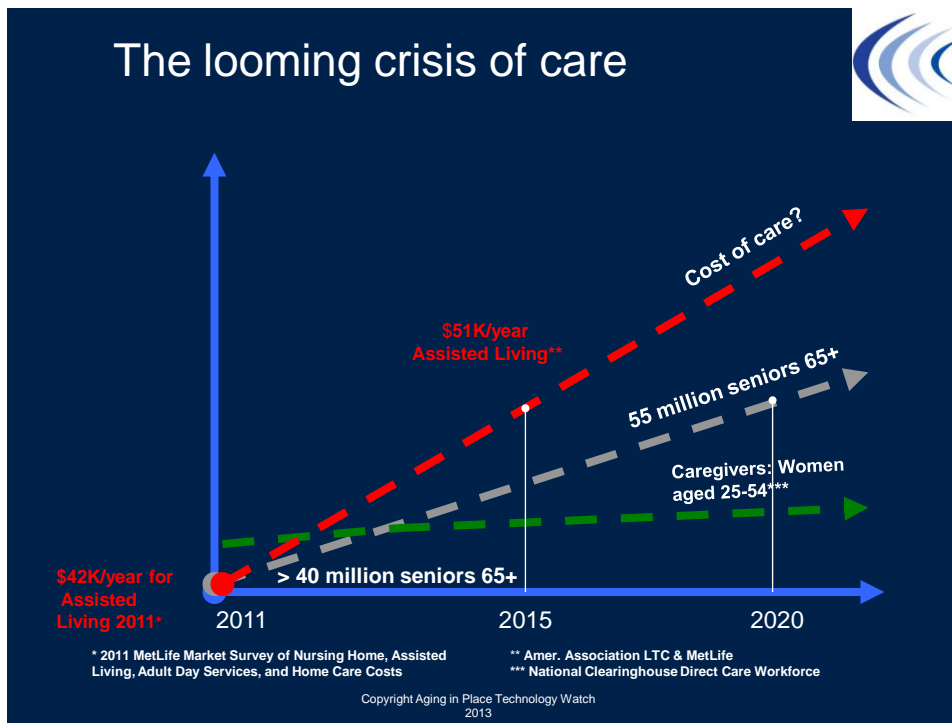


**Aging in America 2013**—American Society on Aging; annual conference  
 March 12-March 15, 2013  
 Chicago  
*Report and analysis by Joop Koopman*

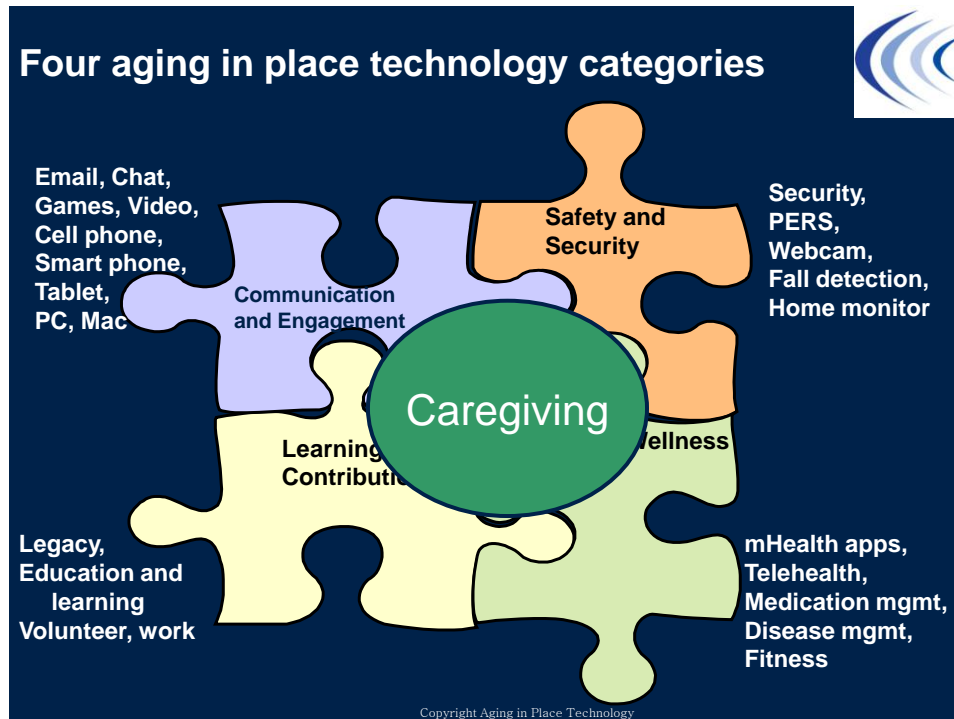
The reality remains startling: **between 2010 and 2050 the US population of 65 and older will have doubled to close to 80M.** There are 40M Americans over 65 today; already there are 5M people older than 85, half of whom are still at home and almost half of whom suffer from some form of dementia. Worldwide, 15 percent of the population is 65-plus—a figure that will increase exponentially. Nearly 40 percent of the developed world will be over 55 by 2050.

Leading ageing expert and celebrated gerontologist Ken Dychtwald—one of the conference’s most visible and in-demand speakers—noted that **by 2050 some 50 percent of the inhabitants of the developed world will have a chronic illness. For the bulk of the older ones among them Alzheimer’s disease will be that condition,** posing a challenge to government, non-profits and businesses to devote more vital resources to find a cure to the crippling disease.

**The “longevity revolution” will come with a steep price tag.** Consider these projections provided by Laurie Orlov, the country’s leading expert on the technology that will enable and sustain Aging in Place, the increasingly indispensable alternative to institutional care that is becoming too expensive for both governments and private individuals. In this respect, (Western) Europe is not all that far behind the US.



The basic template for successful Aging in Place has not changed—the parts have to come together!



Against this backdrop **both businesses and non-profits are trying to make their mark**—aiming for both doing good and doing well in the process—by supporting both the aged and their caregivers. Orlov insists that the aging market will easily top \$20B by 2020!

Preceding the ASA conference, as it does every year, Mary Furlong’s long-running <http://whatsnextsummit.com/> put the spotlight on a number of **business opportunities taking advantage of healthy, affluent and adventurous boomers**. These boomers decidedly know what they want and are willing to pay for it. (In any number of ways, current development and fine-tuning of aging-in-place technology is paving the way for the time when today’s active boomers will begin requiring such personal care and insist on high quality and convenience.)

Interestingly, **AARP is making some key adjustments**. It’s not-yet-officially launched [“Life Reimagined”](#) and [“Create the Good”](#) projects—accompanied by more dynamic design online and presumably later in print—are clearly meant to update the appeal of the organization beyond an overly familiar organization (suffering from an image of dullness and predictability ) that lobbies in the realm of entitlements, offers discounts, and sells insurance. “We want to enhance people’s quality of life,” says Jody Holtzman, AARP’s SVP, Thought Leadership.

“Create the Good” will help find boomers find good causes that can benefit from their “life experiences, skills and passions.” “Reimagined” will encourage and facilitate boomer entrepreneurship—in part, through the sponsorship of business incubator conferences that will also **give boomers the opportunity to serve as mentors to younger entrepreneurs**; the new ‘vertical’ will also encourage those boomers who have, for example, always dreamed of writing to finally take the plunge. “Diagnostic tools” will help users figure out what they really want to do with their remaining healthy years, be it in retirement or in new careers, etc.

The AARP will also step up its efforts to help businesses develop “their 50-plus strategy” and create products and marketing campaigns to appeal to boomers—for example, in the highly lucrative travel business, with boomers accounting for 80 percent of high-end travel packages. **Holtzman speaks in terms of the “longevity economy.”** In this vein, AARP is the sponsor of a [Bloomberg conference](#) devoted to the topic in October 2013. The conference announcement proclaims that the “50+ market accounting for \$3.5 trillion annually in consumer spending is ripe for disruption.”

**Cynical voices claim that these new initiatives merely serve as new window dressing for AARP’s core business of selling insurance** and such. Such sales are unlikely to disappear, but Holtzman insists that the AARP genuinely wants to become more relevant to members ages 50-64, many of whom only stay members for just a few years after first turning 50. AARP wants to find ways to be more “core” to people’s lives, and do so by being of service to boomers as they go through “personal, professional and emotional transitions” –and assist the businesses and services that can help them do so successfully and fruitfully.

The relatively **recent hiring of celebrated editor and publisher Myrna Blyth**, AARP’s new editorial director, is part of the organization’s new approach. Blyth is the former editor-in-chief and publishing director of Ladies' Home Journal; founding editor and publishing director of More magazine; and Director of Magazine Development for the Meredith Corporation.

Blyth, thanks to a significant editorial reorganization, directly oversees AARP’s efforts on all media platforms—print, online, television and radio—affirms that AARP wants to “become hipper,” engage boomers on a more “personal level” and give them more “feedback opportunities,” all in that effort to overcome its dowdy image associated with insurance sales and its dominant appeal to people—mostly women—over 65.

**Changes may involve adding more substantial content to AARP the Magazine**—“making it less shallow,” says Blyth. The AARP Bulletin—which is more newsy and in-depth—and the Magazine may merge if the right revenue model can be found. Another option is to create a tablet-only edition of the Bulletin. The veteran of women’s magazines also promises more exciting beauty and style content. Plus, there will be a revamped [dating site](#). The ‘new’ AARP will be on view in Las Vegas, for its [first](#) of now two annual national shows (May 30-June 1, 2013)

[LinkageConnect](#) is **another player in the fast-growing ‘business of aging’ marketplace**. CEO Scott Collins explains is pursuing a mix of “gerontology with marketing” to offer existing business as well as venture capitalists unique insights to enter the market or tweak existing products.

**“We want to build products that people really want, products and services that can help people thrive at home,”** says Collins, whose company offers consulting services for senior living providers—but the focus is clearly on helping older adults stay in their homes as long as possible.

Linkage is having success in attracting pension funds as potential investors, and has also sparked the interest of the giant Walgreen chain of pharmacy/life-style/grocery stores. Collins is convinced that direct-to-consumer sales hold “the biggest opportunity.”

**Much of what the boomers buy and (literally) consume is in support of a healthy lifestyle.** In fact, more than 20 percent of boomers are considered to be part of what is a fast-growing 50-million strong consumer group identified with a life-style known as LOHAS—**Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability**. This group is associated with [\\$209B in annual sales](#), with natural and organic foods leading the way. (That figure jumps to \$350B worldwide.)

**LOHAS boomers are said to account for as much as 40 percent of this spending**—and they are said to be early adopters of new products and opinion leaders with a significant influence on the buying and living habits of fellow boomers.

Brent Green, author of *Marketing to Leading-Edge Baby Boomers*, has [written and lectured extensively](#) about the importance of understanding the values associated with LOHAS as they pertain to boomer consumers. Working with the Natural Marketing Institute (NMI), a leading market research and strategy firm in the LOHAS realm, Green often teams up with NMI’s Managing Partner Steve French, who presents updated research in key consumer categories each year at ASA. (See this year’s findings attached)

NMI conducts similar research in a number of countries each year, using its findings to bolster and devise strategies for companies’ LOHAS-related marketing and product development. One of its clients was Nestlé, for example, which Steve French and Brent Green assisted in developing **healthy beverages, sometimes referred to as “functional foods,” targeting the boomer market.**

According to [Steve French](#), “many Americans reached adulthood in the 1960s and 1970s during the emergence of a global environmental awareness and greater focus on personal health, and they maintain those same values today.”

“The major difference today,” according to French, “is that they have considerable financial resources and commitment to search for and buy products and services that serve their long-term environmental and health goals.”

An annual [LOHAS Forum](#) is a growing draw for boomer marketers. Green has covered this conference as a journalist; he has also been a speaker at the event; and he has produced a number of radio shows featuring LOHAS industry leaders.

Green is outspoken about this boomer sub-segment as it pertains to health/wellness and natural/organic product trends: **“Pay attention to LOHAS consumers and their evolving preferences and behaviors; these anticipate trends that will soon emerge broadly in the national population.** LOHAS consumers are a fountainhead of what’s to come in the marketplace.”

On yet another front, companies like giant insurer United Healthcare are working to process, codify and **make available the experience of caregivers in its system** available throughout its network, but concrete progress has yet to be made. Nonetheless, **caregiving is a fast-growing industry** (see below).

**Taking the broadest view** is [Ken Dychtwald](#), who has by far been the most popular speaker at ASA and similar conferences for many years now. The flamboyant gerontologist—whose public speaking enraptures audiences worldwide—has in many ways remained a child of the 60s. Hence, he has remained a revolutionary of sorts. The one-time challenger of AARP—he operated a chain of regional 50-plus print titles some years ago—does not mince words. His concern is not first of all with business—though he is a leading and high-priced consultant for a number of companies—but what he calls the **“transformation of retirement.”**

In brief, Dychtwald argues that **the traditional linear progression of life**—childhood, education, marriage & career, followed by retirement—**is upended**: longer lives mean that people can find new loves; go back to school; and start new careers—full or part-time—that they are passionate about.

However, he notes that **Americans are just about the lowest-ranked in the world when it comes to saving for retirement.** What’s more, he charges that US society—and this would be true on a global level—utterly fails to prepare people for the various dimensions of retirement: how to deal with the loss of the sense of identity when a long-term career comes to an end; or with the shock of discovering that leisure time is no guarantee for happiness.

**He urges government, non-profits and businesses alike to help boomers and older adults transform their lives** from ones whose values is determined by “success” in the material and career sense, to ones whose worth is measured in terms of “significance” and finding a “higher purpose.” Much will depend on boomers and seniors “staying engaged”—which, Dychtwald predicts, will mean especially great opportunities for universities, community colleges, whether boomers study in the classroom or primarily online.

**Boomers’ failure to find creative and sustainable ways to grow old**—even and especially when they become physically and mentally less able—**will cost younger generations dearly**, he warns. In a [blog](#) posted on the eve of the ASA conference, he urges his fellow boomers: “we need to rekindle our youthful idealism and marry it with our extensive talents to help make sure that the aging of our generation won’t inadvertently destroy the future for our children and their children.” The message to the world of business is clear—here is a huge opportunity to make money and help a vital cause at the same time!

Meanwhile, **much work goes on in the trenches**. Notable among these efforts is the work of Aging-in-Place expert and contractor [Louis Tenenbaum](#). His continued focus on the local front is on establishing ongoing, real-time communication among physicians, hospitals, nursing homes and senior centers; as well as all service providers—such as transportation services, in-home care providers, social workers, and even volunteers; and, finally, the day-to-day caregivers themselves, whether they are professionals or family members. At the heart of this communication system, of course, is the patient.

Tenenbaum is currently pursuing a strategy that would—on a local level—**bring all the key players together for regular meetings**, at least a few times a year. He aims to encourage all the local operators that make aging-in-place possible to coordinate their activities and avoid duplication. Ideally, this **ongoing communication could take advantage of cloud computing**. Tenenbaum also hopes to bring coordinators from around the country together a couple times a year to build up additional lines of communication—enabling participants to informally advise each other throughout the year.

**The ultimate goal is to provide necessary care for the aging person at the least cumbersome and least costly level possible**, hence in the home whenever possible. E-monitoring can detect, for example, behavior associated with dehydration—such as frequent trips to the bathroom. That information, accessed by caregiver and/or local service provider in a timely fashion, can prompt a local service provider to administer electrolytes to prevent dehydration and thus avoid a costly visit to the hospital.

A key player on the Aging-in-Place front is **MetLife’s Mature Marketing Institute**, with [John Migliaccio](#) as research director, which has produced two key studies—[one](#), co-authored by Tenenbaum, outlining the “care delivery system” needed, and a [second study](#), on “liveable communities,” helping local service agencies and care providers determine their readiness and capacity for aging-in-place within their communities.

Leading thinkers, like futurist [Richard Adler](#) of the Institute for the Future, are convinced that **private enterprise has to be part of the solution**. In the US, as in Europe, he reiterates the process of bringing Aging in Place services and technologies to the marketplace must rely on an ingenious collaboration, and mutually beneficial interplay between commercial enterprise and public funding.

Adler is on the board of a so-called virtual village, [Avenidas](#), in Palo Alto (home to Stanford University, in the heart of Silicon Valley.) Avenidas is a showcase “virtual village,” in which older adults are enabled to age in place thanks to a so-called concierge service that provides a variety of services (plumbing, health care providers, house sitters, etc.) that have been screened for quality of service and reliability.

Avenidas receives modest foundation support, but almost all of its revenues come from annual fees paid by the 365 members. Interestingly, thanks to **shared concierge services**, residents who live close to each other are increasingly connecting socially—via joint meals, trips to the movies, etc. Avenidas is modeled on the famous [Beacon Hill Village](#) in Boston, an example, says Adler, of a **grassroots, entrepreneurial approach to aging issues**, especially in tough economic times and shrinking government money.

**The great challenge is to eventually make such virtual village self-sufficient.** The Beacon Hill model, founded in 2001, has since then sparked the development of nearly 100 similar villages around the country.

Another remarkable local initiative (duplicated elsewhere under the Pace brand) is [On Lok Lifeways](#), described as a “social health maintenance organization” that provides care both at home and, as needed, in local service centers. Much more than offering practical care, On Lok—though already 40-years-old— is **part of the “new wave” in the approach to aging** and features substantial “content,” that is, not just practical care—but also mental, social, emotional, cultural and spiritual support. Adler does not rule out “eldercare robots” and “self-driving cars” coming into play in the not all that distant future.

**Commerce and innovation, Adler insists, have to be part of the picture long-term.** “While ASA has been paying more attention to business issues in recent years,” he notes, “these issues remain a relatively minor part of the overall conference, most of which is still devoted to traditional topics related to the delivery of publically-funded social services to older people, especially the frail/poor elderly.”

In his presentation at the conference, Adler argued **“why innovation in aging is necessary:”**

“The systems and solutions developed over the past half century to support later life in the US (e.g., Medicare, Social Security, the Older Americans Act) will not scale up to support the much later numbers of people reaching later in the next several decades.

“In a time of constrained public resources, **the old paradigm of how we solve problems—identify the problem/ develop a program to address the problem/ fund the program/ problem solved—is no longer working reliably.**

“Therefore, to meet growing needs, **we need a new wave of entrepreneurially-driven innovation—in both the public and private sectors—that will operate mainly on the local grassroots level.**”

**In this respect, Europe is not far behind!**

Adler just joined the board of [the Institute for the Ages](#), which has the mission to study—and experiment in—the **County of Sarasota, in Florida, where more than 30 percent of the population is 65 and where almost five percent of the population is 85-plus.** On a volunteer basis, of course, homes will be equipped with aging-in-place monitoring equipment—with companies footing the bill for testing their health-monitoring equipment and other products—and **the county will serve as a living lab** to help, says the Institute, “create new products and services for a rapidly aging world” and “catalyze innovations for positive aging.”

The Institute’s CEO, Tom Esselman, wants his organization to become an **“evangelist for the power and positivity of aging.”** Progress in the Sarasota experiment will be on display when the Sarasota will host the Positive Aging Conference in February 2014.

**Key players in the realm of software and hardware that are making Aging-in-Place a reality** are, to name but a handful, are Philips' [Healthcare at Home](#) (prominently present at ASA with a large display in the exhibit hall and through sponsorship of general sessions); [CareInnovations](#), a partnership of General Electric and Intel—the partnership forged precisely because the Aging-in-Place market remains scattered and unfocused and thus hard to penetrate; and [GrandCare Systems](#), whose VP of Business Development Laurie Mitchell elaborated on a **major deal with Saga in the UK**, that country's counterpart to AARP, for the sale and distribution of a **computer-like device** capable of comprehensive health, security, and movement monitoring in the home. The company is pursuing sales elsewhere in Europe as well.

Aside from all the **technology—much of it still more of a promise than a practical reality**, leaving aside the complexity of getting local Aging-in-Place systems to function optimally—all the **heavy lifting is done by caregivers**, day in day out, without much of a break. There are some 40 million caregivers in the US—the majority of them women—with responsibility for someone who is over 50.

Andy Cohen is the CEO of [Caring.com](#), **the leading US site for caregivers**. He claims 2M unique visitors monthly and an impressive \$10M of revenue per year, though some observers question the figure, while also pointing out that multiples of that amount have been invested in the site. Cohen confidently predicts revenue could hit \$100M yearly in due time; he is actively soliciting investors. Cohen reports that the typical caregiver is a 57-year-old woman who can be reached by traditional advertising—radio, and late-night television.

The success of the site is credited in particular to **users' reviews of nursing homes** and other senior facilities; the institutions quickly buy ad space if their facility is mentioned; they are given the chance (for a fee) to respond to criticism. Caring.com also invests heavily in content—much of it evergreen—which has to carefully balance conveying practical information and an engaging style. There is in-depth information on a great number of illnesses.

Users can sign up for a number of **specialized email messages and newsletters**—such as tips on how to deal with stress, how to fall asleep easier, access government benefits, handle a difficult patient, avoid a cold and much, much more. A very successful—and still free—service is “Steps & Stages,” which carefully tracks the development of Alzheimer's, as based on a caregiver's submission of critical information. Caring.com is the leader in a crowded field, which includes an entry by the [AARP](#).

**A rising star in the world of care-giving** is Sherri Snelling, who runs the [Caregiving Club](#), a site that showcases a very personal take on her own experiences with care-giving that makes use of **pop and celebrity culture** in a most appealing and upbeat way. The former Chairman of the National Alliance for Caregiving, she just published [“A Cast of Caregivers—Celebrity Stories to Help Your Prepare to Care,”](#) which might spur a video series on [AARP's YouTube channel](#) or on the Retirement Living Network. Snelling has hopes for exposure on The Learning Channel, a major cable network, which would mean a welcome move into mainstream media.



She is regular blogger on The Huffington Post and [Next Avenue](#), the new entry into the boomer realm by the Public Broadcasting System. She regularly conducts ‘red carpet interviews’ with celebrities attending fundraisers for organizations supporting the fight against certain diseases—**asking the rich and famous about their own experiences with care-giving** and coping with the particular conditions of a loved one.

**Snelling is an expert on the differences between men and women when it comes to caregiving;** generally, men suffer less stress, in part because they get more praise from their environment for their care-giving—a dedication that is more expected of women. And, stress, not surprisingly, is a key factor in speeding up the aging process!

In all the work with and on behalf of older adults, one thing is crystal clear: **communication is key.** Not surprisingly, there are a growing number of organizations—both for and not-for-profit—providing the tools and services to introduce older adults to the internet and online communications, including social media platforms.

In New York, [OATS](#) (Older Adult Technology Services) works in conjunction with adult service providers in teaching 60-plus New Yorkers **the very basics of using computers.** OATS recently opened a walk-in teaching [center](#) in the heart of the city and runs a website with great contemporary appeal, [Senior Planet](#), whose tagline is “aging with attitude.”

In Los Angeles, twenty-something [Marcie Rogo](#) has launched [ConnectAround](#), a so-called ‘walled garden’ **social media platform that is strictly members-only**, reserving membership, for example, to residents of a particular gated-community or, potentially, to the residents of a senior living center. Rogo aims at 55-plus users, presuming that these active and generally affluent boomers are already very comfortable. ConnectAround gives users the security that only trusted neighbors and friends can partake of the service.

On the East Coast, [Connected Living](#) is pursuing a slightly different course, enlisting residents of senior centers to learn the basics of surfing the net and email on tablets that feature a trademarked, **easy-to-use template to access specially chosen, tailored content**—such as music, movies, games, and the email function.

However, users can surf the net freely if they choose to do so, and **friends and family are invited to join the conversation**, using their own email address or staying within the system by using a specially assigned ConnectedLiving email address.

To a great extent, the company relies on **peer-to-peer recruitment and instruction.** Management of senior centers has reported remarkable improvements in the health and mood of residents who have signed up; the initiative also helps the homes retain its residents; plus it works as a recruitment tool for new residents. ConnectedLiving has already engaged residents in more than 300 senior living centers and, thanks to a government grant, is also exploring reaching out to elderly residents of poor, underserved neighborhoods.

[Serality](#) has emerged as a leading provider for **turn-key solutions for senior centers** that want to get their residents to experience the benefits of the internet and the socialization power of email and social media. The company serves residents and administrators alike, while also assisting communities in the creation of sponsored-listings by nearby vendors.

In this **very particular realm of communication**, David Weigelt, president of [Immersion Active](#), deserves mention as a leading figure in helping the world of **boomer-oriented digital content**—including ventures dealing with care-giving, besides purely commercial, direct-to-consumer enterprises—**make use of the most up-to-date techniques**. Besides such standard practices as Search Engine Optimization, Weigelt has borrowed from the world of commercial digital publishing to become **the creator of highly effective “aging-in-place” marketing platforms**.

Using a practice first introduced by Forbes.com he invites advertisers to create editorial content—with the creator clearly identified, but with the blog or article mixed in seamlessly with regular editorial content. Such **“branded content”** is proving to be a great success for a variety of clients, including [HomeInstead](#), the care-giving site that is second only to Caring.com. The story of the site’s success is worth a [read](#).

The company’s [“Silver Tsunami eBrief”](#) is a **free weekly newsletter** featuring the latest in boomer marketing, technology as it pertains to boomers and seniors, trends, etc. The service—which regularly includes surveys to collect more vital subscriber data—is also a great way for the company to add to its **database of email addresses**, which, combined with those collected by clients and, occasionally, those available “for rent” are proving a powerful marketing tool.

The company also practices a bit of the **science of “big data,”** keeping track of what other sites are visited by potential prospects and tailoring content and advertising accordingly. The company is also adept at what Weigelt calls “developmental marketing”—connecting brands with particular seasons of life. Case in point: its recent very successful campaign selling caskets hand-crafted by Trappist monks.