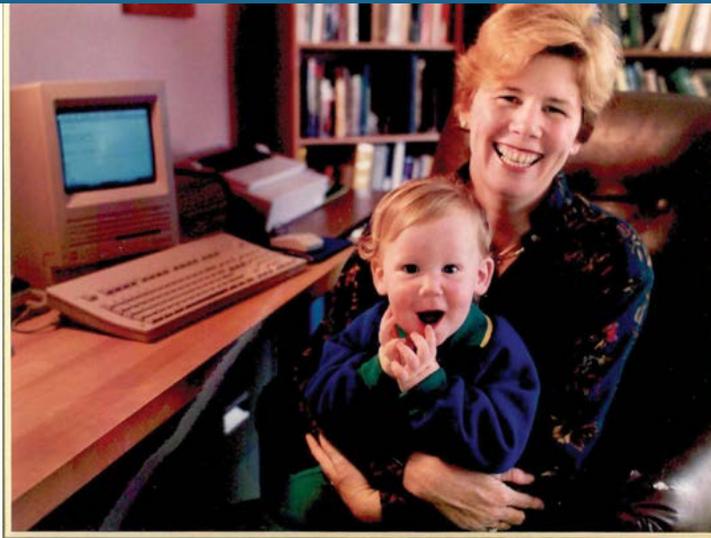


“Boomers Primed for Digital World”

By Mary Furlong, Mary Furlong & Associates



Turn back the clock to the 1980s when my children were curious little ones. They loved to read and explore all of the latest technologies around the house—like our iconic first-generation Mac.

In 1985, I was celebrating the news that my nonprofit organization, *SeniorNet.org*, was getting funding from the Markle Foundation and the dream of creating a social network for seniors could be a reality.

This at a time before AOL, Facebook or Skype had emerged on the digital scene.

Thirty-five years ago—it seems like yesterday and I sound like my grandparents. Why?

Could it be that, at 67 years of age, I’m still chasing the same vision but just using different tools and methods? For example, my Apple iWatch connects me to family and friends and has become my “go to product.” It has helped me get a jump-start on fitness and lose 40 pounds while facilitating other aspects of my daily life. It gives me weather reports, lets me text and enjoy my photos and it tells time!

We boomers are ready for companies offering digital services that can help us with driving (*Uber*, *Lyft*, *SilverRide*), meal delivery (*Blue Apron*), household projects (*TaskRabbit*), caregiving support (*CareLinx*), pet sitting (*DogVacay*), and garbage take out (*TrashDay*).

All we need is a smart phone and the ability to navigate new user interface designs.

We’re primed to embrace the On Demand Marketplace. Personally, I use Uber every week. This week, I rode with a retired high school history teacher, a retired bartender and a janitor. Though many boomers are just learning of the brand, they’re considering it to help finance their longevity.



In my book, *Turning Silver into Gold*, I describe how “every dissonance of aging is a market opportunity.” In January 2016, the 76 million boomers will start to hit 70!

A recently released report by the California Healthcare Foundation (CHF) describes physical changes boomers will experience: **Hearing** – impairment worsens 10% per decade; **Eyesight** – vision changes in the 50’s; and **Dexterity** – arthritis in the hands affects the ability to manage dials.

In the October 2015 CHF report, Laurie Orlov describes various gadget and technology enabled services such as sensor-based activity trackers,

wearable patches, mobile applications and personal health devices and how “together these markets have rapidly reached eye-popping numbers—\$4 billion invested in 2014 alone.”

In an interview with Marc Ramos, Technology Training Specialist at Santa Clara University, we discussed how he provides much needed technology training to help faculty stay current in their jobs. Overhead slides and whiteboards have been replaced by YouTube clips, hybrid learning and collaborative tools that make having global guest speakers a reality.

Time spent with Marc in the training lab helps to give me relevant knowledge and keeps me current with the latest generation of students.

And yet, the challenges prevail. Loneliness still is a huge social need in the U.S and around the world. Perhaps one day, we will see and fund a ‘widows’ support network.

We will move as IBM and Apple did in Japan and make sure all older adults can access services remotely. In addition, we will fulfill the original promise of SeniorNet—to find our world digitally connected with an enlightened, empowered and healthy group of older adults sharing their knowledge and wisdom with a broader community.

Mary Furlong & Associates (MFA) is a strategy, business development, marketing and public relations communications firm. To learn more, go to maryfurlong.com. 415. 902.8671.