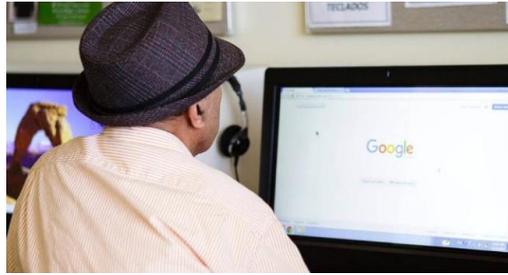


Seniors and Technology



August 19, 2016



Neal Wright | Follow

Chief Information Officer at On Lok, Inc.

Not only do seniors make up one of the fastest growing segments of the U.S. population, but they're also one of the fastest growing groups to embrace technology. Seniors are regularly communicating with friends and family through email and text, while also logging onto such sites as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to communicate with loved ones and simply keep up with the world around them.

Younger seniors (like those served by On Lok's [30th Street Senior Center](#)) who have relatively easy access to the Internet via computers, are quickly discovering the benefits of "being online." In addition, these individuals have more opportunities to learn useful computer skills through the support of their peers via computer group courses at places like 30th Street. However, older seniors – especially those with certain physical conditions or health issues, are oftentimes challenged with wholeheartedly embracing technology due to circumstance.

What's preventing seniors from adopting technology?

According to a [study](#) by the Pew Research Center, roughly 2 in 5 seniors have a physical or health condition that makes it difficult to fully participate in activities that employ the use of technology. Furthermore, many older adults who do not currently use the Internet question whether that lack of access actually hurts them or not. Study respondents report also becoming easily intimidated and even fearful of the need to constantly respond to the ongoing demands that are an inherent part of changing times.

A significant number of older seniors need assistance (or additional equipment) in order to use certain tech devices. For seniors with physical condition like arthritis, an oversized keyboard or a tablet (which doesn't require as much typing) is one solution. And if certain physical conditions prevent them from fully embracing technology altogether, caretakers can benefit from such useful devices as GPS trackers, medication reminders, Personal Emergency Response Systems, wireless home monitoring and other health tracking tools.

Products designed and marketed with senior citizens in mind

From specially designed smart watches to advanced sensor systems that detect falls, younger seniors are open to embracing new technologies as long as they feel they are actually useful. Some technology companies are now listening and have begun to design (or improve) products with senior users in mind. However, stereotypes that paint seniors as a demographic not interested in technology still exist, leaving many tech companies still staying on the sidelines and being slow to adapt.

According to The New York Times ([source](#)), one big obstacle still standing in the way is that many tech companies consist of young employees. In fact, just six of the 32 companies it studied had a median age greater than 35 years old and only eight of them reported a median employee age of 30 or younger. These figures represent the valid disconnect that exists between technology innovators and seniors today. One solution is for tech companies to work alongside older adults more in order to develop tools that improve their quality of life. Also, seniors will likely be more inclined to embrace certain technologies if companies begin to focus on laying out specific features instead of building hip brands that target younger consumers.