

Telikin Blog Posts written by Lauren Allegrezza

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Why a Senior Computer

Technology today has become so pervasive that most of us take it for granted. Not only do we take for granted that we can instantly connect and get information, but we also take for granted how this technology works.

And that's one of the driving reasons behind the idea for a senior computer.

Many seniors and computer novices have never had the opportunity to learn the computer skills which are second nature to tech-savvy users. The concepts of windows, desktops, drop down menus, right-click options, minimizing, maximizing, tasks bars, etc., are so familiar to us because we've been using computers with these features for so long. We never stop to think how confusing it may be for someone who's never used a traditional computer before.

For many seniors learning computers, they describe feeling frustrated, overwhelmed, and lost:

"Where am I?"

"Where did the screen go?"

"Where did I save it?"

"How did I get here and how do I go back?"

Some of the biggest interface design barriers that complicate navigation for senior computer users are:

- 1) Disappearing desktops
- 2) Drop down menus
- 3) Overlapping windows
- 4) Missing or disappearing buttons

To simply assume that everyone can, and should, just learn to deal with these navigational intricacies in order to use the computer is limiting and also self-centered. Just because I want to be able to have eight different programs running,

twelve internet tabs opened, and music playing on my computer, doesn't mean that everyone else wants or needs to do all these things at once.

Example of why a Senior Computer should be different

This "less is more" take on interface design can best be exemplified by an actual conversation I had with a customer a few weeks ago. A man in his 50's was thinking about getting a Telikin for his senior dad. He called me up, with his dad in the room, to ask me some questions, one of which was, "Can my Dad have multiple internet browser windows opened?" After I explained how our structured interface allows for one web browser screen open at a time, the man replied, "Well, my dad just said to me 'Why would I want more than one internet screen anyway?'"

Computers for new users and seniors don't have to be complex. Telikin was created, designed, and built for a different kind of user, one who wants an easier computer experience! It simplifies those aspects of computer navigation that are often frustrating and confusing for novices, while it retains the desired functionality of a conventional computer. Technology should make tasks like staying in touch easier, and more fun; and everyone, including seniors, should have a computer that they enjoy using.

Link to Post:

<http://www.telikin.com/blog/index.php/post/why-a-senior-computer>

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Why Support is Critical For Seniors Learning Computers

For many seniors and computer novices, learning how to use a computer is very exciting, but it also may be a little intimidating.

How many of you are familiar with the phone call from a parent or grandparent that goes like this...

“How do I find my email on the computer?”

or possibly, “How do I turn on the computer?”

or even, “I don’t know what I did, but it’s all gone.”

In [this video](#), I review the reasons we've found why providing easily accessible, on-going technical support is so important to helping seniors and tech novices get comfortable with how they can utilize the computer and having fun doing so.

Learning to use a computer is a new experience for many seniors, and the idea of exploring and interacting in the digital world can be quite thrilling. A computer can help seniors stay in touch with their family via emailing and video chatting, keep their minds active by playing games and learning new skills, and even build new relationships by enabling communication with people who share their interests.

However, for those who have never used one before, a computer can be intimidating and overwhelming. Traditional user interfaces are not easily navigable, icons and images are small and difficult to see, and effective assistance is often not available. Stories of viruses, spyware, and crashes, may scare off some computer novices, while others may fear that they will somehow “break” the computer by clicking or touching the wrong button or icon. As a result, easily accessible, ongoing technical support is critical in facilitating the newcomer’s adoption of computer technology.

Encouragement

Many seniors want to learn how to use computers, but they may lack confidence in their own ability to do so. An effective technical support agent can help overcome these worries, which is why we offer friendly, comprehensive, on-going support for our users. Simply saying something like, "A lot of our customers are computer beginners, and we've helped them learn how to use the computer" allays fears and concerns and provides reassurance. Many first time users may also feel like they have stupid questions, so it is very comforting for them to hear someone say, "That's not a silly question! We've heard that many times before."

Incremental Steps

Furthermore, a great technical support agent knows how to move in incremental steps when teaching new skills. Many of our customers have never even touched a computer before. With these individuals, our technical support team members will get them started with how to move the mouse, click a button, and type with the keyboard. Then, email is usually the first application that they teach because once users start seeing letters from their family members, they are very encouraged by what the computer can do for them. After the user gets more familiar and comfortable with email, our team members might move on to video chat or web browsing. Introducing and teaching one application at a time, and allowing the learner to gain confidence before moving on, prevents them from feeling overwhelmed.

"Language" Barrier

Another barrier for some seniors learning to use a computer is unfamiliarity with computer jargon. Without ever having been exposed to words such as "URL address bar" or "text box," novice computer users would be unlikely to understand directions using those terms. An effective tech support agent knows it is necessary to explain concepts and instructions in a relatable way. Additionally, this is why remote access capability is an excellent asset for tech support teams. For one, by being able to

remotely see the user's screen, the agent can know exactly what the user's question is about. And then, because they can control the mouse, technical support agents can instruct verbally while demonstrating visually to the user. This process of visual and verbal teaching allows for better understanding.

For seniors, the peace of mind that comes with knowing they can call up a friendly and patient person to answer a question is also a major motivator for them to want to start using a computer. Again, technical support helps to ease fears and doubts about the users' ability to master key computer skills.

Our mission is to keep family and friends connected by restoring simplicity and fun to the personal computer. We want our users to get the most out of their computer, and providing great support is the best way to accomplish that. What has been your experience with helping older adults learn technology or even your own learning process? Leave me a comment below to share your story or ask a question!

Link to Post: <http://www.telikin.com/blog/index.php/post/why-support-is-critical-for-seniors-learning-computers>

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Getting Grandma Online

Recently, I came across an article on the New York Times by Paula Span about technology and internet adoption among older adults.

Though internet use among adults 65+ is higher than it's ever been, at 53% according to the [most recent data from Pew Research Center](#), this percentage is still way far behind the rate of other age demographics. Ms. Span notes that the older adults demographic is the one that can benefit the most from having internet access, and yet, they are the slowest to adopt!

Technical Support

One of the points about how to accomplish this that Ms. Span brings up is about technical support.

Proper technical support, either from family members or an outside agent, is [necessary for many older adults learning new technologies](#). From reading the comments on the article, it seems like everyone has a story to share about trying to teach their mother/grandfather/aunt/great uncle how to use a computer for the first time. This process can be very frustrating for both parties involved, especially if it's over a distance. Proper support for those new to technology is hard to come by because most technical agents are trained to give support to the 25-35 year old demographic. It's not always a matter of the agent being respectful or kind, but it may be that the agent just doesn't understand how to explain certain concepts to a tech-novice. With a senior who's never even touched a computer before, walking them through how to set up a wireless internet connection takes a whole different approach than with someone in their 20s.

This is why at Telikin we look for qualities like [patience, empathy, resourcefulness, and perceptiveness](#), as well as technical expertise, in our support agents. We also

train them to use non-technical language and common metaphors to explain how functions like email or photosharing work. Remote access capabilities also help tremendously because it overcomes the “language barrier” between the tech agent and tech-novice user.

Tablets?

Ms. Span also suggests tablets as an option for getting more older adults online quicker. Tablets often are considered as a good option for first time computer users, and certainly they have benefits, but they are not the answer for all, as I've written about before in, [iPad for Seniors?](#) For example, tablets still have to be configured, which is a complicated process for a computer novice. Additionally, because apps for tablets are all different, there is no consistent user interface, further extending the learning curve for a new user.

Ms. Span concludes her article by saying this was only one idea, and that she would welcome others.

It seems as though there is this belief that if only we could get a laptop or tablet in the home of everyone over the age of 65 then we'll have cracked this digital divide! But this line of thinking leaves out one big piece to the puzzle– the technology itself.

What about Technology?

Here's my thought: Maybe part of the reason why older adults, on the whole, have taken so slowly to adopt computer technologies is because these technologies aren't designed for them. Traditional computer technologies are complex and frustrating, even to many experienced users!

Sure, many people think that the iPad is “easy” to use. Those that do, however, also

probably use a smartphone or other computer. Concepts and techniques that come “naturally” to those who are tech-savvy are actually not that natural. *How do I get more options? Right-click on your mouse, of course! How do I rearrange these apps on the screen? Hold down on one until they all start wiggling and move them into place!*

We've learned these skills over years of using all kinds of digital devices. Certainly, there are many people in their 60s, 70s, or even older, who are computer literate and have learned these skills. These seniors use smartphones, tablets, and computers. However, an even larger amount have never had the opportunity to learn technology, and therefore do not hold this niche skill-set. And of course, there are those who think computers are too complex and frustrating and only use them begrudgingly.

If we want more seniors to get online, **then we must actually offer them something worthwhile to adopt.** That's why we developed Telikin. We took a step back to reevaluate what people, seniors and others, want most from a personal computer. Then we took those functions and presented them in an easy to navigate interface built on a protected and safe system and using state of the art, touchscreen capability, all helping to remove the barriers to computing. If we really want to get more seniors online and using computers, we cannot overlook the importance of the device technology.

What are your thoughts? Leave me a comment below and share this article using the buttons at the top of the page!

Read the full article, [Online Habits Coming Slowly to Older Adults](#), by Ms. Span.

Link to Post: <http://www.telikin.com/blog/index.php/post/getting-grandma-online>

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Senior Loneliness

The risk of loneliness in seniors is a major concern, and technology presents opportunities to help overcome that risk.

I recently came across an article in the New York Times discussing loneliness in seniors. The article, written by Elizabeth H. Pope back in September cited, among others, a study, "Loneliness in Older Persons: A Predictor of Functional Decline and Death" led by Dr. Carla M. Perissinotto at of the University of California San Francisco which was published this past July.

While the concept that close relationships can help improve a person's quality of life is not in itself earth shattering, Pope included some more interesting statistics and facts on loneliness, for example:

- the majority, 62.5%, of lonely people (in the UCSF study) were married or living with others
- an estimated 20% of the population is chronically lonely, while almost 40% of adults over age 65 are chronically lonely
- other studies have found an association between chronic loneliness and other health risks such as high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, depression, and cognitive decline and dementia

These three points help us realize that as we age, regardless of whether or not our spouse is still with us or if we're living with family, we must make a **concerted effort to feel companionship and camaraderie** with other human beings. Pope also notes this, quoting Dr. George E. Vaillant, a professor and psychiatrist at Harvard Medical School, "In the same way you exercise, pay your taxes and eat a healthy diet, **you need to start replacing friends as soon as you lose them**, particularly around retirement age."

Maintaining and creating new relationships does not just happen; *it takes effort*, but as we become more geographically separated from family and friends, it becomes more challenging.

While many bemoan the fast-paced digital world, **computers** can actually be used to enhance, complement, and facilitate relationships.

How so, you ask? Here are a few examples that, though fictional, exemplify many real-life situations in which people find themselves and how an easy to use computer can help:

1) A job transfer causes Greg and his family to move out of the state. Now, he's hundreds of miles away from his parents who begin to feel like they are missing out as Greg's kids, their grandchildren, grow up. Visits at summer vacation and Christmas are great, but not enough. **Video Chat** helps maintain the relationship during the long gaps between visits. The kids can now show off their missing tooth and new puppy to their grandparents, who do not feel so far away anymore.

2) After a fall while living on her own, Ethel, who's 84, moves in with her daughter. Though she's now living with someone she loves, her daughter has her own busy life, and Ethel begins to feel lonely. She uses the **internet** to research where in town she can play cards, and finds a group that meets twice a week at the fire hall down the street. At these gatherings, Ethel makes friends with her fellow card players and now looks forward to seeing them.

3) Al and his wife Sharon finally make the move into an independent living community after being retired for a few years. The environment is friendly, and they both make new friends. However, they still miss the people they saw regularly before moving. Al and Sharon exchange **emails** several times a week with their old friends to keep up with each other's lives and to set plans to get together.

Computers do not replace personal relationships, but rather make them easier to maintain. In what ways are you using the computer and the internet to strengthen your relationships? Leave me a comment below to share your story!

Link to Post: <http://www.telikin.com/blog/index.php/post/senior-loneliness>

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iPad for Seniors?

Many people consider the iPad for seniors who want to get started with technology. To some people, the perceived usefulness of the touchscreen and the popular iOS make the iPad a tempting option for their senior loved ones who want to use computers and connect online.

However, when choosing the best device for a senior who has very little experience with technology there are many factors to consider. An iPad may be a good option for some seniors, but it's not the best for all, and there are several other kinds of devices out there to consider.

Here at Telikin, we've had thousands of conversations with seniors and tech novices learning how to use the computer and the internet, and so we know what questions they ask, what hesitations they have, and what issues they are facing when it comes to starting with technology. One of the best things to keep in mind when choosing a [computer for seniors](#) is that *the device is not for you* – it's for someone who isn't familiar with technology and the skills that you may think are second nature.

Here's a list of questions to think about before getting a computer for a senior who is a tech novice:

1. Will the senior have easy access to on-going support?

For technology novices, it will take some time to get confident and comfortable using the new device. Technical support for issues with the software or hardware is important, but new learners will often need "How To" support to show them how to use the device. Are you going to make yourself available for when they have questions about how to do something? Many people would like to help their parent learn how to use a computer, but geographic distance makes it impractical. Anyone who has tried to give technical instructions over the phone knows how difficult it is. If you get an iPad for a senior parent, do they know who they can call when they

have questions? Is that individual going to be patient enough to repeat instructions and empathetic enough to know how to describe things in a relatable manner? Here at Telikin, we've seen first-hand how much on-going support can help someone who is trying a computer for the first time. Friends and family often overlook the necessity of support when helping their loved one get connected, but really, support is a very critical aspect.

2. Will the senior have to configure the device themselves?

Configuration is important when considering the iPad or other device for a senior. One of the benefits to the iPad is the huge selection of apps that can be downloaded. However, as demonstrated in the 2010 study, *"Enhancing the Social inclusion of Seniors by Using Tablets as a Main Gateway to the World Wide Web"*, by Franz Werner and Katharina Werner, a device should be set up before given to a tech-novice senior in order for them benefit from it. Doing so helps reduce the barriers to getting started and simplifies the learning process.

This question raises another issue with traditional computers – if the user can download or install any program, the computer becomes susceptible to harmful viruses. Without knowing the signs of a virus infected installation, a new user (even tech-savvy users) can accidentally infect their computer.

3. Does the device have a consistent user interface?

The results of Werner and Werner's study also showed that a consistent user interface among different programs on a device is important to helping seniors master technology. If the user must learn new navigation, buttons, and skills for every program, the entire process is that much more difficult. Look for a device that has similar style buttons and navigational patterns and performs in the same expected manner so that the user can quickly become fluent. While the iPad can have thousands of useful applications, it may prove difficult for seniors to adapt to each specific interface.

4. Will the senior be able to comfortably use the device?

Many people like the iPad and other tablets because of its small size and portability. However, these aren't necessarily characteristics of the optimal device for seniors. For example, holding the tablet while trying to use the touchscreen can be tiresome. Laptops have the benefit of being portable, but do not require being held. However, most laptops are not touchscreen, an attractive feature for seniors. Desktop computers, because they sit on a surface, are more ergonomically designed to allow for correct position of head and arms. When deciding between a tablet, laptop, or desktop, the specific abilities and limitations of the senior must be considered. Does the senior actually need the device to be portable? Would he or she rather have something sturdy that they don't have to hold? If you think about how and where the senior will be using the computer, you'll be able to make a better decision.

Additionally, a touchscreen is very intuitive and can reduce the barriers to seniors first learning computing. However, typing on a small on-screen keyboard is not always easy. A physical keyboard with large print keys may be necessary. For these reasons, we developed the Telikin as a touchscreen computer with the capability of an on-screen keyboard, but also include a physical keyboard. We recognize that what works for one individual might not work for another.

5. Will the device "grow" with the user?

When first expressing a desire to learn computers, many seniors only want to send emails or play games. Once they learn these skills and begin to feel confident, they often want to move on to other activities. Seniors who never thought they would even go online find themselves setting up a Facebook account to share pictures with their grandchildren! The device shouldn't be so limited that it only lets the user do one or two things. Instead the senior should be able to explore more as he or she gets more comfortable, without having to add extra software or applications. So when it comes to the question of the iPad for seniors who want to move into the digital age, the answer is that every individual is different, and you should consider these questions before committing the user to a device. It is also important to

consider the return policy of the product, because what you think will be a good option, might not end up working. Here at Telikin, we've found that giving our customers 60 days to try the computer gives them more than enough opportunity to ensure that it's the right product for them.

If you have any questions or would like to share your experience, leave me a comment below.

Link to Post: <http://www.telikin.com/blog/index.php/post/ipad-for-seniors>

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Connections with Friends, Family Important to Seniors' Quality of Life

Forty percent of seniors think staying connected to friends & family is most important to maintaining a high quality of life in their later years. This statistic comes from a recent study on aging from the National Council on Aging, UnitedHealthcare, and USA TODAY.

According to Lisa Suhay, the author of an article in The Christian Science Monitor¹ about this study, **40% of seniors in the study listed staying connected to friends and family as the most important aspect to maintaining a high quality of life in their later years**, while only 30% listed having financial means as most important to their quality of life.

Lisa also notes, "While the survey found that seniors today are comfortable using technology, they do say 'a lack of understanding and cost' are obstacles for them to widely adopt technology."

Computers can be a great way to stay in touch with others, however, the complexities of traditional computers and other devices make it difficult for a first-time senior user to get started.

Here at Telikin, *we get that*, which is why we developed the Telikin computer.

We strive not only to give seniors, or anyone else frustrated with modern technology, an easier way to send emails, check the news, research information, and stay in touch with family, but also to do so at a cost that is very comparable to those traditional computers which are more difficult to navigate.

In her article, Lisa goes on to describe her experience with her own mother who loves using the computer, but still has some difficulties. While reading the article, I noticed that so many of the points Lisa brings up about her own experiences are

ones that we often come across and know to be true.

1. Support is Critical

Lisa explains that she is her mom's "IT person on call 24/7."

Well, we've heard that one quite a few times before. Adult children are often the ones who contact us to purchase Telikin for their parents. They frequently explain how their parents call many times with computer questions. These customers realize that the Telikin support team can be an effective partner in helping their parents enjoy computing, and that our support team can be more readily available to handle their parent's computer questions about sending an email or setting up a Facebook account. And with remote access capabilities, our tech support team can very easily show a user how to do something, rather than just verbally describing it.

2. Seniors Love Facebook (and other social sites)

Lisa notes that her mother soon would be checking "Facebook to watch the video of her grandson...rescuing our cat from a tree at midnight last night."

Every day, we help our customers access Facebook to check out pictures of their grandkids or catch up with old friends. We also receive requests for help with setting up online dating profiles, as with increasing frequency seniors are using online dating sites to find new friendships and relationships.

3. Using technology helps decrease depression and loneliness in seniors

Lisa explains how her mother writes stories on the computer but she expresses frustration about the complexities of formatting, "Why don't all computers just have the same word processor? It would make life so much easier!" Lisa then states, "While my mind reeled at the prospect of explaining tech wars to mom, **it was better to have her healthy and aggravated than isolated, weepy, and depressed because the technology wasn't in her life at all.**"

This statement is validated by recent studies from UCLA² and the University of

Alabama³ which found, respectively, that isolation, loneliness, and depression are major health risks in seniors as they age, and that information and communication technologies such as computers and the internet, allow seniors to build social networks and keep them connected to the world.

Technology can abate loneliness in seniors by giving them more opportunities to communicate with others, read about world events, and keep their minds active. Reducing isolation improves quality of life and overall health. **At Telikin, "keeping friends and families connected" is not just a tag line, it is our heartfelt commitment** to help people of all ages stay connected using computer technology. Computing does not have to be complicated or frustrating!

So for those of you who desire your senior loved ones to stay connected with you online, the benefits to them will be significant and the entire family will experience the joys of staying close, even over distances!

1. Read [Lisa Suhay's article in The Christian Science Monitor](#)
2. Read the [ULCA study, ULCA study, Loneliness in Older Persons: A Predictor of Functional Decline and Death](#)
3. Read the [abstract of the University of Alabama Study, You Can Teach an Old Dog New Tricks: A Qualitative Analysis of How Residents of Senior Living Communities May Use the Web to Overcome Spatial and Social Barriers](#)

Link to Post: <http://www.telikin.com/blog/index.php/post/connections-friends-family-important-to-seniors-quality-of-life>

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Using Technology Boosts Seniors' Self Esteem

I've written many times before about [loneliness in seniors](#) and how [computers can help abate that loneliness](#). I was quite excited, though not all that surprised, when I read an article about a study from Case Western Reserve University led by T.J. McCallum, Ph.D, a Professor of Psychology, that looked at technology and socialization in older adults. Out of his research McCallum found that **seniors who use technology have higher self-esteem** and greater social interaction than those older adults who do not use technology. As Kate Freeman, the author of the article, puts it, "Technology plays an increasingly important role in helping older adults maintain and improve mental and emotional well-being."

Though not cited by Professor McCallum as a reason for the higher self-esteem, learning a new skill (such as using a computer) surely can help boost the confidence level of an aging adult. Every day at Telikin, we hear seniors say they thought they were "too old" to learn computers or that the technology age has simply passed them by. However, once they get started with Telikin, and our Support Team shows them how to do a few things, they start realizing that the computer is really something they can utilize!

Warding off Loneliness in Seniors

Given that isolation and loneliness are major threats to aging adults, this study is very encouraging about the benefits for using technology to help seniors feel more connected and engaged with people. New technologies, such as email, video chat, and social networking sites, offer ways for seniors to feel included, rather than excluded, from family happenings and current affairs.

Today, families don't always live close by, and most members of the family are already communicating online. Getting grandma and grandpa on the computer is a clear way to help them stay updated about what everyone is doing. **This is precisely why we developed Telikin – to help more people stay connected to their**

families. This connection helps ward off loneliness and depression, and the added bonus, as Professor McCallum's study shows, is that using the technology helps boosts their self-esteem!

Link to post: <http://www.telikin.com/blog/index.php/post/using-technology-boosts-seniors-self-esteem>

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Happy Grandparents Day

September 8th is Grandparents Day. This is a day for us to take time to appreciate our grandparents who have touched our hearts taught us life lessons, and made us a little wiser.

For Grandparents Day, and every other day of the year, here are 5 ways to show your grandparents you care.

1) Sit down and talk with them

There are so many channels of communication available to stay in touch with people. We'll use text, Facebook, Skype, email, and (sometimes) the phone. These are all great methods to stay connected, but nothing – and I repeat nothing – can replace the value of a face to face conversation. Sometimes, grandchildren may find it hard to connect with a grandparents, whether it's because of a generational gap or the means of communication, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't make the effort.

My grandmother had a stroke at the age of 40 that severely affected her ability to speak. She often knows what she wants to say in her brain but has difficulty getting out the words. When I want to show that I really care about her, I sit down next to her and give her the time to get out what she wants to say. This can take a little bit of patience, however, at the moment when I do get what she's saying, the expression on her face says it all – she's so happy that I understood what she wanted me to know!

2) Join in one of their favorite hobbies

You may not love model trains, but maybe your grandfather does. Why not accompany him to the model train shop? Ask him questions such as what are his favorite kinds of trains, why he got into collecting model trains, or what kinds of trips he's taken on a train.

Does your grandmother love music? Ask her who her favorite artists are and then pull up some of their songs online. As you listen to the music ask her if the songs remind her of a specific memory. You might get a surprising story – like learning what song your grandmother and grandfather had their first kiss to!

3) Give them the gift of one of your talents

My family has been blessed with a lot of musical talent, and during family get togethers, it's not uncommon for us to bring out our instruments and play. Recently, on family vacation my cousins and I got a few guitars and sang songs together as my grandmother watched and listen. Her smile just grew and grew as she watched her grandkids showing off their talent.

Perhaps you love cooking? Prepare a meal that's easy to transport and bring it over to your grandparents, and then *sit down and eat with them*. Not only are you sharing your gift, but you're sharing your time.

4) Go through old photos with them

Today, people *live* in pictures. They're posting new shots of their friends, their babies, their food every hour of every day. Looking at old photos is a great way to reminisce. It's also fun to look at pictures before we had the ability to take 73 shots before getting the picture juuuuuust right. If your grandparents have a lot of prints, why not offer to go through the pictures and organize them. You could also offer to scan the photos so your grandparents have digital copies. As you browse through the pictures together, ask some questions about when and where they were taken and who's in them - you might realize that you look exactly like your great-great-uncle!

5) Use technology to connect with them

But what about if your grandparents live far away? What if you can't just hop over for dinner one night?

Technology can help you there! When getting together in person just isn't an option, video chat is the next best thing! Through a video chat, your grandparents will be able to hear your voice and see your face – a more personal experience that they will appreciate.

While one of my grandmothers lives close by, my other set of grandparents live far away. Talking on the phone just wasn't something we did often. Two years ago, they got a [Telikin computer](#). Now, my grandfather LOVES video chatting. Almost every other night, I hear the computer ringing with a video chat call from him. It's great that I can see his face and catch up with him.

What are some ways that you celebrate Grandparents Day? Leave me a comment below!

Link to Post: <http://www.telikin.com/blog/index.php/post/grandparents-day-2013>

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Senior Computer and Internet Use

The Pew Research Center just released new data on internet and computer usage among older adults. In short, the numbers show that more seniors are adopting technologies, but still at a much slower pace than the rest of adult Americans.

The key overall statistic is that now 59% of Americans age 65 or older go online. In last year's report that same number was 53%, which was the first time more than half of seniors went online. This increase in seniors logging on demonstrates the steady, if rather slow, trend for more and more older adults adopting new technologies. As I've written about before, the benefits of technology for seniors are numerous, so it is encouraging to see that more are actually capitalizing on those benefits.

Here are some of the other key findings:

- The number of seniors getting online varies by age groups:
 - 65-69: 74%
 - 70-74: 68%
 - 75-79: 47%
 - 80 plus: 37%
- Among seniors, those who are younger, higher-income, and higher educated are more likely to hold "technology assets."
- There are also some clear barriers for some seniors adopting new technologies:
 - Support: 77% of seniors say that they would need someone to help walk them through learning a new piece of technology
 - Health: 40% of seniors report physical or health conditions that make it difficult to read or to carry out daily activities
 - Skepticism: 35% of seniors who are not online DISAGREE with the statement that "people lacking internet access are at a real disadvantage because of all the information they might be missing."

The fact that 77% of seniors feel they would need support in order to adopt new technologies is a clear indicator of how we as a society can get more seniors online. Here at Telikin, one of the most critical parts of our operation is providing technical and tutorial support to our customers. The Telikin computer itself was designed specifically for seniors and is much easier than traditional computers for tech-novices to learn, however, one of the major barriers to overcome is the confidence of the user. Many seniors feel as though they CAN'T learn computers - sometimes they had a bad experience in the past, sometimes they are afraid of breaking the computer, but whatever the reason is they need some encouragement and guidance to get them comfortable using the computer.

The other piece of the puzzle is the technology itself. Older adults face physical challenges such as vision and mobility issues that make using traditional computers difficult. If a senior has macular degeneration how could he possibly see what's on the screen of a 10 inch tablet? And for a senior who has severe arthritis in her hands, manipulating a mouse is very difficult. Technology for seniors has to be designed specifically for them as users.

And of course, the last piece is to demonstrate to seniors how they can actually benefit from technology. Everybody uses computers for different reasons, and it's the same with seniors. Maybe one gentleman would love to research new fishing tips, or maybe a grandmother misses her grandchildren who live across the country and would like to see their faces. Whatever their need, once a senior can see how a computer will help them, they are going to be more willing to try it! Many times when we have a new customer call into our support to learn about the computer, the agent will first ask what they were hoping to accomplish, whether it be playing games, online grocery shopping, finding love, or checking on their investments. Then the agent shows the customer which application can help them accomplish that goal.

As the Pew data shows, more and more seniors are adopting technology. And as long as we clearly understand the barriers, we can help even more seniors stay connected to their friends, family, and the world through technology.

Link to Post: <http://www.telikin.com/blog/index.php/post/senior-computer-internet-use>

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Using the Internet Decreases Depression in Seniors

If you needed yet another reason to get your senior parent, friend, or grandparent on the computer, here's one - Using the internet can help reduce depression in older adults. A recent study out of Michigan State University led by professor Shelia Cotten, examined data on more than 3,000 retirees age 50 and older. In this study, of those who did not use the internet, 10% had depression, while only 7% of those who did use the internet experienced depression - a 40% decrease in occurrences of depression when all other factors were held constant. While there wasn't data on exactly what these users were doing on the internet, Cotten says that it doesn't really matter: "It's really about being able to connect and communicate and find information you need."

We see that every day here at Telikin.

There are two major challenges of aging that a computer and internet can help a senior overcome.

The Miles Between

The first challenge is that families today are so spread out. A senior living in Arizona might have children in Utah, California, and Pennsylvania, and grandchildren spread out across the world in New York, Chicago, Switzerland, and London. Maybe she has some childhood friends that are still living, but they also live in different areas. How is she supposed to feel like she can stay in touch with all these people?

A computer and internet can help her connect with the people she loves on many levels. One of the most exciting ways is through video chat. Getting to see loved ones and have face-to-face conversations makes the miles between them disappear almost completely. In the words of one Telikin user, "to be able to chat with and see my grandchildren is as though they are here with me." Then there is also email, photosharing, and social networks like Facebook. All of these channels help keep loved ones close even when they are miles apart.

Decreased Mobility

The second challenge is that as seniors age they may lose their mobility and no longer be able to get out of the house. This often causes feelings of isolation and loss of independence, which can lead to depression.

A computer can bring a new sense of independence and inclusion to someone who is unable to leave their house. Now they can shop online to get groceries and presents, read the news to know what's going on in the world, or do their banking online. They are no longer so dependent on other people to help them do the things they need to get done. Furthermore, they can communicate with people they might not otherwise see and talk with.

The daughter of one Telikin customer actually wrote to us saying, "Bought this computer for my mother who is mostly housebound and completely non technical...She has been emailing and Skyping family and friends. She told me that she feels less isolated and alone...thank you Telikin!" And this is just one example of the kinds of stories we hear everyday!

17 Million

With all these benefits of computer, it's a wonder that more seniors aren't hopping online. According to the most recent data from Pew Research Center, 41% of seniors still don't use the internet. Since there's 43 million seniors in America, that's 17 million older adults who not only are missing out on staying connected with their families, but who are also at an increased risk of depression.

The Pew data also gave insights as to why some seniors are not adopting technologies:

- 77% feel as though they would need support to help them learn a new device
- 40% have physical or health barriers that would make using a computer difficult

This data shows why it's so important that seniors have:

1. easily accessible, on-going support, and
2. a device that is geared towards their needs and abilities

And here at Telikin, that's what we're doing – offering a computer designed specifically for seniors and also providing friendly and helpful technical and tutorial support. This combination - easy technology and great support - will help more seniors benefit from the power of the internet. Do you know a senior that would benefit from an easy to use computer? Give us a call - 800-230-3881!

Link to Post: <http://www.telikin.com/blog/index.php/post/internet-decreases-depression-seniors>

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Learning Your Own Power

At the end of The Wizard of Oz, Glinda says to Dorothy, "You've always had the power, my dear. You just had to learn it for yourself."

For seniors learning to use this computer, this quote couldn't be more true. Every day Telikin support team members witness first hand the power within tech-novice seniors who master the computer when they send their first email, make their first video chat call, or check their bank accounts online for the first time. So often, we hear older adults lament that they don't know how to use computers. **It's quite disheartening to hear someone call themselves "stupid" just because they don't know how to navigate the complicated icons and screens of traditional computers.** Our customers are far from stupid –many of them have had successful careers and had great accomplishments in their life! But if they never had to use a computer before, they never developed the skill set to use one.

We often tell our users that learning the computer is like learning to drive a car: The first time you got in a car, you didn't know what to do, someone had to teach you. It's the same way with computers – you sit down in front of the computer screen for the first time and you're not sure what to do, but with someone telling and showing you how to do things – you realize it's something that you too can do!

Since Telikin was designed for seniors (and other tech-novice users) to be much easier to use, and we provide friendly, US Based support for our users, many people are now realizing what they can accomplish with computers. **But we know that there are so many seniors out there who just think they can't do it.** Do you know one of them? Tell them about [Telikin](#) and let them know that they have the power - they just have to try it and learn for themselves!

Link to Post: <http://www.telikin.com/blog/index.php/post/learning-your-power>

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Brain Training Can Have Lasting Effects in Seniors

An NIH funded study showed that some types of brain training can have positive effects on cognitive abilities even 10 years later. This study, dubbed ACTIVE (Advanced Cognitive Training for Independent and Vital Elderly) which put 2,832 older adult volunteers through different brain training activities is one of the largest and longest studies examining whether or not training can help older adults stave off cognitive decline. The training consisted of 10 sessions lasting from 60-70 minutes over the course of five to six weeks. Follow up tests were conducted one, two, three, five, and ten years after the initial training. While all participants experience decline from their baseline tests, *those who went through reasoning and speed of processing training experienced less decline* than those who went through memory training or had none at all.

Training as an Intervention

National Institute on Aging Director, Richard J. Hodes, M.D., says that these long term results "suggest that **we should continue to pursue cognitive training as an intervention that might help maintain the mental abilities of older people** so that they may remain independent and in the community."

If the training is effective, the question then becomes *how* to get more seniors doing more kinds of training to keep their brains sharp. In the past couple of years, online brain fitness websites and programs have sprung up, and though the true validity of each might not be yet determined, they highlight a valuable platform for cognitive training – the computer.

Use Computers for Seniors to Train

While older adults have been slow to adopt computer technologies, there has been growth in the recent years, and now finally, more than half of Americans age 65 and

older use the internet. Furthermore, with a computer like Telikin, which is specifically designed for seniors, this opportunity of online training is more of a reality. On a web-based platform, any program can be designed to be easily accessed by a senior in the comfort of their own home. Even if some initial instruction is needed for the user to comfortably and accurately use the program, they could then complete training as frequently as prescribed – even daily if needed!

Additionally, some research has shown that learning new skills could help reduce cognitive decline, so learning to use a computer in and of itself may be helpful. One study published in the Psychological Science journal tested the effects of different activities – learning a new skill (quilting or digital photography), performing non-demanding in-home activities (crossword puzzles and listening to classical music), or engaging in social activities (field trips or entertainment tips) – on cognitive vitality. Only those who learned a new skill showed improvement. Lead researcher Denise Park of the University of Texas at Dallas, explained, “Only the groups that were **confronted with continuous and prolonged mental challenge improved.**” Learning to use a computer, which requires new skills and different ways of thinking, could be the kind of mental challenge needed to show similar improvements in cognitive vitality in older adults.

As the research continues to grow on this subject, we’ll have a more clear understanding of exactly what can be done to help our minds age better, and with the latest technologies, doing so will be easier than ever.

Read more about the [ACTIVE Study on the NIH website](#).

Read more about the [study in Psychological Science](#).

Link to Post: <http://www.telikin.com/blog/index.php/post/brain-training-lasting-effects-seniors>

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Technology the Way to Differentiate LTC Communities

In the long-term care industry, the communities that utilize and offer technologies will be the ones who differentiate themselves from the competition. Recently, LTC executives gathered in Las Vegas for the Long-Term Care. CXO Summit to discuss the current and future state of their industry. According to Chris Hyatt, COO of Emeritus Senior Living, "Technology is going to play a huge role over the next few years, especially as it relates to a demand for better customer experience and quicker turnaround in communication with residents and family members." (1)

Demand for Technology

The attendees at the conference recognized the fact that technology is going to be a major factor for the "decision-making children who ultimately choose a senior living community for their parents." (2)

"Technology is going to play a huge role over the next few years..."

This demand probably stems from the fact that we now live in an age of instant information and instant access, while also being separated from family members by long distances. Children want assurance that they are going to be able to get in touch with their parents wherever they live.

The key to meeting this demand is going to be in the technologies that communities offer to the residents to use. Creating a website where children can view activities schedules or select meals is nice, but it won't satisfy the children's desire to actually check in with their parents.

Imagine being able to offer families the ability to talk with and see their loved ones every night. Imagine the peace of mind that would give to both the parent and child.

Meeting the Demand

Meeting this need is possible, but actually doing so is going to take more than putting a few old, complicated Windows PCs in a room and hoping residents will know how to use them. Why not make a little investment in technology that is not only safe and easy to use, but actually designed for seniors, to help them stay in touch with their families and the world?

Telikin is a solution for communities who want to provide residents with an easy way to communicate with their loved ones and explore their interests. With simple, one touch access to email, video chat, web, games, and more, the Telikin computer puts easy communication right at residents' fingertips. Children will love the fact that with video chat they can actually see for themselves how their parent is doing. And since many seniors believe that connections with their friends and family are the most important aspect to maintaining a high quality of life as they age³, your residents will appreciate the new communication tools you provide for them.

So why not add computer technology to differentiate your community from your competition? Learn more about Telikin for Communities and see why many communities are offering Telikin computers for their residents.

1 & 2. Olivia, Jason. Technology Will be the Biggest Driver for Senior Living Repositioning. 23 January 2014. www.seniorhousingnews.com.

3. Suhay, Lisa. The aging survey 2013: Technology is a big hit with Grandma and Grandpa. 31 July 2013. www.csmonitor.com.

Link to Post: <http://www.telikin.com/blog/index.php/post/technology-to-differentiate-ltc-senior-communities>

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Virtual Vacations

It's the middle of the November, which for many folks in the US means winter weather is here! Winter is a very popular time for vacation, especially to places that offer beautiful, warm beaches. Vacations to faraway places aren't always possible though, especially for some older adults. Whether it be financial, physical, or situational barriers, many seniors do not get the opportunity for travel. However, technology opens up new opportunities for those people to visit places that they might otherwise never get to see.

If you're someone who can't go away on a vacation – or you know someone who can't - here are ways that you can recreate the vacation experience with the computer and internet:

1) Research your destination

When we travel, we learn about different cultures, lifestyles, histories, and peoples. Researching the place you want to visit is the first step to recreating the vacation experience from the comfort of your own home.

2) Take a virtual tour

There are so many sites that offer virtual tours of cities, museums, historic sites, etc. You can take an [aerial tour over Hawaii](#) or [walk through the Smithsonian Natural History Museum](#) as if you were really there. YouTube also has thousands of videos of popular vacation spots.

3) View pictures

Why not take advantage of other people's vacations? Many people post pictures publically for others to view online. Flickr is a popular photo sharing website where you can search for pictures in a particular place. Vacation websites also curate photographs of popular destinations. Check out these amazing shots of [Australia from the National Geographic Travel site](#).

4) Enjoy new cuisine while you “travel”

Another great part of vacationing is new foo! If you're able to cook, find some different recipes to try out. If you're unable to cook, find a local food establishment that offers the type of cuisine from your vacation destination. Order out a meal from a local Cuban restaurant or try out a dish from that new Ethiopian place downtown! Eat your fancy cuisine as you view photos and take virtual tours.

Computers offer so many new adventures for seniors who learn to use them - whether it be the chance to see their baby granddaughter's face for the first time or to virtually visit the beaches of Hawaii. Telikin customers often tell us that their computer opens up “a whole new world” to them that they otherwise wouldn't have known!

So pick a spot – anywhere in the world – and take a virtual vacation there this weekend! And the best thing about a virtual vacation? No jet lag when you come home!

Link to Post: <http://www.telikin.com/blog/index.php/post/virtual-vacations>

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October and November Telikin Cares

Congratulations to these four organizations who were awarded one of our 20" Telikin Elite computers for the benefit of their residents and clients!

The Magnolia School

The Magnolia School in Jefferson, LA is a non-profit organization offering support and services to adults with intellectual and other disabilities. The school's largest program is the vocational day services which help clients through learning job skills, volunteering, and supported employment.

Allister Mckinnel is a vocational trainer at the school, who teaches about 235 adults age 21-82. In the nomination letter, Allister explained how many of his students struggle with using a mouse and keyboard on traditional computers. Students at the school utilize computers in many different ways. The school has a horticulture therapy garden in which the students will often find different plants and insects that they then want to research. Some of the students are also very artistic and would like to be able to paint and draw on the computer, but the mouse makes that very difficult. The Telikin's touch screen and structured interface will make all these things easier for the students.

Congratulations to the Magnolia School and thank you Allister for the nomination!

Assisi Homes of Kenosha

Assisi Homes of Kenosha is an independent living facility, home to 60 residents ranging in age from 62 to 100 who are low-income.

Lizabeth Rogge is the Resident Service Coordinator at Assisi Homes. She nominated her community for Telikin Cares because the community doesn't have a public computer and most residents cannot afford one of their own. Many of the residents in the community rely on food stamps and food pantries for their groceries, so a

computer is just not a luxury available to them. Many of the residents' families live out of state, and they desire a way to stay in touch with them, so Lizabeth wanted to give the residents a way to do that. She "envisioned using Telikin... as a non-threatening approach to using computers," teaching them email, Skype, and brain challenge games so that they can stay in touch and keep their minds active. Volunteers will teach the residents how to use the Telikin so that they can start enjoying all the benefits of computing!

Congratulations to Assisi Homes and a big thank you to Lizabeth for the nomination!

Abe's Garden Park Manor

Park Manor is a 114 resident Independent Living Community owned by the not-for-profit organization, Abe's Garden. Judy Given, Director of Campus Development, got to see Telikin first hand at the LeadingAge Annual Meeting and Expo in October 2013, and once she saw Telikin in action, she knew that the her residents would benefit so much from this computer.

The community did not have any publically accessible computers for use, and only a handful of residents had their own. Residents began expressing an interest in using computers to stay in touch with family and to help stave off further memory decline. Judy explained that staff at Park Manor had tried to teach residents how to use traditional computers before, but the residents struggled with concepts such as "cursors" "clicking" and "double-clicking", so they were never able to get very far. In her nomination letter, Judy wrote to us, "We are so excited about the prospect of providing our residents with an easy-to-use computer so they can access their families, entertainment, and have the experience of self-reliance in using a computer."

Now, Judy foresees the Telikin to be a very popular thing among the residents, as they begin to explore the endless possibilities that it offers – from communicating

with family, to staying entertained, to helping improve their memory.

Congratulations to Park Manor and thank you Judy for the nomination!

Menomonee Falls Public Library

Menomonee Falls Public Library in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin serves about 250-400 senior citizens *every day*. In addition to books, the library offers them classes of all kinds, including computer classes. Gary Finch, the IT Assistant, nominated the library for Telikin Cares because he thought that the Telikin computer would be a great addition to their offering. In the past, some of the seniors who came to the classes had difficulty with traditional computers because of decreased vision and mobility in their hands. The touchscreen interface makes Telikin a much more accessible device for seniors to access the weather, web, and news.

The library's senior patrons will now have access to a computer that is specifically for them! Gary also plans to use the Telikin when teaching computer courses to let seniors know that there is a different kind of device made just for them.

Congratulations to Menomonee Falls and thank you to Gary for nominating the library!

Link to Post: <http://www.telikin.com/blog/index.php/post/october-november-2014-telikin-cares>

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