



## Seniors increasingly using the Internet - from Keeping in Touch to Finding a Home

For Main Line Times

According to an April 2014 Pew Research Center report, six in ten seniors—59 percent—reported using the Internet. This is a dramatic increase from the 35 percent of older adults using the Internet in 2008.

Now, a January 2015 Pew report confirms the popularity of several social media platforms among seniors. The report noted that 31 percent of seniors use Facebook. 2014 was the first time that more than half of online adults older than 65 use Facebook (56 percent). In fact, seniors are the fastest growing demographic on Facebook. Among online adults 65 or older, the percent that use Facebook increased by 24 percent; that use Twitter increased 100 percent; that use Instagram increased by 500 percent; that use Pinterest increased by 88 percent; and that use LinkedIn increased by 62 percent.

Among the benefits seniors are finding through their use of the Internet and social media:

Keeping in touch with kids, grandkids and with their friends.

Learning more about subjects that interest them, such as travel, food, current events or their genealogy.

Getting answers to questions about a product or service without making a phone call and waiting for a service representative.

Entertain themselves through videos, music, games, articles, ebooks and more.

Using the Internet to “downsize” to a new home

According to the National Association of REALTORS® (2013 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers) 75 percent of senior home buyers use the Internet as an information source as they seek to “downsize” their homes – that is, moving to a smaller home or retirement community that better fits their living requirements. For the entire population, 76 percent of potential home buyers use online websites “frequently” in their home searches – compared to 68 percent for real estate agents and 16 percent for yard signs.

The Internet has totally changed the way buyers shop for homes today. In today’s real estate market, selling homes is a beauty contest based on two things: price and looks. And the Internet provides home buyers a huge amount of information, which they can filter based on price (not too high, not too low) and pictures of homes. Armed with their PCs, laptops and mobile devices, home buyers can now avoid wasting time looking at houses that do not meet their expectations and criteria – because the Internet helps them screen homes before ever visiting them in person.

Home buyers say that photographs are the most useful tool in their home searches on the Internet. They are looking for homes that are cleaner and fresher, and photography can help show that a home is more up-to-date than others on the market.

Here are some facts about the importance of using photographs to help buy and sell a home on the Internet:

Sharp, well-lit photographs showing well-maintained exterior landscapes and pleasant, clean interiors create a positive emotional response in potential buyers.

Studies have shown that buyers eliminate more than 50 percent of homes they browse on the Internet based on the pictures presented.

Image is everything when it comes to marketing a home for sale!

A picture is worth a thousand words – most people would rather look at a picture than read a description of the property

Virtual Tours can be an important tool in the home search process, and not just for million-dollar homes!

In a study of more than 100,000 listings from every state in the United States, listings with 21 or more photographs generated 55 times the number of detailed views and 27 times the amount of interest than listings with fewer than 21 photographs.

The Internet does not eliminate the need for a real estate agent. While most buyers use the Internet to search for a home, they still want a real estate agent to represent them in the transaction. In fact, in some ways the Internet makes the role of the home seller’s real estate agent even more important – because it is the seller’s agent’s job to make the home stand out in the vast sea of other listings!

Yes – the Internet has changed the lives of seniors – from staying in touch with family and friends to entertaining themselves to downsizing to a new home.