

# The Importance of Online Marketing for Continuing Care Retirement Communities

## 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

The Internet, now over ten years old, is still the fastest growing communication phenomenon in America. Its novelty has worn off and recent studies have confirmed that the Internet is no longer simply a medium of the young. In fact, over 51% of Americans between the ages of 50 and 64 have access to and use the internet. When put in context of America's aging population trends, it becomes obvious how significant this population is. Currently only 15% of Americans over the age of 65 use the internet but it is a quickly growing group and as the next section outlines, it is the most important segment of the population to Continuing Care Retirement Communities.

## The Pre-Qualified Marketplace

Getting your message in front of the right audience is the key to marketing success. The internet provides a unique, valuable, and cost effective method of putting your organization in touch with the very audience you want to attract.

Unlike other mediums such as radio, television and print, the internet gives you access to an exclusive group of seniors. Wired seniors, meaning those with internet access, are much more likely than other seniors to be married, highly educated and enjoying relatively high retirement income.

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.

**74%**

of wired seniors are married.

**76%**

of wired seniors have at least some college educations.

**19%**

of wired seniors live in households with an annual income between \$50,000 and \$75,000.

**25%**

of wired seniors live in households with an annual income over \$75,000.

While a CCRC's 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 retirement living alternatives. 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).

The following table provides greater detail of how seniors who use the internet compare to those that don't.

<b>Senior Citizen Demographics</b>	All Seniors	Wired Seniors
<b>Marital status</b>	%	%
Married(or living as)	47	74
Divorced	10	9
Widowed	33	18
Never been married	3	1
<b>Income</b>	%	%
Under \$30,000	63	24
\$30,000-\$50,000	21	33
\$50,000-\$75,000	8	19
\$75,000+	8	25
<b>Education</b>	%	%
Less than high school	29	4
High school graduate	34	21
Some college	20	30
College graduate or more	16	46

Source: Pew Internet & Maerican Life Project Surveys, March-Dec. 2000. N=4,335, Margin of error is ±2%.

**69%**

of wired seniors go online everyday.

**68%**

of wired seniors say they would miss the internet if they no longer had access.

**58%**

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

**48%**

of wired seniors have used the internet to search for products and services.

## Families/Family Caregivers Online

As the CCRC market knows, a potential resident's family can be very influential in decisions relating to their parent's retirement and long term care. Also, more and more seniors are moving near their Boomer children and the children are directly involved in researching and identifying retirement living alternatives for their parents.

To forecast how important a CCRC'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. In fact, 48% of wired seniors were encouraged to go online by family members.

Over **51%** of Americans between the ages of 50 and 65 use the Internet.

This group spends 7.7 hours online a week, **56%** go online everyday.

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

**66%** of internet users aged 50-64 have used the internet to research products/services.

**63%** of baby boomer 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.



## 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 a CCRC.

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.

The Internet is the perfect tool for comparing products and services. In fact, internet savvy consumers will typically not make major purchases or commitments until they have used the web to answer their questions and compare alternatives.

It is certain that the Internet will play a more and more important role in the success and continued vitality of CCRCs. This importance will continue even after potential clients have been converted into 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 CCRC, 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:

James Gledhill, Executive Director  
Voice: (336) 456-0669  
[james@saltboxsolutions.com](mailto:james@saltboxsolutions.com)