



Commitment

Web Site of the Week: AgeNet

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[Url: www.agenet.com](http://www.agenet.com)

Site Description: AgeNet is a one-stop information and referral network specifically targeted to older adults (seniors) and caregivers. It offers health, drugs, legal, financial and housing information to enhance the quality of life for older adults and their families.

An interview with one of AgeNet's founders David Williams

Tell us about your site. What does your site have to offer? What are some of the most interesting and outstanding aspects of your site?

The AgeNet® Web site covers a gamut of topics that are of special concern to older adults and caregivers including health, geriatric drugs, financial, legal and insurance issues.

Current hot topics are conveniently segmented in a "Watchful Eye" news format and cybertravelers have an opportunity to e-mail specific questions about geriatric drugs to a Registered Pharmacist or ask an Occupational Therapist about home safety and adaptive equipment.

A new area called Mourning and Living, hosted by Harriet Sarnoff Schiff, the author of "When Did I Become My Parent's Parent" and "Living Through Mourning," addresses death, bereavement and caring for an aging parent.

One of the most outstanding aspects of our site is it's ability to empower people with "actionable" information that they can use help themselves or someone they care for.

For example, our "Ask a Pharmacist" area has generated Thank You notes such as: "Just a note to thank you for your very quick, very helpful response. If only doctors in their offices would explain things so simply and succinctly, we the patients would be so much better off. I read the inserts that come with various prescriptions, but it often takes a triple Ph.D. to makesense of it. Especially when you're not at your physical best. Your site is a God-send, had I only known about it earlier this year..."

How did this site get started? What are the origins of the site?

AgeNet was founded in late 1995 by Madison, Wisconsin residents David Williams and Doug Hennig. The preliminary Web site was launched in 1997 and the Chat, Helpful Products shopping area, Geriatric Drug Reviews and online Geriatric Medication Assessment were just recently added.

From the very beginning Williams and Hennig agreed that AgeNet would not only offer visitors credible substance but also challenge people's notion's about aging and older adults.

It would have been easy to create a "link site" and post a few articles; however, to us, it was more important to be good than to be first. Needless to say, it was difficult standing by and watching other companies launch "senior" Web sites that touched on some of our marketing ideas and receive the free publicity that was so prevalent

during the Internet's early days.

AgeNet still hasn't developed some of our other Domain Names such as assistedliving.com, caregivers.com, geriatricians.com, geriatricnurse.com, geriatricdrugs.com, seniordrugs.com, and advancedirectives.com.

We know what we want to do with these Domain Names but we first want to establish strategic alliances with companies and organizations that can provide both content and products or services that are of value to our visitors.

We believe that knowing where to obtain quality products and/or services is just as valuable to visitors as good editorial information. It's frustrating to learn that a particular product could help improve your life but you have no idea where to get it. That's one of the distinguishing benefits of the AgeNet Web site -- we bring buyers and sellers together.

Why do you think your site has been well-received?

AgeNet's primary mission is to help older adults maintain independence, dignity and security.

As your magazine is described as a one-stop umbrella site for women, AgeNet is an 'umbrella' business designed to consolidate and anchor geographically fragmented products and services targeted to aging American consumers. In effect, the AgeNet Web site uses the Internet's communication power to 'bridge the distance' between aging parents and caregivers -- enhancing the quality of life of both.

The AgeNet Web site as an 'information rich' environment where visitor participation can be as active they wish.

Not only does AgeNet provide good edited content, but it also tries to provide visitors an opportunity to 'take action' on that content.

For example, a visitor to AgeNet may learn about a new drug in our Watchful Eye area and then pose a specific question about that drug in our Ask a Pharmacist area. They may then choose to take an extra step and purchase an online Geriatric Medication Assessment.

Likewise, 'taking action' might also include providing visitors the opportunity to chat with a peer, search for a local elder law attorney, learn about the attributes of a specific nursing home or assisted living facility and actually purchase needed products and services directly over the Internet.

What type of information do you specialize in?

The AgeNet Web site is divided into seven major topic areas: Health, Drugs, Legal, Insurance, Financial, Helpful Products and Caregiver Support. Other major areas of interest include:

*** Ask a Pharmacist: Recognizing that medication management is one of the top concerns of older adults and caregivers, the "Ask a Pharmacist" area allows visitors to question a registered pharmacist about the use and misuse of drugs specific to the needs of older adults.**

*** Ask Terri: This expert advice area allows visitors to question a geriatric care specialist (OTR) about helpful products**

including adaptive products and equipment such as vision aids, tub grab bars, safety benches, sock aids, eating aids and other items and/or problems affecting home safety.

*** Mourning & Living: This area addresses death, bereavement and caring for an aging parent. It's hosted by the national best selling author Harriet Sarnoff Schiff, the author of "When Did I Become My Parent's Parent," "Living Through Mourning" and "The Bereaved Parent." Included in this area is the "Dear Harriet" column and numerous hospice related links.**

*** The AgeNet Chat Area: Allows members to chat with other members that have similar interests so each can learn from the experience of others. This is a place where members can offer each other mutual support and export life experiences.**

*** Watchful Eyes: Organized by topics, Watchful Eyes are short reports on news articles, specific to the aging population, that have been published in newspapers and magazines around the country .**

*** The AgeNet Geriatric Drug Review: Developed by a Registered Pharmacist and Certified Diabetes Educator, this area highlights drugs used for treating Diabetes, Alzheimers, Parkinsons' Disease and Arthritis.**

*** The AgeNet Lawyer Search: In cooperation with Martindale Hubbell, AgeNet offers a "Lawyer Search" highlighting attorneys and law firms that specialize in elder law, family law, probate, trusts & estate planning.**

*** The AgeNet Physician Search: In cooperation with Big Yellow, AgeNet offers**

a "Physician Search" that helps visitors locate doctors that specialize in geriatrics and/or related disciplines.

*** The AgeNet Book Store:** In association with Amazon.com, AgeNet offers over 1,500 book titles that are specific to the needs of older adults. The book titles are a real eye-opener and help people learn about "what's available" to help them deal with their specific problem. For example, caregivers can learn about the "36 Hour Day" and diabetics can learn about the variety of cookbooks that are available to help them manage their diet.

*** The AgeNet Online Store:** This is an area where visitors can purchase products that help make a home "older adult friendly." Products include: A discreet home delivery service that offers incontinence supplies called "It's Nobody's Business," dressing aids, telephone adapters, safety benches and chairs, tub grab bars, walking canes, button hooks and zipper pulls, book holders, jar openers, lamp switch extensions, ergonomic garden tools, large playing cards and reachers to name a few.

*** The AgeNet Senior Housing Area:** In alliance with Senior Living Alternatives, AgeNet provides visitors with a comprehensive search area for nursing homes, assisted living facilities, retirement communities and home health agencies. Through Senior Living Alternatives, AgeNet also provides an e-mail response program where Senior Living Alternatives automatically responds to a visitor's specific query by e-mail -- no need to search the site.

*** Celebrity Birthdays** posts the birthdays of celebrities 50 + and helps remind people that growing old doesn't mean growing

infirm. It seems like only yesterday when Benjamin was driving the red Sunbeam convertible and Mrs. Robinson was seducing the recent college grad. But the fact is, Dustin Hoffman is now 61 and Anne Bancroft is 66. What's more, Paul Newman is 73 and still going strong and, the first man who set foot on the moon, Neil Armstong, is now 68.

Anything special or exciting coming up for your site in the near future?

We are in the process of establishing strategic alliances that will allow us to offer online wills, nutritionals (vitamins, herbs, etc.), long-term care insurance and nutrient-rich pre-packaged meals designed for older adults who can not get to the grocery store or, eat light, and need a more controlled diet.

What is the philosophy of your site?

As mentioned earlier, AgeNet's primary mission is to help older adults maintain independence, dignity and security. We want to enhance the quality of life for both aging adults and their families.

Who is your audience? Who does your site cater to?

Older adults (senior citizens) and their caregivers (adult children).

A quantitative example of "Bridging the Distance" between these two target groups is the measurable increase in online commerce sales in our books and Helpful Products areas. In December, we enjoyed a significant increase in online sales and catalog requests. Many were multiple sales from adult children in California purchasing helpful products for an aging

parent that lived in the Midwest.

What makes your site different from the other sites on the WWW that offer similar information?

We bring it all together. We're not just for older adults and we're not just for caregivers.

Our site is different from other senior sites the same way a magazine differentiates itself from other periodicals. Tonality. Style, Content, and Format. When we ask people what they like about our site, they often respond by saying that AgeNet "comfortable." We blend the "high tech" with the "high touch". Something familiar delivered by a new medium.

We're are not always redesigning and implementing technology for the sake of technology. We want people to be familiar with us -- like an old comfortable sweater. We use simple font styles that are readable and avoid distracting backgrounds and graphics that do not add value. We add humor and we have opinions. (check out our valentine story, and story on greeting cards).

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