,000 Americans turn 50 every month.

It isn't surprising therefore that the 35-55 age group is the largest audience online. They are using the Internet to research and compare information about a broad range of products and services.

While an Assisted Living Residence's (ALR) services would not be purchased online, it is important to realize that consumers of this age group will use the Web to research and compare ALR's. The internet is already used to research other major purchases such as stocks (23% of online shoppers), home loans (29% of shoppers), and real estate (20% of shoppers).

Over **55%** of Americans between the ages of 35 and 55 use the Internet.

**56%** go online every-day and spend an average of 7.7 hours a week.

- 45% have Web access only at home
- 37% at home and work
- 15% only at work

**56%** have used the internet to search health related information.

Web users tend to be more educated, and have higher incomes.

**61%** have incomes between \$50,000 and \$150,000.

**52%** of this age group actively shop online.

## Caregivers Online

As the ALR market knows, Female Baby Boomers are very influential in decisions relating to their parent's long term care. Also, more and more seniors are moving near their Boomer children and the children, especially the daughters, are directly involved in researching and identifying extended care services for their parents.

The fastest growing group on the Internet are women followed by seniors.

**63%** of women online have used the Internet to research health related information.

Over half of these women have searched for health information for their, or their spouse's, parents.

## The Silver Tsunami

Another aspect of the online marketplace that cannot be ignored are the seniors themselves. Today, 16.4 million senior citizens are actively online in the U.S. By 2003 that number is expected to exceed 27 million, or 43% of all U.S. seniors.

To forecast how important an ALR's Web presence will be to a family's decision process, understand that nearly 3 in 5 wired seniors (56%) say that the Internet has improved their connections with family and that 92% of wired seniors use email to communicate with friends and family.

**69%** of wired seniors go online everyday.

**58%** of wired senior women use the internet to search for health information.

**42%** of wired seniors have income greater than \$50,000.

## Making the Web Work for You

Given the current online marketplace and the dramatically increasing growth online of key target markets it becomes apparent that an attractive, exciting, informative and personal website is critical to the continued success and growth of an Assisted Living Residence.

Online marketing and an effective Website will:

- Put you in front of the pre-qualified audience you want to target
- Increase the ROI of all offline marketing efforts by giving consumers a positive “pre-contact” experience with your organization
- Help reduce cost-per-new-resident

Today, not having a website is comparable to a business in 1920 not having a telephone.

Put simply, Baby Boomers will typically not make major purchases or commitments until their questions are answered and they have compared alternatives. As more and more consumers are realizing the Internet is the perfect tool for doing this kind of comparison.

It is certain that the Internet will play a more and more important role to Boomer children and their parents when first researching and comparing Assisted Living Residences. This importance will continue even after family members have become residents. A “brochure site” will not be enough to distinguish your residence from your competitors’.

Beyond describing your services and facility, your website should provide:

- Means for inquirers to get additional information immediately
- Mechanisms for inquirers to share that information quickly and easily with geographically dispersed family members
- Ongoing facilitated communication between the ALR, the residents and their families

Saltbox Solutions has developed a product, Longevity, to help your organization make the most of the marketing opportunities provided by the World Wide Web. To learn more about how we can help you take advantage of the Web, please contact:

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