Improving our Understanding of Older Person's Needs in Learning New Technology

The Federation of New Zealand SeniorNet Societies

13 October 2009

LITMUS

Contents

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1. Executive Summary

The Federation of SeniorNet Societies has commissioned this study to evaluate how the SeniorNet service is meeting the needs of older adults in learning new technology and to improve an understanding of older adults' learning needs.

Key learning needs

Older peoples' learning needs stem from the assurance of a comfortable learning environment. This involves learning techniques that match the learners' pace, avoid complicated and technical jargon, incorporate the use of repetition and are tailored specifically for older people. There is a preference for 'older people teaching older people' and small class sizes. It is also considered important to have a computer at home.

Value of SeniorNet

SeniorNet is a highly valued service. Older people's learning needs are recognised and incorporated within the SeniorNet service. This is what makes SeniorNet unique and why older people specifically join SeniorNet to learn about new technology. Unlike other providers, SeniorNet focuses on the older individual and provides a supportive learning environment that encourages, rather than makes older people feel inept because they have different learning requirements than younger learners.

SeniorNet is also recognised for its quality learning environment. SeniorNet provides older people from diverse age groups, experiences and interests with high-quality teaching and courses that contain relevant subject matter. Members are highly satisfied with the learning they receive.

Importantly, attendance at SeniorNet has enhanced older people's use of the internet to find information and to engage with agencies and organisations online. Some members are now more stimulated, less isolated and in better contact with friends and family. They have the confidence, motivation and ability to learn and to use new technology, as well as the increased mental stimulation associated with doing so.

Emerging considerations

To attract and retain members and funding and sponsorship, SeniorNet needs to actively raise awareness of key aspects of the SeniorNet service and continue to meet the varied needs and interests of its members.

Challenges faced include those on a practical day-to-day operational level, as well as those that relate to maintaining core fundamental aspects of the SeniorNet service (volunteers, members and sponsorship/funding). Of some concern is a decline in the willingness or ability of new members to volunteer. The Federation and some learning centres are also constantly challenged by their ability to attract sponsorship/funding. These are core considerations for SeniorNet moving forward, as is the way in which SeniorNet markets and promotes itself to attract members and funding.

The way forward

Some people question the future relevance of SeniorNet, as the next generation of older people experience greater technological experience. However, SeniorNet is a service that is currently meeting the diverse needs of its members and providing for those who want the basics, as well as the latest in new technology. Moreover, a supportive and encouraging environment for older people will remain important irrespective of the extent of technological knowledge. What will be necessary is for SeniorNet to ensure it continues to keep abreast with members' different learning requirements and areas of interest, and to keep up with new technology. Volunteers, members, and sponsorship and funding must also be ensured.

Recommendations arising from this evaluation relate to practical day-to-day operational matters, including:

- maintaining classes and course subject matter that reflect the latest in new technology and members' interests

- increased tutor support

- processes to further enhance the production and modification of course manuals.

Recommendations are also made to maintain and strengthen underlying fundamental aspects of the SeniorNet service. These include:

- regularly conveying information and opportunities to encourage succession planning and uptake of voluntary leadership, committee and functional roles within learning centres

- alternative advertising methods to attract new members (i.e. having a face-to-face presence within communities)

- advertising and marketing that focuses on the value and unique attributes of the SeniorNet learning environment, as well as demonstrating to potential new members other practical aspects, such as the costs of joining and the availability of short courses of relevance, member-related discounts and local learning centres

- attracting sponsorship/funding by promoting and marketing the value and societal good of the SeniorNet service, and demonstrating to potential funders the exposure and benefits to be obtained by supporting SeniorNet

- engaging a marketing firm to assist with promotion, advertising and marketing.

2. Background

2.1 'SeniorNet'

In 1992, SeniorNet was established in New Zealand. SeniorNet was conceived from research undertaken at the University of San Francisco (1986) that identified the concept of *'older people teaching older people'* in new technology.

SeniorNet initially started as one learning centre in Wellington. Since then, around 100 local learning centres have developed across New Zealand with approximately 20,000 members. Until 2005, SeniorNet was funded in New Zealand by Telecom. Since 2005, SeniorNet has operated through a variety of funding sources and sponsorship.

In 2006, the Federation of New Zealand SeniorNet Societies (the Federation) was established to support member SeniorNet societies and the learning needs of older people through resources and funding. There are presently 88 member societies representing individual learning centres across New Zealand. Each is self-sufficient, with committees and members securing premises, funding, equipment and sponsorship. Numbers at each learning centre range from 20 through to 1200 plus members.

Learning centres teach technology and computer skills to older adults aged 55 years and over (a small number are 50–54 years). Central to SeniorNet is the concept of *'older people helping older people'.* This recognises that older people find it easier to learn from people their own age, who are more appropriately able to explain technology in a relevant way and with necessary patience. SeniorNet's principle *'participate in the age in which we live'* seeks to encourage continuous learning of new technology amongst older people.

The Federation is confident that its core concept of *'older people helping older people'* and SeniorNet's specific approach has been a key factor in the success of its development and membership in New Zealand, as well as in assisting older people to learn technology.

2.2 Purpose of the evaluation

The Federation commissioned Litmus, an independent evaluation company, to evaluate how the SeniorNet service is meeting the needs of older adults in learning new technology and to improve an understanding of older adults' learning needs.

The objectives of the evaluation were to understand:

- why older people specifically join SeniorNet to learn about new technology
- the different learning needs of older people when it comes to new technology
- how SeniorNet is meeting the learning requirements of older people
- factors important to member attraction and retention
- challenges and considerations important to SeniorNet's future provision of services.

2.3   Approach

The evaluation used a mixed method approach to inform the evaluation objectives. The qualitative component was undertaken in the first phase of the study to understand key areas of focus and to inform the scope and content of a quantitative survey. The second component involved quantitative methods to measure the extent to which views were held across a larger sample of SeniorNet members.

Note: the evaluation is specific to learning centres who are members of the Federation. Moreover, with the exception of some key informants interviewed, the evaluation has centred on the views, perceptions and experiences of *current* SeniorNet members.

Qualitative phase

The qualitative phase involved the following in-depth engagement undertaken between March and June 2009:

- 12 key informant face-to-face and telephone interviews with:
  - three SeniorNet funders
  - five people particularly knowledgeable about SeniorNet through an existing or prior involvement with SeniorNet
  - three Māori representatives
  - an organisation advocating on behalf of Pacific older people.
- Engagement with 37 male and female members at three different SeniorNet learning centres (Motueka, Hutt City, Eden Roskill) involving:
  - three focus groups with people aged 50–65 years
  - three focus groups with people aged 66 years plus
  - three face-to-face interviews with SeniorNet tutors.

The size of the focus groups ranged from five to eight participants, although most groups consisted of six SeniorNet members.

The interviews and focus groups were conducted to obtain detailed insights into older people's learning needs and to explore perceptions of SeniorNet's role in meeting those needs. Discussions were facilitated using a semi-structured discussion guide (Appendix 1).

The key informant interviews were undertaken with a diverse range of individuals selected on the basis of their in-depth knowledge of SeniorNet and/or an in-depth understanding of the needs of older people in new technology. The interviews were approximately one hour in duration.

The six focus groups and three tutor interviews enabled rich insights from the perspective of those practically experiencing or actively involved with SeniorNet. The three different locations were selected to obtain rural, urban, island and population diversity. The age-split of the groups reflected the broad age group membership of SeniorNet (aged 50 and over) and the different learning needs and experiences of diverse older people. The focus groups were facilitated over a period of 1.5 hours and the tutor interviews were each approximately one hour in duration.

Analysis of the qualitative data was undertaken using a thematic coding framework to elicit key themes and findings. This included:

- reviewing interview notes and transcripts to identify recurring and dominant themes

- identifying quotes to illustrate common themes and responses.

Key themes and findings were presented in a summary report to the Federation on 9 June 2009 and formed the basis for the development of an online survey.

Quantitative phase

The quantitative phase involved an online survey that members were invited to complete via links provided on the Federation website and individual member learning centre websites. The survey is presented as Appendix 2.

The online survey was launched on 5 July 2009. It ran for four weeks and closed on 3 August 2009. A total sample of 2,103 SeniorNet members completed the survey. Around three-quarters of survey respondents attend classes to learn new technology. Most have attended SeniorNet activities (i.e. courses, sessions, meetings) in the last 18 months. Indeed, half of respondents have attended five or more activities in the last 18 months. The majority of respondents are in the 64–85 age range. Slightly more females (58%) than males (42%) responded, most are European (97%) and 87% are not in paid employment.

The following table provides information on the nature of respondents' membership:

Length of SeniorNet membership	Percentage of respondents (n=2,103)
Less than 1 year	13%
1–2 years	16%
2–4 years	23%
More than 4 years	48%
Members' main role(s)[1]	Percentage of respondents (n=2,103)
Attend classes to learn new technology	73%
Tutor	24%
On a SeniorNet committee	19%
Member who does not attend classes	16%
Tutor's helper	11%
Provides technical support	7%
Number learning activities last 18 months	Percentage of respondents (n=2,103)
1	14%
2–4	36%
5–6	15%
7 plus	35%

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[1] The survey enabled members to indicate more than one role.

As with SeniorNet membership, the age range of survey respondents varied:

Age group	Percentage of respondents (n=2,103)
Under 50	0.2%
50–54	0.4%
55–64	13.0%
65–74	51.0%
75–84	32.0%
85–94	4.0%
95+	0.1%

2.4   Notes to the report

This report provides a synthesis of the qualitative and quantitative evaluation findings. This involves an approach that uses the qualitative information to explain the quantitative findings. Where a section of the report provides predominantly qualitative information, this has been enabled by the rich insights provided by key informants and SeniorNet members.

A number of responses to the online survey required respondents to indicate whether they 'strongly agree' or 'agree', or 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree'. Throughout the report, these responses have been combined to convey the percentage of respondents who either agree or disagree with a statement. For example, the percentage of 'strongly agree' and 'agree' responses are added together to demonstrate the number of respondents who agree.

3. Older People's Learning Needs in New Technology

3.1 Who is joining SeniorNet?

The typical SeniorNet member seems more likely to:

- own a computer
- be well educated and/or come from a professional background
- be retired vs. still in the workforce
- be New Zealand European
- be female rather than male (although only slightly more likely)
- have heard about SeniorNet via 'word of mouth'
- have made some attempt to learn new technology at other adult learning centres.

3.2 Drivers to joining

There appears to be four common drivers to joining SeniorNet:

1. A desire to keep in touch with family, particularly those who live elsewhere.

2. Acquiring a computer or other technology (i.e. digital cameras) without knowing how to use the technology.

3. Wanting to extend one's skills and knowledge beyond an existing limited scope, e.g. going beyond the limited knowledge acquired in one's professional life (i.e. word processing) to learning more about new technology in retirement.

4. A desire to impart one's knowledge of new technology within the SeniorNet model.

3.3   What are older people's learning needs?

A key barrier for older people is a lack of confidence to learn new technology. Hence, older people need a learning environment that builds confidence and encourages older people to persevere in learning new technology and to feel safe and comfortable asking for learning support.

Older People's Learning Needs
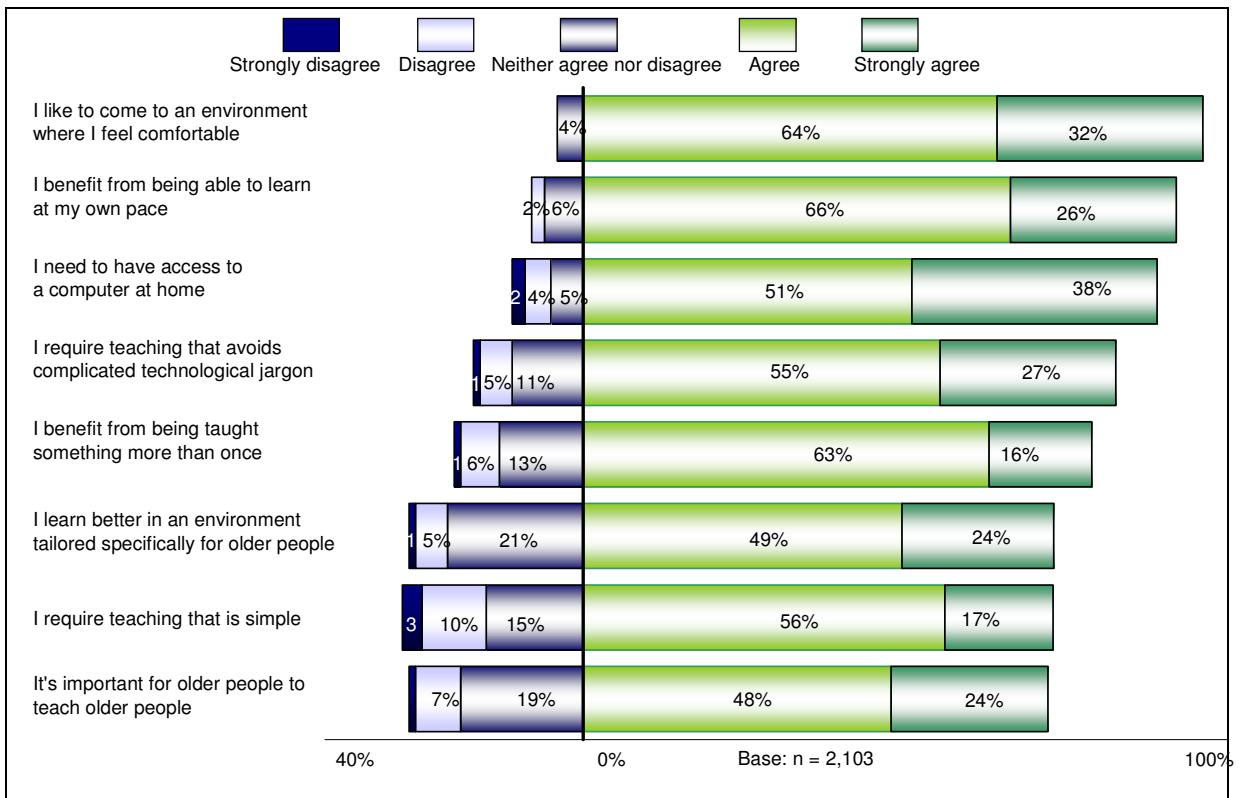
96% of all respondents agree it is important to come to an environment where they feel comfortable. Core aspects of this environment are learning needs or techniques that:

- **Match the learners' pace: 92% of respondents agree**

  A number of older people require a slower pace of teaching, recognising that older people are not a generation that have been raised surrounded by new technology and that learning may not come as quickly as it did in one's earlier years. Patience is needed, as are allowances for short-term memory loss.

- **Avoid complicated technical jargon: 82% of respondents agree**

  This includes keeping teaching materials, learning methods and course content relatively jargon free and simple. SeniorNet's course manuals are well regarded by members because they are simple and avoid confusing jargon.

- **Incorporate repetition: 79% of respondents agree**

  This learning technique ensures information is understood and remembered.

- **Are tailored specifically for older people: 73% of respondents agree**

  That SeniorNet is solely for older people provides members with an immediate peace of mind that they will not be showed up by those in their younger years. The pace and style of teaching and learning is also able to be structured to an older age group and their specific learning requirements. Learning centres seek to: identify and provide courses of interest to members; understand the extent of each member's knowledge and learning needs and cater to this; respond where possible to people's physical impairments, and provide tea-breaks at the mid-point of each class. An exclusively older age group enables a learning environment that is considered safe and comfortable, where people are able to relate to one another because of a shared life-stage and common outlook.

- **Involve older people teaching older people: 72% of respondents agree**

  While 'older people teaching older people' ranks as slightly less important than the other key requirements, it remains an important factor. Tutors of the older age group are seen to have high degrees of patience, teach at an appropriate pace, be able to meet members on the same footing, and empathise with the difficulties members encounter. Overall, this ensures older people are encouraged and not intimidated, and feel comfortable and secure in the knowledge that they are in a supportive environment.

  > *There is a higher degree of patience being exhibited by a lot of the tutors whereas you find that the younger people probably tend to want to get on and keep things moving. The older tutors have empathy and are probably attuned to what's going on so it certainly helps. When you're suffering from a bit of short term memory loss it's invaluable that you're never made to feel stupid.* (SeniorNet member aged 50–65)

  The reason this requirement is ranked lower than the other key areas perhaps reflects that, while an important and preferred teaching requirement, it is possible to be effectively taught by people of a younger age group, so long as the other key requirements identified are not also lacking (i.e. patience, appropriate pace, repetition). However, as older people commonly experience, younger people do not often incorporate these elements in their teaching unless specifically focused on doing so.

These specific learning requirements apply equally whether members are in their 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s or older. They remain important despite the different levels of knowledge people come to SeniorNet with and the different length of time as members.

In addition, SeniorNet's recognition of these learning requirements provides the basis from which to understand the value of the SeniorNet service and how SeniorNet is meeting the needs of older people of different life stages, experiences, knowledge and physical capabilities.

3.4   Class preferences

SeniorNet members prefer a variety of class-type options when learning new technology. Nearly 70% of all respondents prefer to attend small classes of two-four weeks duration.

There is a trend certainly towards the short two-hour type workshops backed up by the more substantial ones of four weeks. We think four to five weeks is probably long enough for any course. (SeniorNet member aged 50–65)

Preferred Ways to Learn New Technology

Attend small classes that run for 2–4 weeks	69%
Attend small classes that run for 6–8 weeks	36%
Less 'hands-on' workshops which involve special interest topics	32%
Attend question and answer sessions	26%

Base: n=2,103   0%   70%
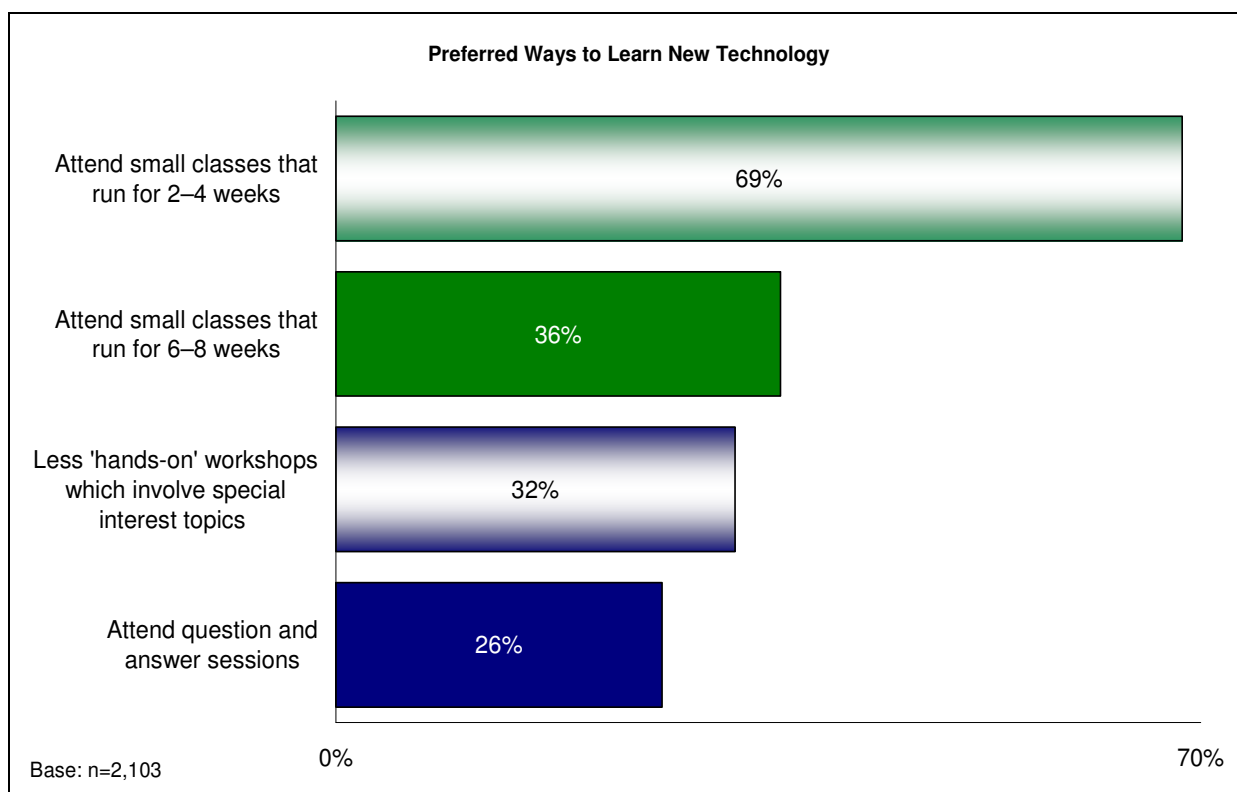
- 69% of members prefer to attend small classes that run for 2–4 weeks.
- 36% prefer small classes that run for 6–8 weeks.
- 32% prefer less hands-on workshops that focus on special interest topics.
- Just over a quarter (26%) prefer question and answer sessions.

This preference for variety most likely reflects members' different knowledge, skill and experiences of new technology, as well as time available and the extent of learning required depending on the subject matter of courses.

The importance of small class sizes is reflected in SeniorNet's teaching. Small classes and a low student-to-tutor ratio are characteristic of SeniorNet classes, which are commonly taught by two tutors, one lead tutor and one assistant tutor (and sometimes three tutors where a particular student may require one-to-one input). As members discussed in the focus groups, this approach provides members with the certainty that their learning needs are important and will be met. It enables classes to be taught at the required pace of its different members. Members are encouraged to seek assistance as required. Tutors are aware of people's different learning needs and are able to respond to these. The small class size enables tutors to spend quality time with each student.

Conversely, members reflecting on the class size of other adult education providers concluded they did not provide an environment where they felt able to learn. Because there was one teacher and sometimes up to 30 students, the teacher was unable to come 'onto the floor' and spend time with students. Older people were left to muddle on their own through their workbooks. They felt discouraged from asking questions or for assistance as they did not want to look stupid. There was an absence of support or encouragement. It is an environment older people describe as favouring those already up-to-speed.

> *We went to a couple of night schools and it became apparent that the tutor really concentrated on those who had skills already and they progressed far quicker than people who didn't have those skills. And I found myself floundering right from the beginning and there was sort of a favouritism feeling. We lasted two or three sessions. Then I heard about SeniorNet. As soon as we came we immediately felt we were more at home with people our age and connecting with the kind of people we like to be with.* (SeniorNet member aged 66 or older)

Members also overwhelmingly prefer to attend classes in the daytime and during the week.

Preferences for Timing of Courses

Attend in the daytime and during the week — 96%

Attend in the evening or in the weekend — 4%

Base: n=2,000

0%   100%
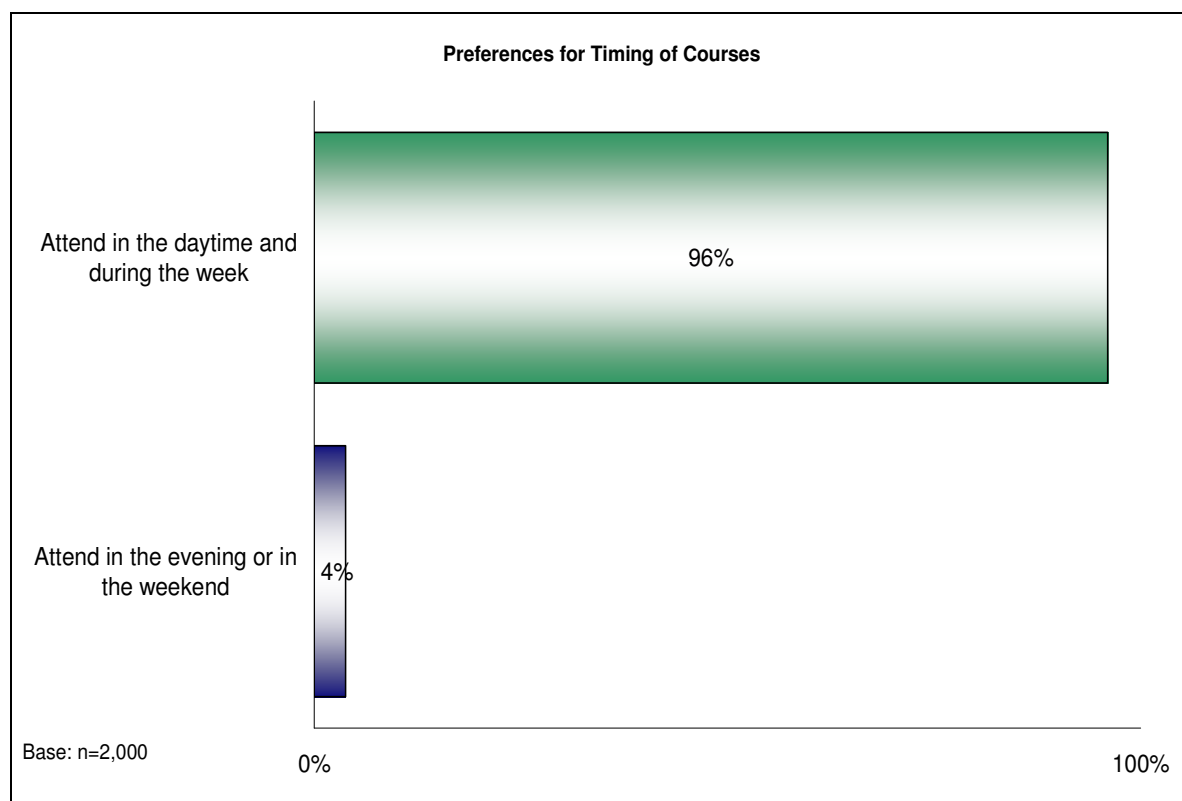
- 96% of all respondents prefer courses to be held in the daytime and during the week.
- Only 4% would prefer to attend courses in the evening or in the weekend.[2]

It is also of note that there is no obvious link between preferences for the timing of classes and the age group and employment status of members, despite some belief that those in the under-65 age group and/or in paid employment may prefer evening or weekend classes.

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[2] Note: this question formed part of another survey question and was not compulsory (n=2,000).

3.5 Preferred membership and course costs

Affordable membership fees and course costs are considered important by members.

The other thing is affordability – you know you can always afford to pay for these courses. You don't have to think oh I can't stretch this week and I suppose that's down to the volunteers giving their time freely. (SeniorNet member aged 50–65)

Respondents indicated the costs that they consider reasonable to pay for SeniorNet membership and courses:

	No more than $10	Between $10–20	Between $30–40	Between $40–50	Between $50–60	Between $60–70	Up to $100
1 year's membership	5%	44.0%	43.0%	5%	2.0%	0.5%	0.5%
Fees for a 2-week course	22%	60.5%	15.0%	2%	0.5%	0%	0%
Fees for a 4–6 week course	1%	17.5%	53.5%	21%	5.0%	1.0%	1.0%

Base: n=2,103

- Most members (87%) considered that between $10 and $40 was reasonable to pay for one year's membership.

- More than 80% considered that $20 or less was reasonable to pay for a two-week course, with 60.5% of members indicating that $10–$20 would be reasonable.

- Just over half of members (53.5%) considered between $30 and $40 to be reasonable for a 4–6-week course.

4. The Value of SeniorNet

SeniorNet provides a unique learning environment for older people. It is recognised and valued as identifying and responding specifically to older people's learning needs. This underscores why members choose SeniorNet over other providers teaching new technology. SeniorNet is geared specifically towards providing a shared, supportive and comfortable learning environment. Learning centres are specifically tailored to meet the learning requirements of people in the older age group.

4.1   Measuring the value of the SeniorNet service

> *If SeniorNet no longer existed I think I'd give back my computer. I'd still be in the dark. I probably wouldn't venture out to take one of these other courses again and children aren't very good at teaching you. They go so fast and aren't prepared to wait or let you practice. I think there'd be a huge hole. We just wouldn't be catered for.* (SeniorNet member aged 50–65)

SeniorNet fulfils an important societal function by motivating and contributing to older people's learning and use of new technology, and to an active involvement in society. Arguably, without SeniorNet, a number of older people would be without an environment where they would feel comfortable going to learn about new technology and would not fully engage with today's technological society.

To consider actual behaviour changes in members' use of technology pre- and post-SeniorNet, the table below focuses specifically on respondents who agree that they did not experience various actions prior to coming to SeniorNet. As can be seen, coming to SeniorNet has made a significant difference for a number of these respondents.

Actions and experiences changed since coming to SeniorNet	Percentage of respondents
Lacked mental stimulation, now more mentally stimulated	95% (17% of all respondents)
Was not in regular contact friends/family, now in more regular contact	92% (21% of all respondents)
Did not feel able to learn new technology, now confident to do so	91% (27% of all respondents)
Was not inspired or motivated to learn new technology, now inspired/motivated	90% (24% of all respondents)
Did not use internet to look for information, now does	89% (46% of all respondents)
Felt isolated, now feels less isolated	81% (8% of all respondents)
Did not interact with organisations online, now does	62% (37% of all respondents)
Did not use online banking, now does	41% (27% of all respondents)
Did not use the internet to shop online or look for best prices, now does	32% (20% of all respondents)

Importantly, these members are now more stimulated, less isolated and in better contact with friends and family, and have the confidence and ability to learn and use new technology, as well as the increased mental stimulation associated with doing so.

Of note, for nearly half of *all* survey respondents:

- 89% did not use the internet to look for information but now do since coming to SeniorNet.

In addition, for around one quarter of *all* survey respondents:

- 91% now feel confident learning new technology, despite not feeling able to before coming to SeniorNet

- 90% are now inspired or motivated to learn new technology, whereas they lacked this motivation before.

Notably, there has been a much smaller change in older people's use of the internet to make financial transactions online. This could be related to concerns around security of the internet vs. an inability to use the internet for such purposes. It may also indicate a subject area where older people would benefit from more information or skills and thus a future focus area for SeniorNet teaching and learning.

For key informants and members interviewed, the value of being more connected and able to use the internet was explored in-depth. Specifically, SeniorNet is valued for enabling:

- **Greater participation of older people in society**

  SeniorNet helps people to feel confident to connect with society using new technology and introduces older people to a wide array of relevant online information and how to engage with agencies and services online. This is important as it is increasingly well recognised that people become marginalised and left behind if unable to interact in a society that values access to technology. For older people, this is perhaps even more of a concern, particularly if housebound or isolated.

  > *What SeniorNet has done for me is to conquer the fear of going near the computer.* (SeniorNet member aged 66 or older)

- **Connected families and communities**

  Through SeniorNet, older people can now keep in more regular touch via the internet and remain a part of the lives of their children, grandchildren and other family members, particularly if living overseas.

- **Older people to keep their minds and selves active**

  Some members spoke of the importance of keeping one's mind active post-retirement and find that membership of SeniorNet assists by providing new learning opportunities and busy activity.

  > *It performs an extremely important societal function. It's a grandiose way of putting it but I really do believe this. People like ourselves who are all going in to retirement and are either in old age or entering old age can become a greater burden on society if not active physically and mental. [SeniorNet] has a great societal function in keeping a lot of elderly brains ticking over and I think that's a very important function.* (SeniorNet member aged 50–65)

■ **Social networking, engagement and camaraderie**

The social nature of SeniorNet (while not predominantly the reason people join) is recognised as an important part of the SeniorNet experience. People also establish social networks that are furthered outside of the SeniorNet environment.

> *I lost my husband and this is like a family to me, it's really, really great. You get great companionship, phone calls, the talks. And the people that come in really enjoy it because we are all at that same level of trying to keep ahead of the grandchildren.* (SeniorNet member aged 66 or older)

■ **Knowledge and sense of empowerment and achievement**

Through the continuing ability to learn new skills and new technology, older people attain a sense of achievement and empowerment where this may have been previously lacking in the technological area. The SeniorNet environment also nurtures this sense of achievement by encouraging and providing the opportunity for older people to share their knowledge with their peers and by being able to progress from being a beginner to a tutor.

■ **An opportunity to help others**

SeniorNet provides the opportunity to help one another and to feel good as a result. It provides people with an ability to give back to their own community, offering different roles for people to take on (i.e. technical support, tutor, secretary). This embraces the voluntary nature of SeniorNet, which is founded on goodwill and people's use of their knowledge and skill for the benefit of others.
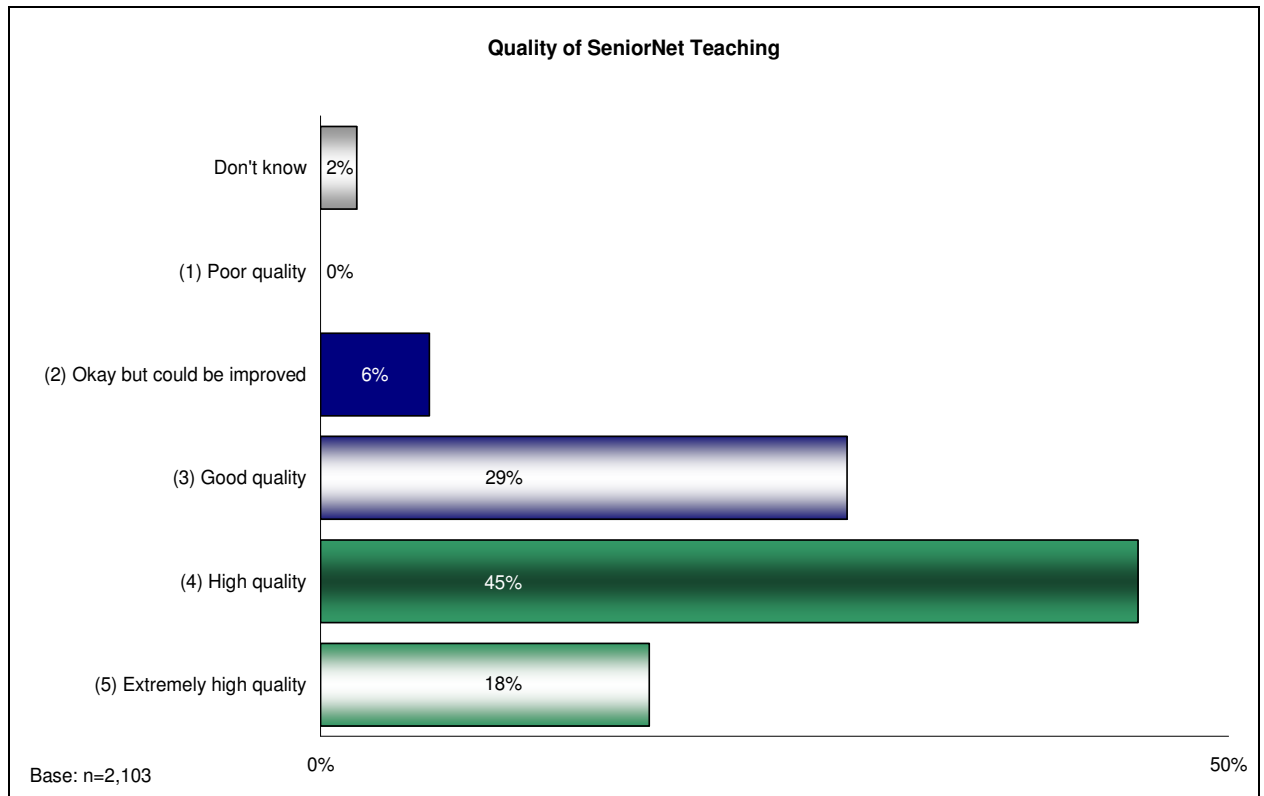
The 'personal touch' or evident community spirit to help one another within learning centres appears a unique feature of the SeniorNet service. This extends to members feeling welcome to phone or email tutors outside of lessons with questions, as well as tutors or members of the technical team going to members' homes and helping to install software.

> *If you've got a problem there's always somebody you can go and talk to and see; whether somebody else in the class or a tutor. You don't feel as though you're imposing on them. They don't make you feel belittled by the fact you have a question.* (SeniorNet member aged 50–65)

The type of membership SeniorNet offers also widely appeals. On the one hand, for older people wanting to be constantly active within SeniorNet, there are tutoring opportunities, administration and technical activities, and frequent courses, meetings and workshops of interest. For others, it is possible to only remain loosely affiliated and to attend courses or other activities for a fixed period or on an irregular basis. This is important, particularly for older people who want flexibility of membership due to other commitments, such as holidays, visiting with family, illness or an involvement with other organisations.

4.2   Quality of teaching

Respondents highly regard the quality of teaching they receive at SeniorNet and the learning that they take from SeniorNet courses.

Quality of SeniorNet Teaching

Category	Percentage
Don't know	2%
(1) Poor quality	0%
(2) Okay but could be improved	6%
(3) Good quality	29%
(4) High quality	45%
(5) Extremely high quality	18%

Base: n=2,103

0%   50%

- 45% of respondents consider the teaching at SeniorNet to be of a high quality, with 18% considering teaching to be of an extremely high quality.

- 29% describe good quality teaching.

- Only 6% describe the teaching as okay and able to be improved.

- No respondents consider the teaching at SeniorNet to be of a poor quality.

Equally, members who attend SeniorNet classes to learn new technology (n=1,501) are highly satisfied with what they learn.

Satisfaction With What Learnt

Category	Value
Yes, I learnt a great deal	66%
Yes, I learnt a reasonable amount	33%
No, I learnt very little	1%
No, I did not learn anything	0%

Base: n=1,501
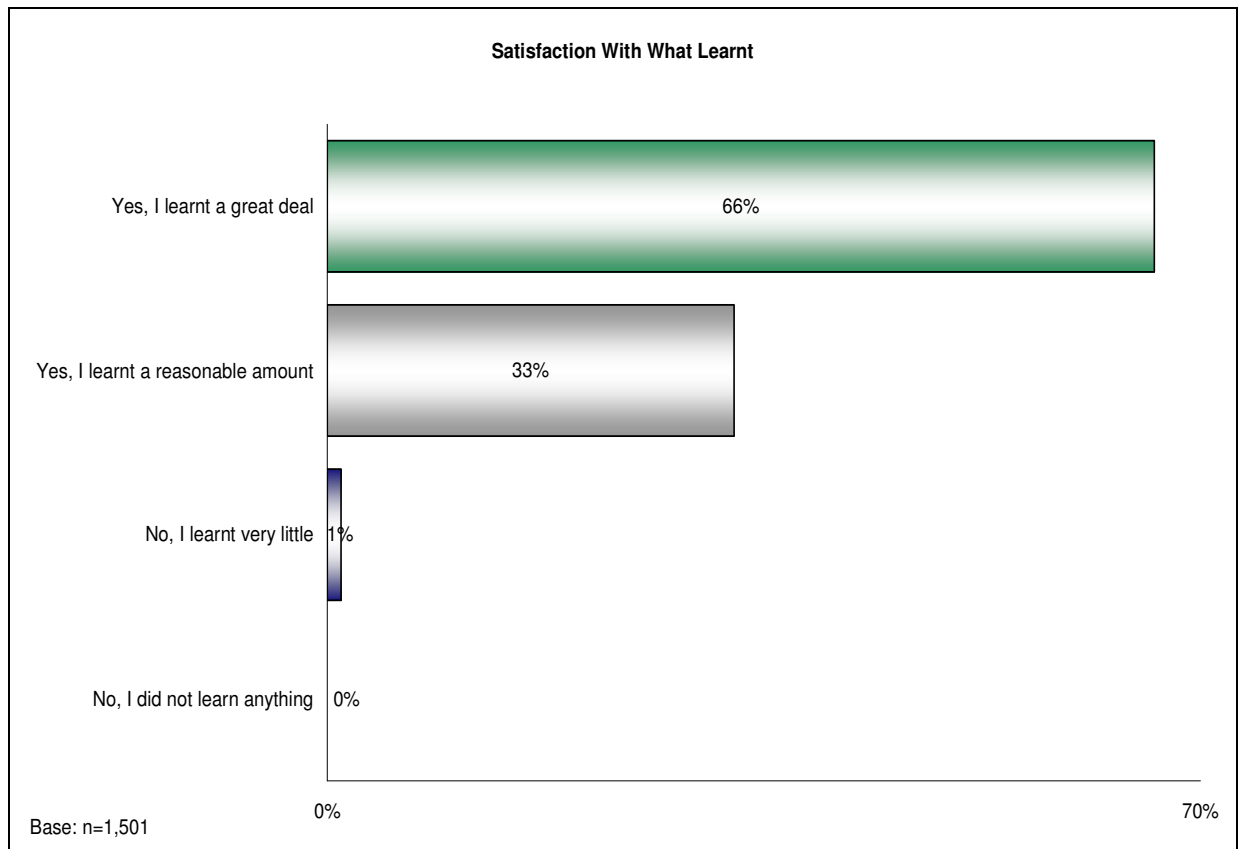
- 66% of respondents who attend SeniorNet classes feel satisfied that they have learnt a great deal.

- 33% believe that they have learnt a reasonable amount.

- Only 1% of respondents feel that they have learnt very little.

- There are no respondents who did not learn anything.

4.3 Relevance of course subject matter

The relevance of the subject matter of SeniorNet courses/sessions is also highly valued by respondents who have attended courses in the last 18 months (n=1,538).

Relevance of Subject Matter

Yes, the subject matter is of relevance to me	52%
Mostly the subject matter is of relevance to me	38%
Now and then the subject matter is of relevance to me	9%
No, the subject matter is not of relevance to me	0%

Base: n=1,538)

0%   55%
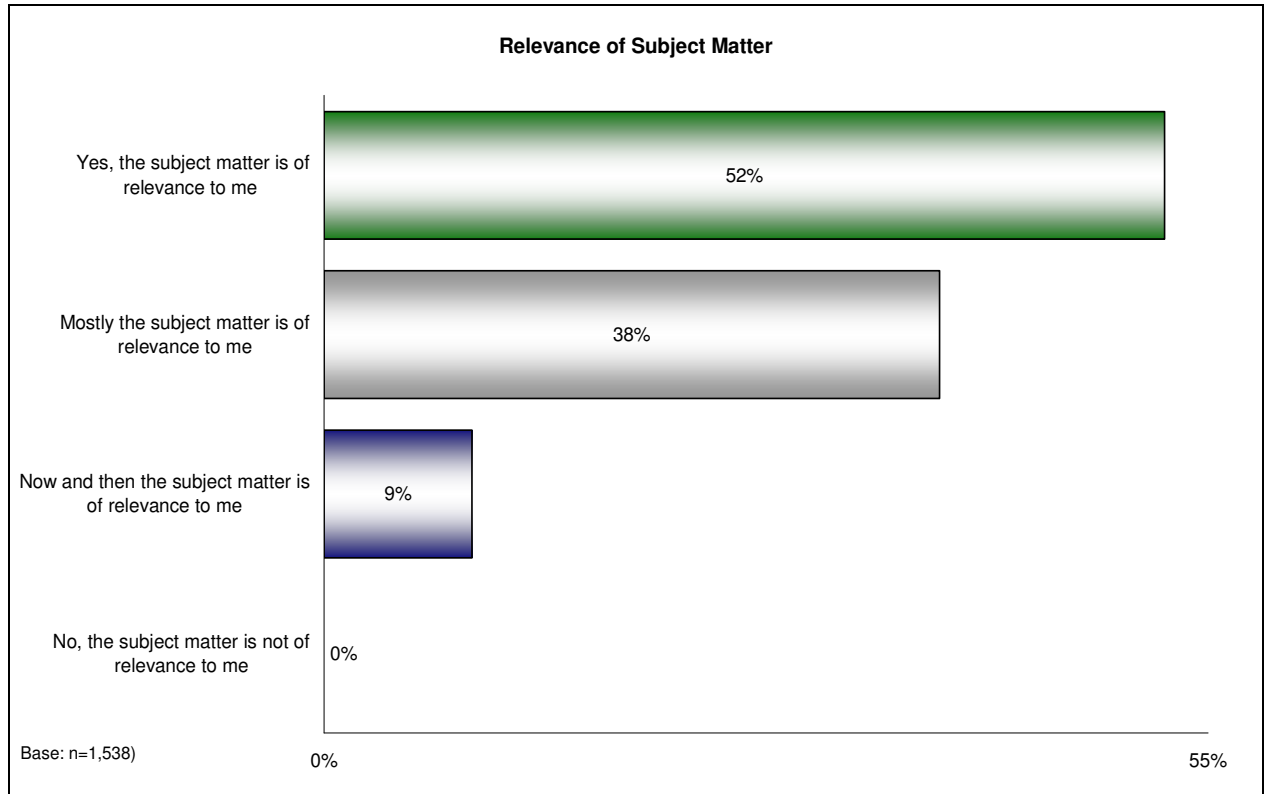
- 90% of respondents either entirely or mostly agree that the subject matter of courses/sessions is of relevance:
    – 52% state that the subject matter is of relevance
    – 38% describe the subject matter as mostly relevant.

- 9% of respondents consider that now and then the subject matter is of relevance to them.

- Importantly, no respondents consider the subject matter to be irrelevant.

5. Ongoing Viability: Protecting Fundamental Aspects

Volunteers and members are at the cornerstone of SeniorNet. The ability to continue to attract funding is also paramount. It is arguable that an erosion of these crucial elements would threaten the very existence of SeniorNet. It is therefore essential that any threats to these fundamentals are addressed and that future enhancements or considerations protect their very nature.
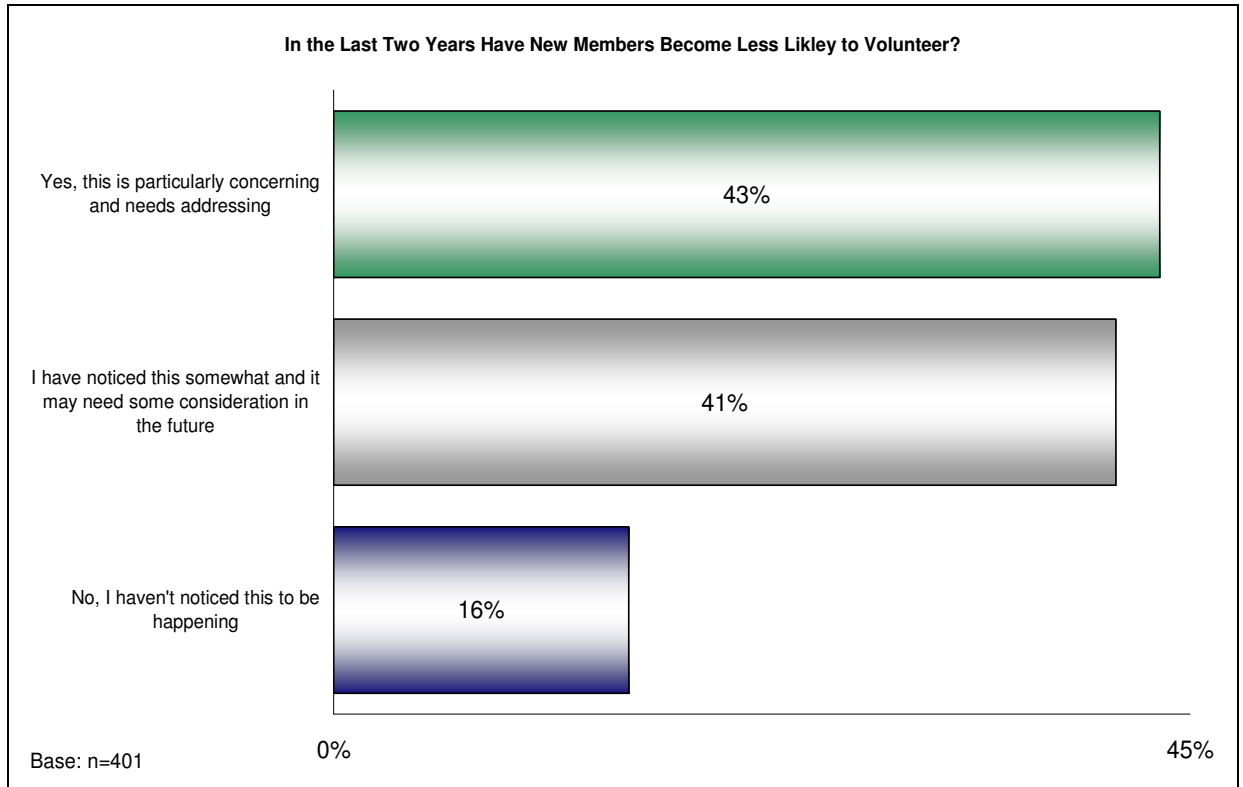
5.1 Maintaining and attracting volunteers

SeniorNet entirely depends on committed volunteers who freely and wholeheartedly give their time. It is the significant time, contribution, good will and desire to help others that enables SeniorNet to put the learning needs and requirements of older people at the forefront and to provide the unique learning environment that is of prime importance. Across the qualitative interviews, it was clear how important it is for learning centres to have:

- committee people with strong leadership skills and knowledge, and the ability and knowledge to attract funding

- tutors with sufficient knowledge and skills, and the ability to appropriately impart their knowledge

- technical support people readily on hand to ensure technology is always functioning.

> *We've got just an absolutely fabulous tech team; we couldn't do anything without our tech team because they are here holiday time and right through just updating. It's fabulous, all voluntary.*
> (SeniorNet member aged 66 or older)

However, members have begun to notice a gradual decline in the ability or willingness of people to volunteer. This is considered to be an issue that requires addressing either now or in the future. The graph below provides an idea of the extent of the concern.

In the Last Two Years Have New Members Become Less Likley to Volunteer?

Yes, this is particularly concerning and needs addressing — 43%

I have noticed this somewhat and it may need some consideration in the future — 41%

No, I haven't noticed this to be happening — 16%

Base: n=401   0%   45%

- 84% of committee members who responded to the survey question (n=401) have noticed that, in the last two years, new members are less willing or able to volunteer as tutors or for committee roles:

  - 43% see this issue to be particularly concerning and believe it requires addressing

  - 41% have noticed this somewhat and consider that the issue may need some consideration in the future.

- 16% of committee members have not noticed that new members appear less likely to volunteer.

To explore how this issue may be addressed, either now or in the long term, all survey respondents except *current* serving committee members (n=1,702) considered what may encourage them to become a committee member or to have more of an active role in their learning centre (note: respondents could select multiple responses).

What would encourage a more active role?	Percentage of respondents (n=1,702)
Nothing, as this is not something that would suit or interest me (includes being too busy, no spare time, other commitments, distance from learning centre, age/health issues, already served on committee)	64%
Being invited or encouraged to have such a role	15%
Availability of informal training opportunities	13%
Being regularly told of available opportunities	10%
Knowing who to speak to about this or the process to follow	7%
Non-monetary recognition	2%
Not feel confident/competent at this time	2%
9% already have had an active role or have previously served on the committee	

If a range of approaches are considered together, potentially 45% or more of respondents could be encouraged to take on more active roles:
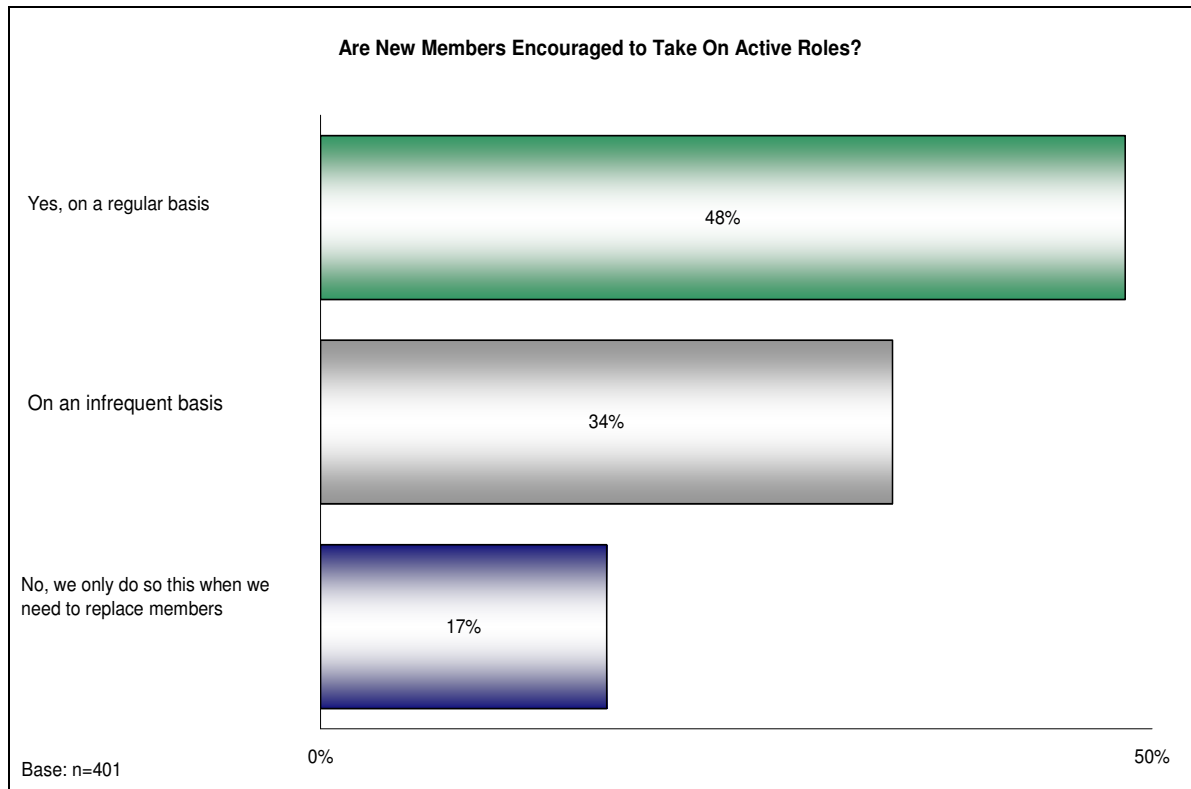
- 15% of total respondents to this question would consider taking on a more active role if invited or encouraged to do so

- 13% would be encouraged by informal training opportunities

- 10% would be encouraged by being regularly told of opportunities

- 7% would if they knew who to speak to or the process to follow.

This is positive as it demonstrates that active roles are likely to be taken up if learning centres specifically convey the availability of opportunities, encourage people to take up these opportunities and advise the process to follow[3].

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[3] Of note, a quarter of all respondents excluding existing committee members (n=1,702) do not know how to become committee members or how to have a more active role in the running of their learning centre.

Encouraging more active roles

Presently, it does appear that members are encouraged to take on active roles within learning centres, though the extent to which this is undertaken is variable.

Are New Members Encouraged to Take On Active Roles?

Yes, on a regular basis	48%
On an infrequent basis	34%
No, we only do so this when we need to replace members	17%

Base: n=401

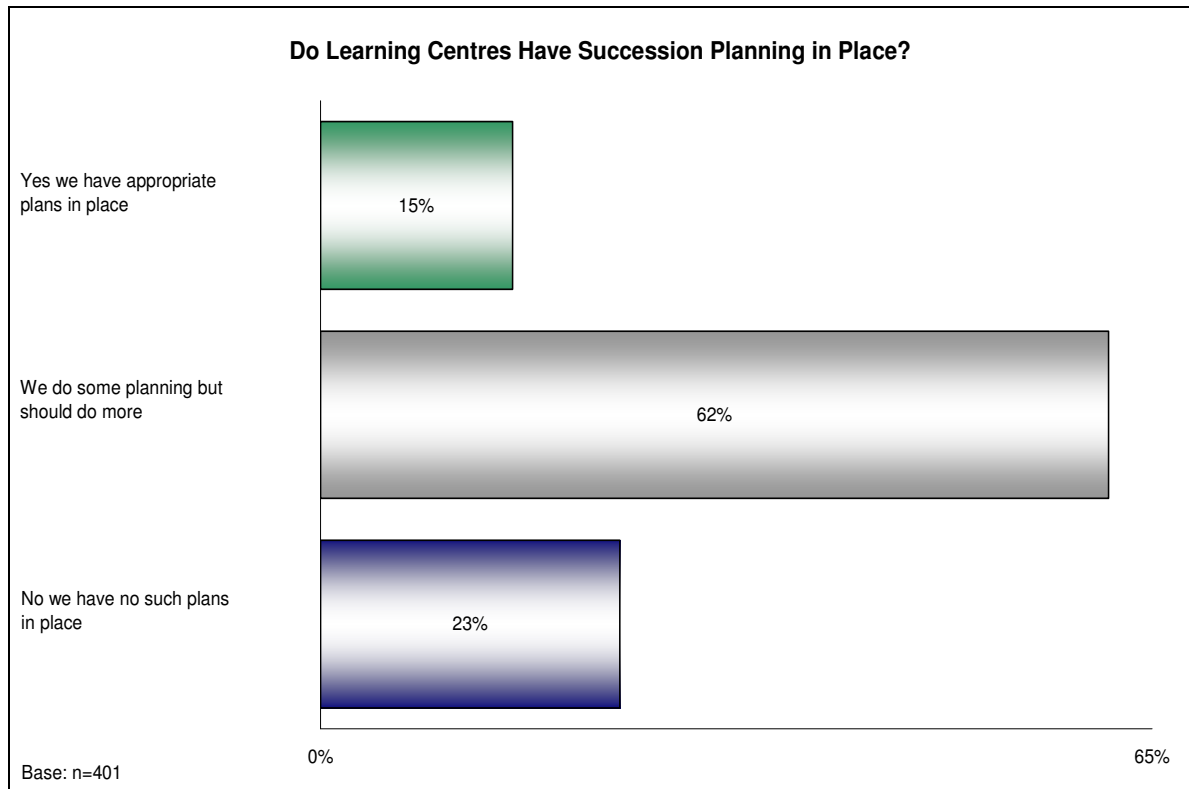0%   50%

- Nearly half (48%) of committee members regularly encourage members to take on active roles or to become committee members.

- Just over half (51%) do so infrequently or solely to replace members.

Learning centres may therefore be able to enhance the availability of more active members through more regular encouragement and the provision of informal training opportunities (this would not only assist members to prepare for active roles, but would provide insight into what various roles may entail). While this might depend on actual roles/positions becoming available, for succession planning purposes, proactive encouragement and regular training opportunities could provide the opportunity to identify members who can be called on in the future either in a 'stand-in' capacity or to take on roles once they become available.

Succession planning

In considering the issue of succession planning, respondents indicate that more can be done.

Do Learning Centres Have Succession Planning in Place?

Category	Percentage
Yes we have appropriate plans in place	15%
We do some planning but should do more	62%
No we have no such plans in place	23%

Base: n=401

0%   65%

- Only 15% of committee members consider that their learning centres have appropriate plans to deal with people leaving or retiring from key roles.
- 62% believe that they should do more planning.
- 23% have no succession plan.

This may therefore indicate an opportunity for the Federation to lead the wider consideration of opportunities and strategies for succession planning, including training opportunities and encouraging members to take on more active roles. In addition, learning centres with plans currently in place could potentially assist in this process.

> *I think it would be good if the Federation paid attention to the skills that are needed to run the learning centres because I think that's the crux of it – the way it runs gives it strength. The Federation should look at training leaders.*
> (SeniorNet member aged 66 or older)

5.2   Retaining and attracting members

Member retention is strongly influenced by the ability to *continue* learning about new technology. By attending SeniorNet, members obtain an increasing awareness of the many ways in which new technology can be used as a key part of everyday living. They also become increasingly braver as new knowledge and skills develop and the fear of new technology dissipates. Members therefore return to attend different courses and workshops of interest. With increasing confidence, some members also become tutors.

Key informants and members identified the two following factors as central to member retention:

■   the supportive SeniorNet learning environment

■   an awareness of courses available, and importantly an understanding of what the particular course is about and why it would be of interest/relevance.

Nearly all survey respondents (98%) agree that, to attract members, it is important for people to be aware that learning will take place in a comfortable environment (no respondents disagree).

Factors Important to Attracting Members
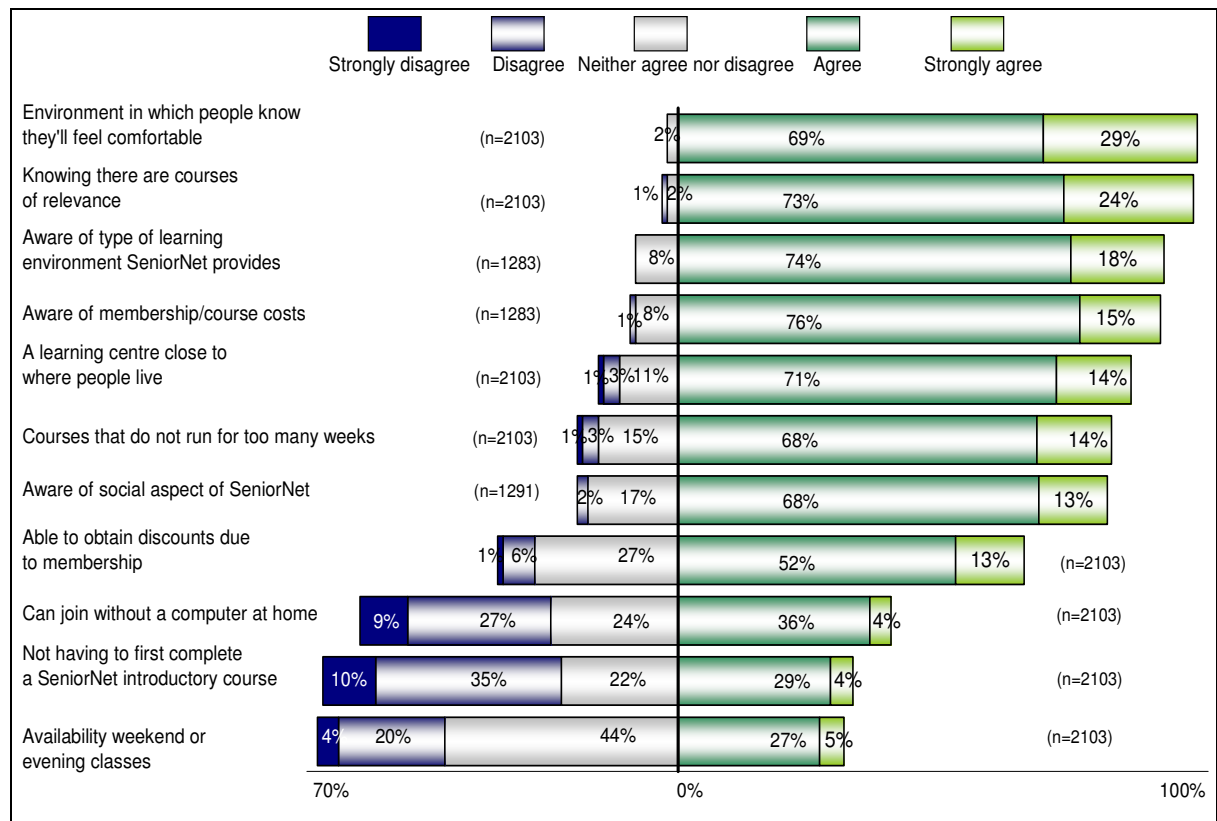
Similarly, being aware of other aspects of the SeniorNet environment is important to attracting members:

■   92% agree it is important to know about the type of learning environment provided (no respondents disagree)

- 81% agree it is important to know about the social aspect of SeniorNet (only 2% disagree)

- Nearly all respondents (97%) agree that it is important to know that there are courses of relevance available (only 1% disagree).

In terms of attracting members to SeniorNet, some key functional factors are also considered important:

- 91% agree that it is important to know about the costs of membership and courses (only 9% disagree)[4]

- 85% agree it is important to have a learning centre close by (4% disagree)

- 82% agree it is important that courses do not run for too many weeks (4% disagree)

- 68% of respondents agree that the ability to obtain discounts due to SeniorNet membership is important (only 7% strongly disagree/disagree).[5]

The following three factors appear to be *less* important:

1. Being able to join without a computer at home:

   - 40% agree this is important

   - 36% disagree.

   For members who raised this as an issue, not having a computer at home had been an initial barrier to their joining SeniorNet as they thought it was a prerequisite to membership. In fact, members appear to take it for granted that having a computer at home is necessary to join and believe it is a key learning need as it is considered necessary to practise what is learnt and also strengthens the motivation to learn.[6]

2. Not having to first complete an introductory course:

   - 45% disagree that this is an important consideration

   - 33% of respondents agree that not having to complete the introductory course is important to attracting members.

   Of note, age or employment status of members did not have a bearing on this factor, despite some indication in the focus group discussions to the contrary. A small number of members (more often people recently leaving the workforce or in the under-65 age group) expressed some frustration at having to complete introductory courses when they felt sufficiently computer savvy to go straight to the courses they were interested in. However, other members believe these courses help learning centres to identify the extent of members' skills, knowledge and experience and to assess the type of learning individuals may require.

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[4] This response option, as well as 'knowing about the type of learning environment' and 'aware of the social aspect' were added to the survey on the third day of the survey running as they were spontaneously and commonly raised by members responding to the 'other comments' option.

[5] Please refer to Appendix 3 for more information about what type of discounts respondents are interested in receiving. Most respondents (83%) are interested in obtaining discounts on computer software.

[6] All respondents indicate that they have a computer at home.

3.   Availability of weekend/evening classes:

- 44% of respondents neither agree nor disagree that the availability of evening or weekend classes is important

- 32% agree

- Around a quarter of respondents (24%) disagree.

Again, it is of interest that there is no obvious distinction between the responses of those in the under-65 year age group and the over-65 age group, or across respondents in paid employed and not in paid employment.

Promoting SeniorNet to attract members

The factors respondents' prioritise as important to attracting members are areas where SeniorNet does well (i.e. comfortable environment, relevant courses) and signals the importance of their ongoing maintenance. However, these findings also strongly support the importance of specifically conveying or marketing key aspects of the SeniorNet service to attract potential members (rather than relying on members becoming aware of these aspects after joining). For existing members, awareness of relevant courses and their potential is also important to member retention.

Whereas respondents recognise the importance of publicising key aspects of the SeniorNet service, views vary as to whether SeniorNet needs to reconsider the way it currently advertises to attract new members.

Improving Advertising to Attract New Members

Base: n=2,103
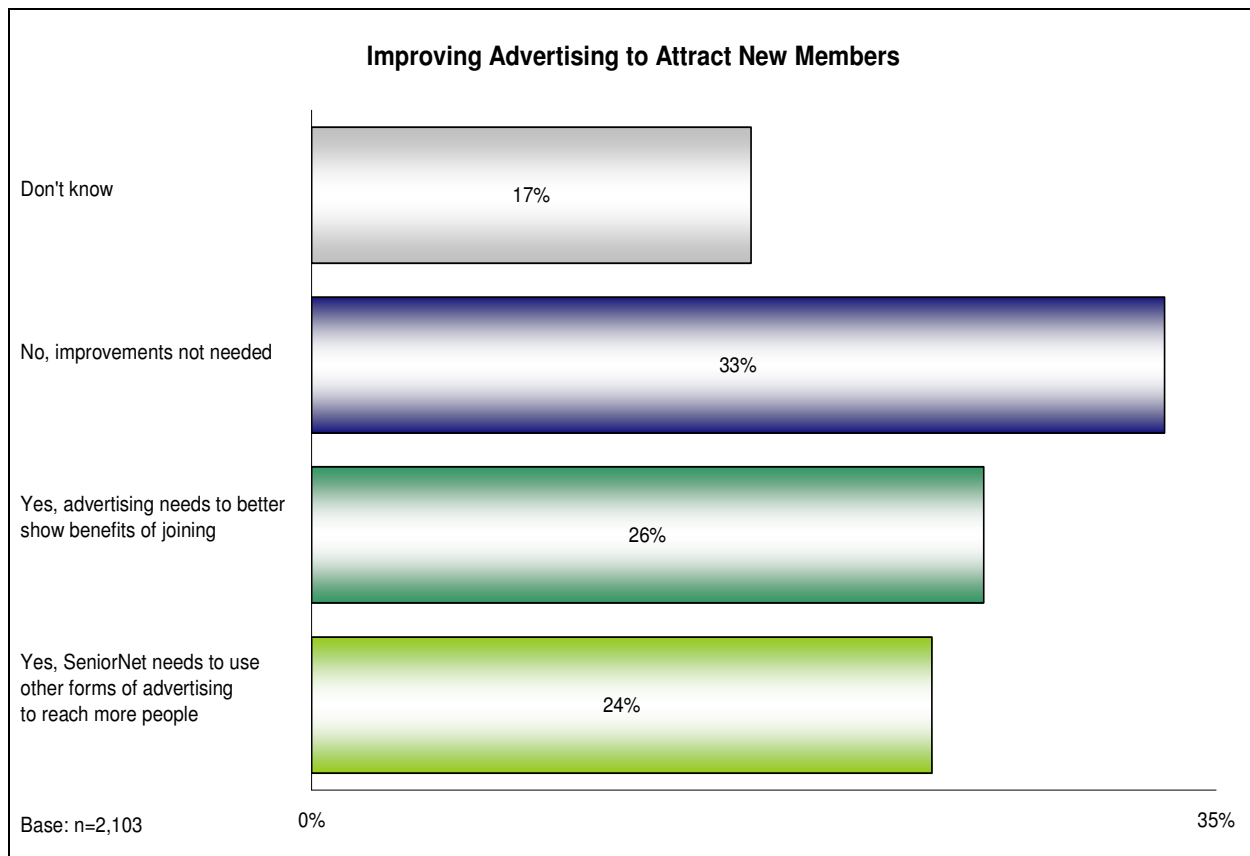
- 50% of respondents agree that some improvement needs to be made to the way SeniorNet advertises:
  - 26% believe that advertising needs to better show the benefits of joining SeniorNet
  - 24% believe that other forms of advertising are required in order to reach more people.

- 33% of respondents indicate no improvements are needed.

- 17% do not know.

However, as the qualitative component of this study identified, improvements to advertising to show the benefits of SeniorNet and to the forms of advertising used are interrelated considerations. For members interviewed who considered that SeniorNet's profile needs to be raised, it was felt that there was a reliance on traditional forms of marketing (word-of-mouth, flyers and brochures and advertisements in local newspapers). They consider that a predominant use of traditional forms of marketing:

- **Limits and restricts membership**

It only attracts people already connected to an existing SeniorNet member or those lucky enough to stumble across SeniorNet advertisements when placed.

■ **Does not encourage**

It does not allow SeniorNet to convey its unique attributes or the personal benefits that can be attained by coming to SeniorNet and connecting with new technology. People with no or minimal knowledge of SeniorNet are therefore probably unaware of SeniorNet's safe and comfortable learning environment and the great things that can be done using new technology. Arguably, therefore, SeniorNet will continue to find it difficult to attract those older people who have the mentality that it is 'too hard' and that new technology 'is not for me'.

■ **Is not compelling**

It does not allow for the important societal good of SeniorNet to be conveyed.

■ **Is impersonal**

It does not allow for the human face of SeniorNet to be seen.

Therefore, in terms of SeniorNet's overall approach to attracting membership, three interrelated suggestions are as follows:

1. Increase self-promotion and visibility, including a greater face-to-face presence within different parts of the community.

2. Seek to reach those who do not know about SeniorNet and do not know people who are members (those not reached by 'word of mouth').

> *If only the person who'd sold me the computer said 'well go to SeniorNet'. Cause that's really how to get through to people who don't know about it.* (SeniorNet member aged 66 or older)

Some suggestions included: establishing arrangements with retailers of new technology to provide information to customers about SeniorNet; attending community events; visibly and publicly celebrating SeniorNet successes and milestones.

3. Develop and use specific branding to:

▪ convey the value and unique attributes of the SeniorNet learning environment – one where older people feel comfortable coming to learn about new technology and that also offers social aspects

▪ enable people to see that there are relevant courses available, as well as courses that run for weeks rather than months

▪ highlight that there are probably local learning centres nearby

▪ enable an awareness of the costs of joining, as well as the discounts on goods and services available to SeniorNet members.

> *So by branding it and narrowing it and saying this is a really supportive environment for people that want to lean more about how to use computers. Shift the positioning from 'you poor people who have missed out on computers' to 'look this is your chance to be a bit more connected.* (Stakeholder)

5.3 Continuous ability to attract sponsorship/funding

The strength of a learning centre appears to partially rest on that learning centre's ability to secure funding and support, as well as factors such as whether one's premises are owned outright or a learning centre has high rental outgoings.

> *Some [learning centres] that are paying the bigger fees probably have high rental charges for their premises probably something three or four times what we pay. So it's pretty hard on them.* (SeniorNet member aged 50–65)

There is also awareness that funding will be increasingly harder to attract in the current and future economic climate. This raises concerns for the continued future viability of some learning centres.

Common responses to the funding issue are as follows:

- Membership fees and course costs need to be kept low. This is an important feature of SeniorNet and helps retain members.

- SeniorNet needs to attract a diversity of funding sources. This comes down to a smart marketing approach that demonstrates the societal good of SeniorNet and is aimed at:
    – **lobbying government** (i.e. social agencies) – key informants interviewed believe it is important for SeniorNet to demonstrate to government the important societal function of SeniorNet and the social cost of SeniorNet not being around, e.g. older people's disengagement from society if not digitally connected
    – **appealing to the private sector** – key informants believe it is important for SeniorNet to secure funding from financially stable and significant organisations. The attraction is showing how SeniorNet can help these organisations' brands (i.e. raising visibility and demonstrating social responsibility, mutual gains and a return for investment for little cost).

> *I haven't seen much about SeniorNet in the media for eons. They need to create publicity, create events, celebrations, get media attention. Self promotion is not part of their culture yet if they don't self promote or make themselves visible then it's not a great interest to partners or sponsors. Sponsors like events and visibility. They want to be seen as the good guys doing good stuff. SeniorNet have people with good community contacts but they need to deliver something back to their partners. Old people using computers is still something people are interested in and are keen to see. It makes a good story really.* (Stakeholder)

6. Core Challenges

6.1   Identifying the core challenges

Committee members and tutors confirm that core challenges facing learning centres relate to practical day-to-day matters and are underpinned by potential threats to core aspects of the SeniorNet service: members, volunteers, and funding and sponsorship.

Core challenges	Percentage of respondents who strongly agree/agree	Mean rating: 1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither/nor 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
Having tutors available to teach courses wanted by members	93%	4.3
Knowing that the quality of teaching is of a high standard	91%	4.2
Attracting volunteers with technical knowledge	91%[7]	4.3
Attracting volunteers	91%	4.2
Keeping manuals up-to-date	90%	4.3
Attracting new members	90%	4.2
Knowing what courses are of relevance to members	90%	4.1
Keeping up with new technology	87%	4.1
Member retention[8]	87%	4.2
Understanding new members' level of existing knowledge	85%	4
Attracting sufficient sponsorship/funding	84%	4.1
The premises that we operate from (i.e. size and facilities)	74%	3.8

Base: n=647 (committee members and tutors only)

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[7] 46% of respondents strongly agree that this is a core challenge. 45% agree.

[8] A total of 332 committee members and tutors considered this challenge as it was added to the survey on the third day of the survey running after it was identified as being commonly raised by participants in the 'other comments' option.

6.2   Describing these challenges

The remainder of this section provides an overview of the challenges identified by participants during the focus group discussions (this does not include challenges relating to member retention and attraction, or attracting volunteers and sponsorship/funding, which were discussed in section 5).

Availability of tutors to teach emerging technology

Often, the nature of courses available is shaped by the existing knowledge and interest of SeniorNet tutors. This in itself has seen some learning centres lower their entry age to bring in people with knowledge and the ability to teach new areas of technology when tutors aged 55 plus are unable to provide this. The challenge is how this sits alongside SeniorNet's philosophy of 'older people teaching older people'.

> *It should be older people teaching older people. Older people have a higher level of patience; know how to speak at a simpler level and at the older person's pace. But there should be some openness about it if the facilitator is good and their skill needed.* (Māori representative)

> *Where there is a need lacking, it should not be so much exclusion by age but rather about having tutors who are the right people and who have the right attitude – the right skill level and the right interaction.* (Stakeholder)

It however appears that SeniorNet presently takes an appropriately balanced approach – predominantly older people teaching older people, but without excluding younger tutors when a specific need arises (and ensuring younger tutors meet older people's learning needs). The continued challenge is maintaining this balance and ensuring existing tutors have the knowledge, skills and access to new technology (including software) to be able to learn and teach new and relevant courses as technology emerges.

Knowing teaching is of a quality standard

As earlier discussed, most members are satisfied with the quality of teaching that they receive at SeniorNet. The challenge is monitoring the quality of teaching.

Members interviewed explicitly stated that formalised evaluation of teaching, as well as formalised tutor training, goes against the fundamental volunteer environment of SeniorNet.

> *I find it extremely difficult to critique when people are voluntary giving their time and energy making us feel comfortable.* (SeniorNet member aged 50–65)

In this regard, members raise issue with having to complete course evaluation forms, as required by the Tertiary Education Commission. However, this is a necessary requirement and in the future, learners could be called on to have an even greater role in formal evaluation requirements relating to government funding of adult education.

The challenge is therefore obtaining a balance between incorporating these requirements and knowing and being able to demonstrate that members are receiving good quality teaching, while also ensuring tutors feel comfortable and that the volunteer nature of SeniorNet remains intact. Some members consider that the challenge could be lessened

through proactively maintaining and enhancing confidence in the teaching received, e.g. through greater informal training opportunities and tutor support.

Keeping course manuals up-to-date

Ensuring course manuals are up-to-date, and modifying them as required and developing new ones, can be onerous and time consuming.

Wellington SeniorNet has helped by providing some manuals, but they are in hard-copy only and are not modifiable. The Federation also identifies manuals held by other learning centres and notes these on its website. However, some learning centres may not indicate what manuals are available, manuals may be developed after the Federation notification, and it can be hard to discern the content of the manuals from only a brief description.

I am just thinking about reinventing the wheel. We are writing one course in Auckland and they're also writing the same course in Blenheim. We actually need an even better system. It's better than it used to be but it's still not 100%.
(SeniorNet member aged 50–65)

In an ideal world I think if [the Executive Officer of the Federation] got all the manuals and went through each of them with two or three people with the expertise and produced a best standard manual and we could all teach from the same manuals; though it would be a mammoth task.
(SeniorNet member aged 66 plus)

Courses on offer that attract members and meet members' needs

As identified earlier, most members believe that the subject matter of SeniorNet courses is relevant. However, it can be challenging to ascertain the type of courses members would like, as well as being able to meet those desires. Some learning centres may be proactive in their attempts to find out what members want. Others may be reactive. There is also the difficulty that members may not necessarily realise the possibilities of new technology and how this applies to their everyday interests until commencing a course (this is in itself an inherent difficulty in attracting members). It is therefore considered important to continuously seek new ways to ascertain this or to learn what other learning centres may be doing (i.e. one learning centre has recently introduced informal coffee mornings).

Keeping up with new technology

Technology is constantly changing and needs to be kept up with. Learning centres appear to be doing a good job of this, e.g. catering for members with different software by running parallel classes using Office 2003, Windows XP and Office 2007 and Windows Vista.

Challenges identified relate to learning centres being able to acquire and to become familiar with new software and technology to keep up with the diversity of technology constantly being acquired by learners.

The place of laptops within learning centres is emerging as a consideration, particularly as they are becoming increasingly popular due to reduced price and limited space.[9] Some learning centres appear to have responded by welcoming laptops into the classroom. Others have not. The concern appears to be the unsuitability of connecting laptops to learning centres' networks (threat of viruses), as well as the set-up of laptops not aligning well with existing course manuals.

> *We just need to know how many people we put off by saying we won't allow laptops.* (SeniorNet member aged 66 or older)

A similar issue is the emerging popularity of Apple Macintosh computers:

> *The tutors where I joined up knew very little about Macs which meant that I didn't really learn as much as I'd hoped.* (SeniorNet member aged 55 or older)

In response to this, a small number of specific Apple Macintosh classes have emerged. There is also a 'Mac-only' SeniorNet learning centre, which is based in Christchurch and offers distance learning to students.

Understanding new members' existing level of knowledge

The ability to discern the extent of new members' level of knowledge when it comes to new technology enables committee members/tutors to ascertain individuals' learning requirements and the level of teaching classes require. Some learning centres require all new members to complete an introductory course. However, as earlier discussed, this can put off new members who feel sufficiently equipped to bypass the introductory course.

> *I joined up cause I wanted to learn about the scanning picture enhancement; but I had to go back and start learning about how to use the mouse. I spent six weeks doing that totally bored. It's been a little bit of a bug bear that there's no way of assessing members.* (SeniorNet member aged 50–65)

It may be more of an issue in the future, when members with greater levels of experience of new technology come through. Alternative ways to understand new members' level of knowledge may then be required.

Premises that learning centres operate from

Some learning centres are not easily accessible (i.e. not ground-floor access) and are hard to heat. They may also be too small, which limits the number of classes and other activities that can be held.

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[9] Indeed, 37% of all respondents indicate that they have laptops at home.

7. Other Matters to Consider

While not forming a key component of the evaluation, the Federation sought initial feedback about seeking greater participation of Māori and Pacific members, and about the 'SeniorNet' name.

7.1 Greater ethnic diversity of SeniorNet members

The Federation is interested in attracting a greater ethnic diversity of membership to SeniorNet. This reflects that the majority of SeniorNet members identify as 'New Zealanders' and 'Europeans'. The following table identifies the ethnic identity of SeniorNet members in 2008.

Identified ethnicity of membership in 2008	Number of members
New Zealanders and Europeans	10,377 (97.20%)
Māori	180 (1.70%)
Asian	65 (0.60%)
Pacific Island people	16 (0.15%)
Other	39 (0.40%)
Total providing data	**10,677**

Source: *SeniorNet Annual Report 2008*

Survey respondents had mixed views about whether SeniorNet needs to attract a greater ethnic diversity of membership.

Need to Attract Ethnic Diversity

Base:
n = 2,103
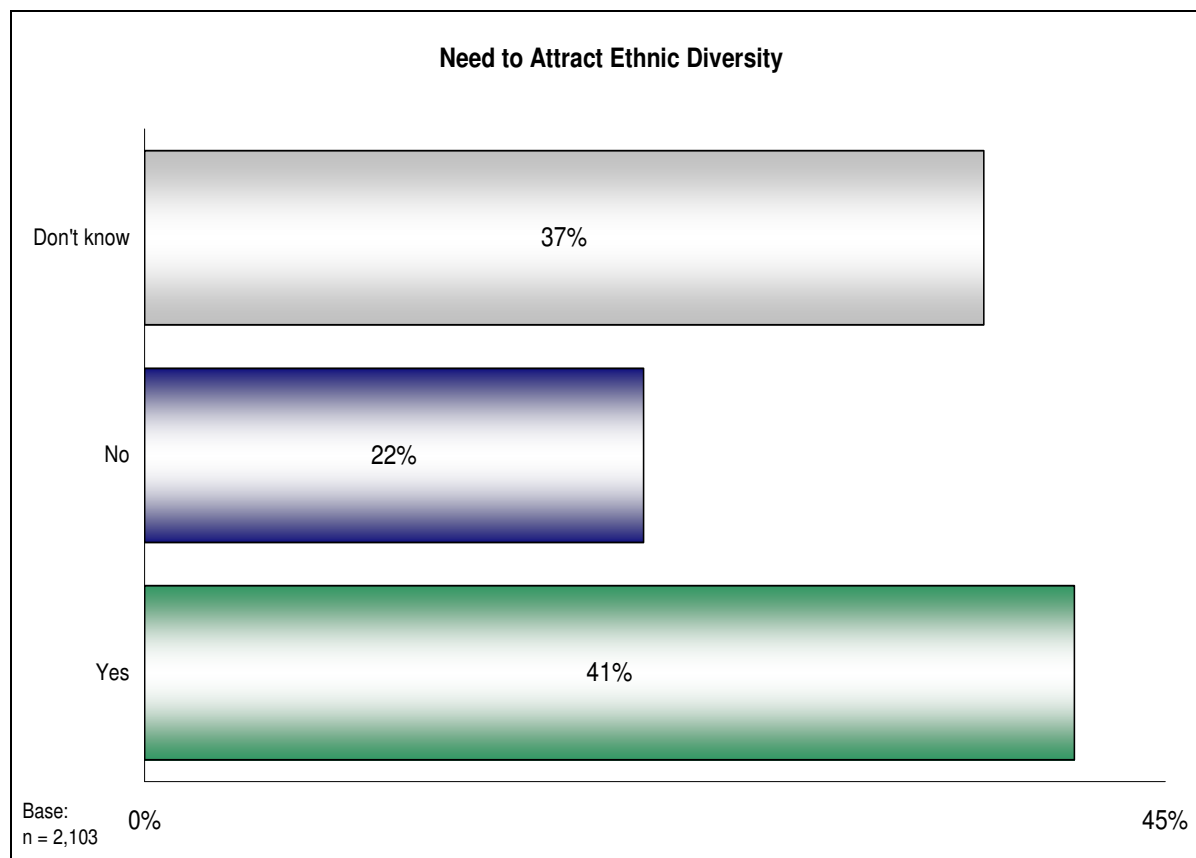
- 41% agree that SeniorNet needs to attract a greater ethnic diversity of membership.
- 37% of respondents do not know.
- Just less than one-quarter (22%) of respondents do not agree.

Reflecting SeniorNet's current ethnic demographic, and given that more respondents than not agree that SeniorNet needs to attract greater ethnic diversity, this is an area that requires further consideration by the Federation. A two-fold approach that has emerged from the qualitative research (and is discussed below) is for the Federation to:

- consider the way in which SeniorNet is marketed and whether this has an impact on the ethnic constitution of SeniorNet
- consider involvement with diverse and established communities of interest.

Key informant interviews included three interviews with Māori representatives, and an interview with an organisation advocating on behalf of Pacific older people. This reflected the Federation's desire for initial consideration of this issue. The interviews considered the core needs of Māori and Pacific older people in learning new technology. Of note, key learning requirements considered important for Māori and Pacific older people were in alignment with the learning needs identified by SeniorNet members and the unique learning environment provided by SeniorNet: learning at one's own pace, with people of a similar age and in a supportive, confidence-building environment.

From the perspective of the Pacific organisation, a lack of relevance of new technology and not being aware of its potential is a core barrier for Pacific older people learning new technology. In addition, older Pacific people would feel more comfortable in a familiar environment and where they could speak in their own language. The organisation interviewed was unaware of SeniorNet, despite the fact that they cater specifically to older people and have recently established an initiative to encourage older people to learn new technology. One consideration raised was whether SeniorNet could work alongside this Pacific organisation to provide an environment that encouraged older Pacific membership.

Māori representatives interviewed considered that a lack of relevance and not owning a computer were barriers to seeking to learn new technology. They did not think that it would be crucial for the learning environment to be predominantly Māori constituted or Māori run. As with the Pacific organisation, what was identified as important is an environment where Māori learners would feel comfortable attending, e.g. a local, familiar community setting. Related to this would be the importance of SeniorNet establishing community networks with established Māori organisations and individuals to enable a presence within local communities.

In addition, one representative, while describing her recent experience of enrolling with a wānanga, revealed the importance that face-to-face marketing had to her uptake. Before this, she had enrolled in other 'polytech' courses, but had never had the courage to attend. She then described her encounter with the wānanga via their presence at a community fair. She got to see the 'face of the wānanga', which involved friendly and encouraging people who provided her with a raft of information about what she could do if she enrolled and what form the learning would take. In contrast, this representative had not previously heard of SeniorNet, but was interested in aspects of the SeniorNet model (e.g. older people only).

Options to achieve greater ethnic diversity

This initial exploration relating to attracting greater diversity of membership therefore raises consideration of two potential options:

1. Diversity via marketing

Given that new membership of SeniorNet arises commonly from 'word of mouth', this may unintentionally encourage the present narrow ethnicity of membership where people's networks may reflect one's own ethnicity. The identification of marketing opportunities that may attract ethnic diversity, such as at community events, may at the very least create a greater awareness of SeniorNet. Ultimately, it may have the flow-on effect of a greater diversity of membership.

2. Diversity via relationships with established organisations

Attracting ethnic diversity of membership may not be so much about modifying the SeniorNet learning environment but may instead involve working alongside respected and established Māori and Pacific individuals and organisations to have a presence specifically in places where different older people *already* feel comfortable coming together. Given that the next generation of Māori and Pacific older people are more likely to own computers and have knowledge of new technology and a desire to learn more, this may well be an important area for greater consideration by the Federation.

> *The issue of trying to branch out and saying well we want to bring in Māori or Pacific; to me that is losing the way. Just go where people are and what they are doing in communities. Stick with the model…* (Stakeholder)

7.2   Appropriateness of the SeniorNet name

Overall, most respondents appear satisfied with the name 'SeniorNet', believing it to appropriately reflect what SeniorNet is all about.

'SeniorNet' as a Reflection of the Service

Name is an accurate reflection — 80%

Name only reflects some aspects of what SeniorNet is about — 17%

Do not think name appropriately reflects what SeniorNet about — 3%

Base: n=2,103

0%   80%
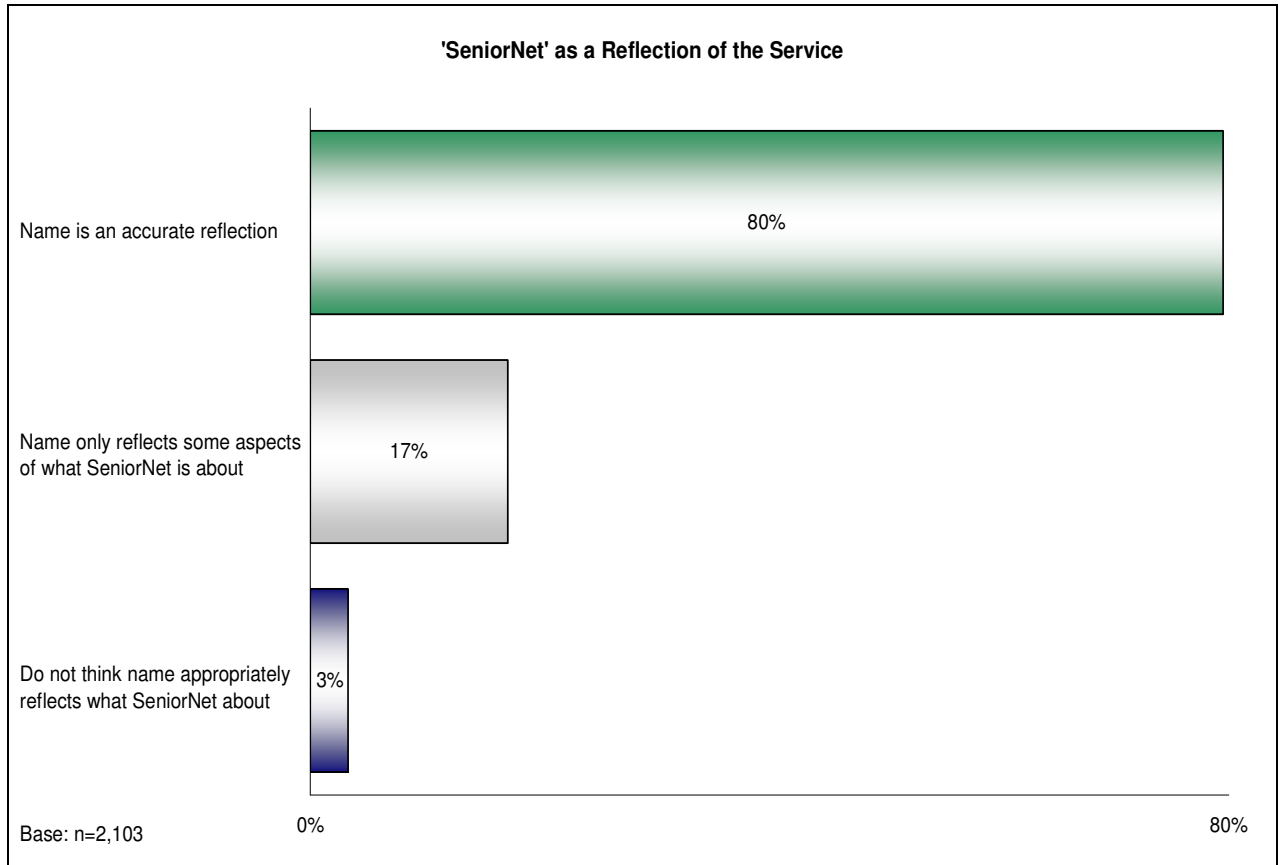
- 80% of respondents think that the name 'SeniorNet' accurately reflects what SeniorNet is about.

- 17% consider that the name only reflects some aspects of SeniorNet.

- A very small number (3%) indicate that the name does not appropriately reflect what SeniorNet is about.

Thinking about the future, the majority of respondents consider that the present name is suitable to attracting the next generation of members or does not matter too much.

Attracting Future Members

Yes, the name is suitable	70%
The name doesn't matter too much	23%
The name is likely to be off-putting	7%

Base: n=2,103   0%   70%
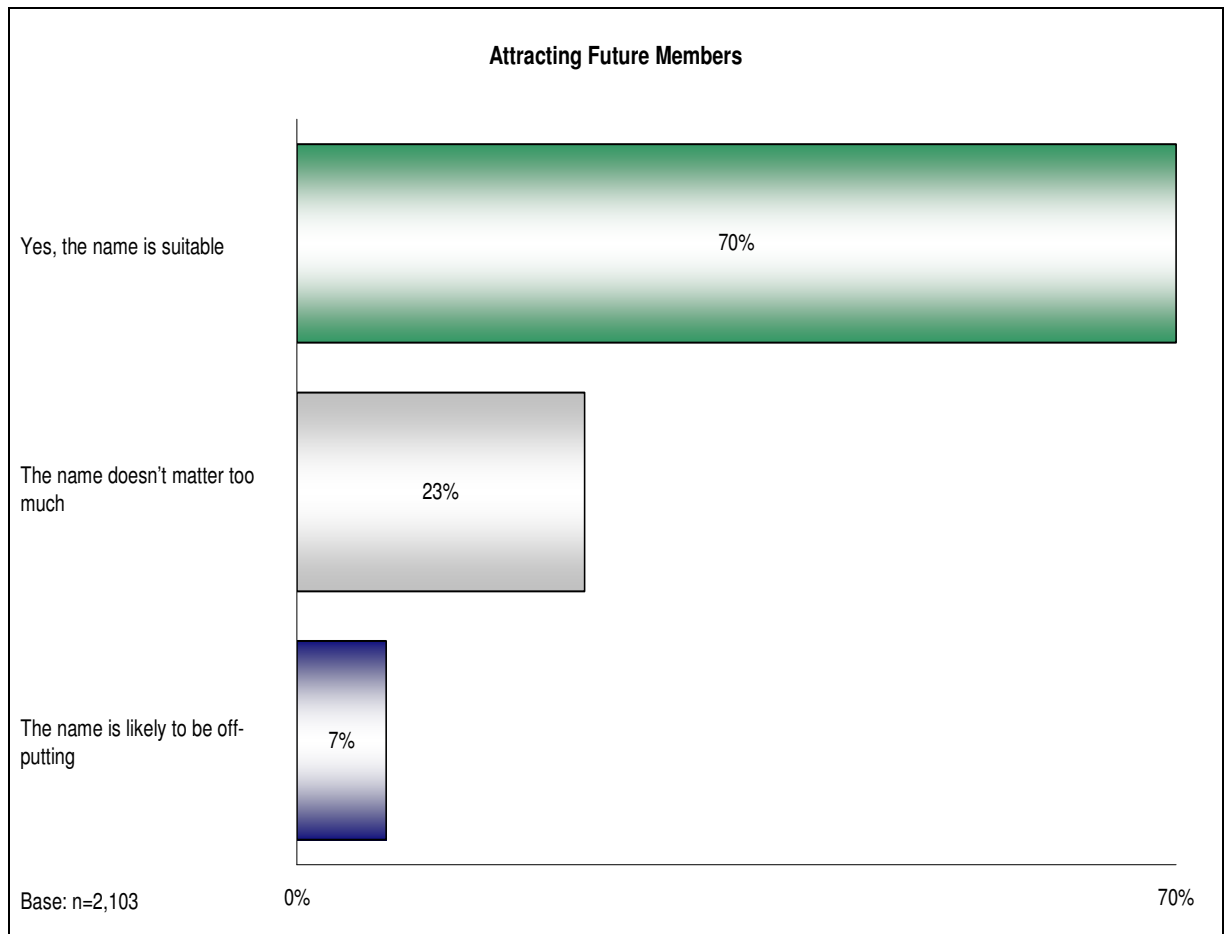
- 70% think that the name 'SeniorNet' is suitable to attracting future members.

- 23% of respondents consider that the name does not matter too much when it comes to attracting future members.

- Few respondents (7%) think that the name is likely to be off-putting.

Some key informants viewed the name as an established identity that would be difficult to change. A small number thought the name could be looked at. It is a name that would not mean much to people who have never heard of it, as the term 'senior' is not necessarily how older people see themselves and the term 'net' does not reflect that SeniorNet is about more than the internet. However, there is no strong push to change the name 'SeniorNet', with members believing that the name remains relevant in the present and for the future.

8. Future Considerations

8.1   Context

Two views have emerged in relation to the future of SeniorNet, particularly considering the next generation of members who are likely to be more technologically savvy. One view is that eventually the SeniorNet service could become redundant as people will have sufficient knowledge of new technology and will no longer need to learn the basics.

> *The reason why we will be out of existence is that the next generation coming through is already computer trained and they don't need the stuff that we need. We are training the people who fell between the age gap sort of thing and that's what the whole function of SeniorNet really is. We won't be here in 15 years.* (SeniorNet member aged 66 or older)

Others indicate that this was a fear 20 years ago and still SeniorNet remains well established, with large numbers continuing to join with no or very minimal knowledge of new technology and still wanting the basics. Even with an emerging technologically advanced generation, technology will always be developing and older people will continue to want to learn new things in a supportive environment with their peers.

> *There's no question that there will be continuous technology changes and which means there will be people who will always want to be catching up and learn a new technology. The challenge for SeniorNet is how adaptive it is to that change. We can always stick to the same old and eventually you'll become the dinosaur and disappear but I think that if we can have people coming into SeniorNet that are receptive to technology changes… If you're looking down the track further, there has always been this talk you know that SeniorNet eventually will become extinct. I don't believe that. I think that if it's adaptable enough it will continue to provide a function.* (SeniorNet member aged 50–65)

Irrespective of the divergence of view, it will be crucial for SeniorNet to further the core fundamental aspects of the service (members, volunteers, sponsorship/funding) and to maintain the learning environment it provides, which recognises and incorporates older people's needs in learning new technology.

8.2   Areas for consideration

As the table below signifies, in the future it will be important for SeniorNet to:

- keep abreast of members' different levels of learning need
- keep up with new technology
- ensure the content and delivery of courses remains relevant, aligns with members' interests and availability, and is aimed at the right level.

Future areas for consideration	Percentage of respondents who strongly agree/agree (n=647)	Mean rating: 1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither/nor 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
Keeping abreast of members' preferences and interests	98%	4.4
Keeping up with new technology	98%	4.5
Catering to members' different skill and knowledge	98%	4.4
Availability of volunteers	97%	4.4
Committee members with strong leadership skills and knowledge	96%	4.4
Continuous ability to attract funding	95%	4.4
Local technical support people	95%	4.3
A government committed to supporting SeniorNet	94%	4.5
Funding from more than one source	90%	4.3

Members consider that future more technologically advanced members are likely to continue to demand special interest topics (e.g. digital photography, making videos), as opposed to basic word processing or introduction to the internet. They will want to use new technology in a way that accords with their personal interests, but will still seek a supportive environment such as that provided by SeniorNet.

Members also believe that there may be an increasing demand for problem-solving or question and answer sessions. Already these appear to be particularly popular and provide the opportunity to share current problems and solutions. As such, this type of session will remain equally relevant to the next generation.

One stakeholder also commented that it will be important for SeniorNet to focus on the 'fun-stuff' and the whole area of social networking:

SeniorNet should ensure it is promoting the fun stuff. Things are shifting a bit. Older people are becoming or are digitally literate, though it's the confidence; they get so frustrated in how to use this stuff. But they are often missing out on the social networking, the new tools. People in their 60s, 70s and 80s are getting limited movement or find it harder to get out and about. There's so much fun stuff they could do online once they have that confidence – commentate on things; run blogs. There is a whole world of social networking stuff. It's just as exciting and fun for old people as it is for kids. (Stakeholder)
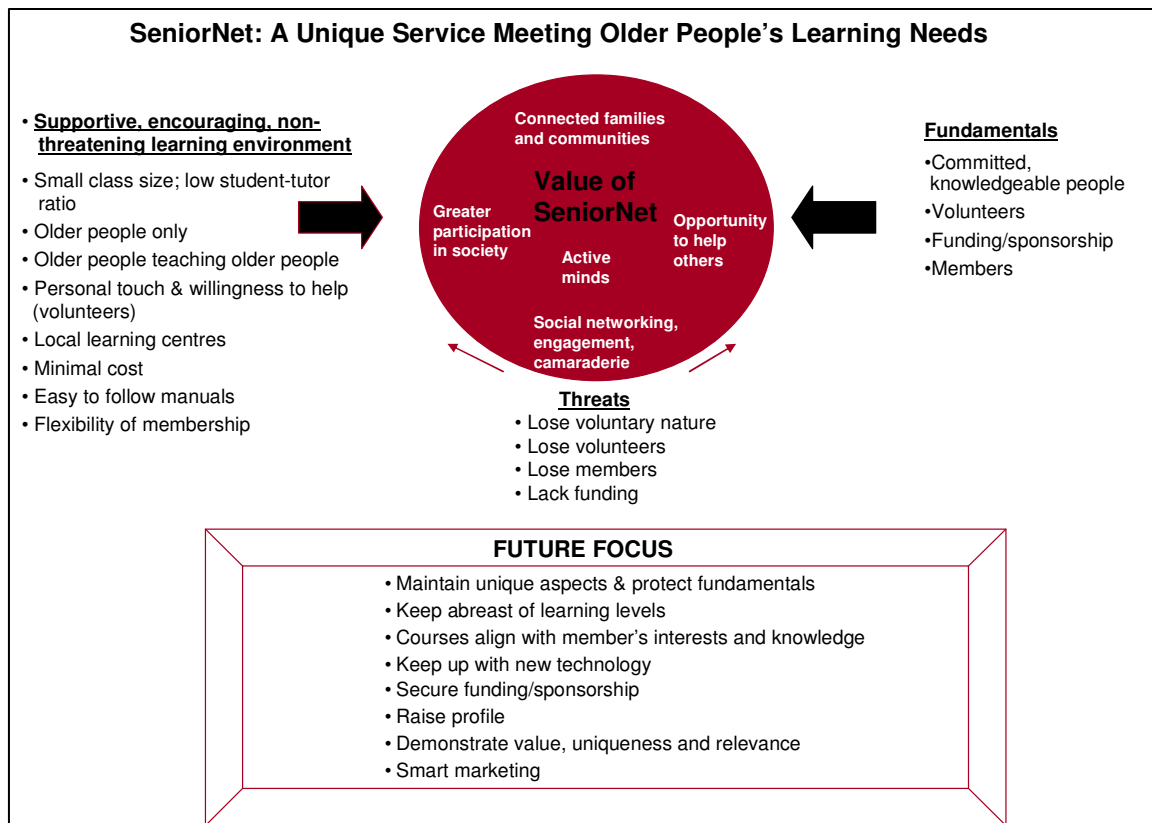
Equally, there needs to be recognition that some older people do not want to go beyond the 'basics' or are unaware of what new technology can do for them. It will be important therefore to promote the potential and personal relevance of new technology.

Twittering for example. We come back to one of our problems. That is keeping up cause we are not at the forefront of the technology. My kids or grandchildren might be and maybe it's of no interest to us tremendously. We just want to do the basics. For example we had a blogging class and only a small number were interested. But then I did photo editing and it wasn't until I started that I realised its potential and I loved it. (SeniorNet member aged 66 or older)

Looking ahead it will be important for learning centres to move forward and adapt as is required. Fundamental challenges include the time, cost and resources necessary to keep up with new technology as it emerges, e.g. ensuring an environment that caters to different technologies, provides up-to-date manuals and has people on board able to teach new technology as it evolves.

The next generation may not need the same level of basic learning, as they may have had greater technological exposure. Equally, however, there may also continue to be a considerable number of older people who require the basics (i.e. people 50 years plus who are made redundant or who retire and who later in life find a need or desire to engage with new technology). Irrespective of this, the supportive learning environment that SeniorNet provides for older people will remain important.

9. The Way Forward

SeniorNet: A Unique Service Meeting Older People's Learning Needs

• **Supportive, encouraging, non-threatening learning environment**

• Small class size; low student-tutor ratio
• Older people only
• Older people teaching older people
• Personal touch & willingness to help (volunteers)
• Local learning centres
• Minimal cost
• Easy to follow manuals
• Flexibility of membership

Connected families and communities

Value of SeniorNet

Greater participation in society

Active minds

Opportunity to help others

Social networking, engagement, camaraderie

Fundamentals

•Committed, knowledgeable people
•Volunteers
•Funding/sponsorship
•Members

Threats
• Lose voluntary nature
• Lose volunteers
• Lose members
• Lack funding

FUTURE FOCUS
• Maintain unique aspects & protect fundamentals
• Keep abreast of learning levels
• Courses align with member's interests and knowledge
• Keep up with new technology
• Secure funding/sponsorship
• Raise profile
• Demonstrate value, uniqueness and relevance
• Smart marketing

The above diagram demonstrates the fundamental and unique aspects of the SeniorNet service. It also identifies key areas of consideration for SeniorNet moving forward. These stem from the maintenance and enhancement of these core aspects to ensure SeniorNet continues to provide a highly valued and important service.

The evaluation has identified key learning needs of older people in new technology that remain relevant despite the age of older learners and the extent of technological experience. The SeniorNet model embodies these key learning needs. This makes SeniorNet a unique and highly valued provider and one that is enabling older to people to better participate in society and to have better connectivity.

Despite some concern about the long-term relevance of SeniorNet for the next generation of older people, there is also a strong view that SeniorNet will remain highly relevant. However, it will be important for SeniorNet to continue to proactively focus on the different experiences and learning preferences of its members and to cater for a diversity of older learners.

Recommendations for the future can be considered within two categories: those important to practical day-to-day operational matters and those that will maintain and strengthen underlying fundamental aspects of the SeniorNet service.

9.1 Recommendations relating to day-to-day operations

SeniorNet membership is, and will continue to be, constituted by older people with varying levels of technological knowledge and different learning requirements and subject matter preferences. This will require SeniorNet to keep abreast of members' different levels of learning needs, interests and course requirements. It will also be vital to keep up with new technology as it emerges.

This evaluation has led to the recommendations outlined below, which have arisen in relation to members' consideration of day-to-day operational matters.

Classes and subject matter

1. The variety of class types that are currently offered (courses of different length, special interest classes, question and answer sessions) should be maintained.

2. The subject matter of classes, sessions and courses should maintain the basics but also needs to reflect the latest in technology and members' interests and include special interest subjects[10].

3. SeniorNet activities are best held predominantly in the daytime and during the week.

Tutor education and support to promote quality teaching

4. Annual workshops for tutors to learn about different learning techniques and how to modify teaching styles in response (VARK learning strategies) may proactively enhance a high quality of teaching.

5. Promotion of informal tutor discussions and social get-togethers may assist tutors to share issues or uncertainties with other tutors, to learn from one another and to discuss how students progress.

6. Non-monetary recognition of the contribution of tutors (life membership, dinners, petrol vouchers) proactively supports the quality job tutors provide.

Course manuals

7. Processes to lessen the time-consuming nature of the production and modification of course manuals would be beneficial. This could involve:

   a) learning centres making manuals available on their websites

   b) the Federation having more regular contact with learning centres to keep up with the development of new manuals as they become available

   c) the Federation posting more information on its website about the content of manuals

   d) the production of standardised best practice manuals from a central place and which are able to be modified.

Costs

8. Membership costs of $10–$40 are preferred. Preferred course costs are: under $20 for two-week courses; and $30–$40 for four-to-six-week courses.

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[10] Reflecting earlier findings, one area of future focus might be strategies to safely use the internet to undertake financial transactions.

9.2   Recommendations to strengthen fundamental aspects

Volunteers, membership and sponsorship and funding are at the cornerstone of the SeniorNet service.

Members have to a varying extent noticed a decline in members willing or able to volunteer in the last two years. This may be addressed by a range of approaches to proactively encourage members to take on more active roles.

A key consideration running through the evaluation findings is the potential of modified or improved advertising and marketing of the service to raise the visibility of SeniorNet to encourage membership and to attract sponsorship and funding. The Federation has undertaken much effort in this area. However, given the importance of enhanced promotion and marketing to fundamental areas of the service, this section concludes with the recommendation that SeniorNet should consider engaging a marketing firm. In addition, SeniorNet learning centres and the Federation might also look to their own skill set, diverse membership base and technological skills to consider techniques to better promote and market the service in the ways identified.

The recommendations outlined below arise from consideration of these issues by key informants and members.

Volunteers

1.   Opportunities to take up active roles in learning centres could be more widely advised to members.

2.   Regular informal training opportunities to undertake various leadership, committee and functional roles could be made available.

3.   Information about who to speak to and the process to follow to become a more active member could be more widely known.

4.   Succession planning may be encouraged and enhanced by the proactive provision of opportunities for members to learn more about taking on active roles in learning centres, even where there are no immediate opportunities available. The Federation could consider facilitating leadership training. Learning centres could consider sharing information about the nature of planning they undertake.

Promotion and marketing

5.   To retain members, learning centres could actively promote the subject matter of available SeniorNet courses and potential opportunities offered through their uptake.

6.   To attract members, learning centres and the Federation could consider how to reach those who do not know about SeniorNet and do not know people who are members (i.e. advertising other than 'word of mouth'). This could include having a greater face-to-face presence within different parts of the community.

7.   To attract members, learning centres and the Federation could convey the value and unique attributes of the SeniorNet learning environment. i.e. one where older people feel comfortable coming to learn about new technology and that also offers social aspects.

8. To attract members, people should be able to clearly see that there are courses of relevance available, as well as courses that run for weeks rather than months. It is important to know that there is likely to be local learning centres nearby.

9. To attract members, learning centres and the Federation could publicise the reasonable costs of joining, as well as the discounts on goods and services available to SeniorNet members.

10. To attract sponsorship/funding, promotion and marketing should ensure that potential funders are aware of the value and societal good of the SeniorNet service.

11. To attract potential funders it is important for SeniorNet to demonstrate the benefits that a funding entity will gain from supporting SeniorNet and for such entities to be confident that they will receive exposure through funding or sponsoring SeniorNet.

12. SeniorNet should consider engaging a marketing firm.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Discussion guides

Discussion guide for key informants

03 March 2009

**Improving our Understanding of Older People's Needs in Learning New Technology
Interview Guide for Key Informants**

This interview guide is indicative of the relevant subject matter to be covered. It is designed to allow freedom of any additional relevant topics which may arise during the interview to be discussed.

Introduction

- Introduce self/Litmus
- Informed consent
- Time: around one hour
- Four key areas / objectives:

    1. Understand the learning needs of older people in new technology

    2. Understand how SeniorNet meets these learning needs

    3. Understand why older people choose to join SeniorNet and factors important to member retention

    4. Identify potential challenges and enhancements.

Context

- In what capacity are you aware of SeniorNet? How are you involved with SeniorNet?
- What do you know about SeniorNet?
- How informed would you say that you are about SeniorNet?
- What are your perceptions of the SeniorNet service?
- What do you consider to be the value of the SeniorNet service?

Learning Needs of Older People

- What would you say are the key learning needs of people 55 years plus when it comes to new technology?
- Does this differ for people in the 55–65 year age group vs. 65 years plus?
- Are these learning needs different from those of people in other age groups? How/why?
- Do you see the learning needs of older people changing in the next 5–10 years? In what way?

SeniorNet Service

- When we think about the learning needs of older people, do you believe that SeniorNet is meeting those needs? How?

- Why do you think SeniorNet members choose SeniorNet vs. other providers of education in new technology? What does SeniorNet provide older people that other service providers do not?

- What is the value of the concept 'older people teaching older people'?

- What would it mean to older people if SeniorNet was not around?

- What are your views on how SeniorNet should be funded to ensure its ongoing viability?

SeniorNet Membership

- Who is the SeniorNet service aimed at?

- Who do you consider to be SeniorNet's main users? *(probe age group, gender, ethnicity)*

- What do you believe SeniorNet would need to do to attract participation of other older people (i.e. different ethnicities/gender)?

- What factors are important to retention of SeniorNet members?

Future Enhancements

- How could SeniorNet enhance its service to meet the learning needs of older people? What would this require?

- Thinking about the future (e.g. 10 years time), where does SeniorNet need to focus/enhance the service to meet the learning needs of older people? What would this require?

- Do you consider the name 'SeniorNet' will be appropriate to attracting the next generation of potential SeniorNet users (those currently in their 40s)? If not, how could 'SeniorNet' be rebranded?

Other Comments

Focus group discussion guide

16 April 2009

Improving our Understanding of Older People's Needs in Learning New Technology
Interview Guide for Focus Groups with SeniorNet Members

This interview guide is indicative of the relevant subject matter to be covered. It is designed to allow freedom of any additional relevant topics which may arise during the interview to be discussed.

Introduction
- Introduce self/Litmus
- Informed consent
- Time: around 1–1.5 hours
- Four key areas / objectives:
    1. Understand the learning needs of older people in new technology
    2. Understand how SeniorNet meets these learning needs
    3. Understand why older people choose to join SeniorNet and factors important to member retention
    4. Identify challenges and potential areas where SeniorNet can enhance its ability to meet the learning requirements of older people.

Warm-up – Introductions and Context to Joining SeniorNet
- Length of time as SeniorNet member; Reasons for joining; Level of knowledge of new technology when first joined SeniorNet.

- What motivated you to come to SeniorNet to learn new technology vs. other organisations? What does SeniorNet provide that other providers do not?

- Have you been to other organisations to learn new technology? What made you choose to go there? How did this compare to SeniorNet?

- How did you hear about SeniorNet? Do you think that SeniorNet has a high enough profile? Is there a wide awareness of SeniorNet courses?

- What do you think about the costs of belonging to SeniorNet and attending courses?

- Would you have considered joining SeniorNet if you didn't own a computer?

Meeting the Learning Needs of Older People
- Thinking about your learning needs, what is important for people in your age group to be provided when learning new technology?

- Is the SeniorNet service meeting these learning needs? How?

- How would you describe the value of the SeniorNet service?

- SeniorNet has a philosophy of 'older people teaching older people'. How important is this?

The SeniorNet Service

- Thinking about SeniorNet's teaching and learning techniques, what works particularly well for you? What does not work so well?

    Explore:
    – Comfort of environment (test physical environment/whether accommodation adequate, not cramped – how improve)

- Class size
- Computer numbers
- Tutor numbers
- Teaching materials for home
- Catering for physical needs (hearing, arthritis).

- What do you think about the days and times that the SeniorNet service is available?

- What about the specific workshops/course material? Are these up-to-date with the type of things you wish to learn? Is the technology up-to-date?

- What are your views on the quality of teaching that you receive? How does SeniorNet continue to attract good quality tutors? What would attract / not attract you to becoming a SeniorNet tutor?

- Is there a social aspect to SeniorNet? How important is this?

- What would it mean to older people if SeniorNet was no longer around?

Retaining and Attracting Members

- Will you continue to undertake SeniorNet courses beyond the current course you are completing? In what circumstances/frequency?

- What factors are important in encouraging you back to SeniorNet?

- Does SeniorNet need to attract broader membership in terms of gender, ethnicity? If yes, what does SeniorNet need to do to attract participation of other older people (i.e. different ethnicities/gender)?

Future Enhancements

- What do you consider is important for SeniorNet to maintain its ongoing viability (i.e. funding)?

- Have you any suggestions for enhancing the SeniorNet service?

- Thinking of your learning needs in the future, say 5 years time: will SeniorNet need to adapt or enhance its service in any way to meet those learning needs? In what way?

- Do you think that the name 'SeniorNet' is appropriate for attracting the next generation of potential SeniorNet users? Is the name off-putting in any way? How? Why? How could 'SeniorNet' be rebranded?

Other Comments

Discussion guide for tutors

19 April 2009

**Improving our Understanding of Older People's Needs in Learning New Technology
Interview Guide for Tutors**

This interview guide is indicative of the relevant subject matter to be covered. It is designed to allow freedom of any additional relevant topics which may arise during the interview to be discussed.

Introduction
- Introduce self/Litmus
- Informed consent
- Time: around one hour
- Four key areas / objectives:
  1. Understand the learning needs of older people in new technology
  2. Understand how SeniorNet meets these learning needs
  3. Understand why older people choose to join SeniorNet and factors important to member retention
  4. Identify challenges and potential areas where SeniorNet can enhance its ability to meet the learning requirements of older people.

Context

- How long have you been a member of SeniorNet?
- How long have you been a SeniorNet tutor?
- What encouraged you to become a tutor?
- What do you consider to be the value of the SeniorNet service?

Learning Needs of Older People

- What would you say are the key learning needs of people 55 years plus when it comes to new technology?
- Does this differ for people in the 55–65 year age group vs. 65 years plus?
- Are these learning needs different from those of people in other age groups? How/why?
- Do you see the learning needs of older people changing in the next 5–10 years? In what way?

SeniorNet Service

- When we think about the learning needs of older people, do you believe that SeniorNet is meeting those needs? How?
- How do you know your pupils have learnt what they have come to SeniorNet to learn?
- Why do you think SeniorNet members choose SeniorNet vs. other providers of education in new technology? What does SeniorNet provide older people that other service providers do not?
- What is it about the class environment that ensures older people feel comfortable? *(explore class size, adequacy of accommodation, ability to cater for physical needs)*
- What is the value of the concept 'older people teaching older people'?
- What would it mean to older people if SeniorNet was not around?

SeniorNet Tutors

- What key factors are important to SeniorNet being able to continue to attract quality tutors?

- How would you define a quality SeniorNet tutor?

- Is it difficult to attract sufficient quality tutors? If so, what can be done to enhance this?

- Do you feel sufficiently supported by SeniorNet in being able to provide quality teaching?

- Do you feel that you are kept up-to-date with modern technology and can adapt your teaching as technology develops?

- Any room for enhancements in this area?

SeniorNet Membership

- Who is the SeniorNet service aimed at?

- Who do you consider to be SeniorNet's main users? *(probe age group, gender, ethnicity)*

- Do you believe that SeniorNet needs to attract the participation of other older people (i.e. different ethnicities/gender)? How could SeniorNet do this?

- What factors are important to retention of SeniorNet members?

- Is there a good awareness of the SeniorNet service in the community? If not, what can be done to lift the SeniorNet profile?

Future Enhancements

- How could SeniorNet enhance its service to meet the learning needs of older people? What would this require?

- Thinking about the future (e.g. 10 years time), where does SeniorNet need to focus/enhance the service to meet the learning needs of older people? What would this require?

- What is key to ensuring SeniorNet's ongoing viability?

- Do you consider the name 'SeniorNet' will be appropriate to attracting the next generation of potential SeniorNet users (those currently in their 40s)? If not, how could 'SeniorNet' be rebranded?

Other Comments

Appendix 2 Online survey

About your membership of SeniorNet

1. How would you describe your involvement at the SeniorNet learning centre you attend?
    (please click on *one or more* that best applies)
    - I attend classes to learn about new technology
    - I am a tutor
    - I am a tutor's helper
    - I am on the committee
    - I am a member but do not attend classes
    - I provide technical support

2. How long have you been a SeniorNet member?
    (please click on *one only* that best applies)
    - Less than 1 year
    - 1–2 years
    - Between 2 and 4 years
    - More than 4 years
    - I am not a SeniorNet member   (automatic exit from survey)

2(a). Which of the following have you been to in the last 18 months…?
    (please click on *one or more* that best applies)
    - I have attended a SeniorNet course/tutorial (e.g. email, folder management, word processing)
    - I have attended a SeniorNet interest group (e.g. digital cameras, genealogy)
    - I have attended a SeniorNet question and answer session
    - I have attended members' meetings
    - I have not attended any courses, interest groups or sessions in the last 18 months (go directly to question 4)

2(b). In total, how many courses, groups, sessions or members' meetings have you attended in the last 18 months?
    (please click on *one only* that best applies)
    - I have attended 1
    - Between 2 and 4
    - Between 5 and 6
    - 7 or more

The value of SeniorNet

3. Before coming to SeniorNet how strongly do you disagree or agree that the following were true?
    (5 point scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree, strongly agree)
    - I was not in regular touch with family/friends
    - I did not use online banking
    - I did not use the internet to find information of relevance to me (e.g. travel, health)
    - I did not interact with organisations and agencies online
    - I did not use the internet to look for best prices or to shop online
    - I felt isolated
    - I lacked mental stimulation
    - I was not inspired nor motivated to learn new technology
    - I did not feel able to learn about new technology

4. After attending SeniorNet how strongly do you disagree or agree that the following are true?
    (5 point scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree, strongly agree)
- I am now better connected and keep in regular touch with family/friends
- I now use online banking
- I now go online and find information of relevance to me (travel; health)
- I now interact with organisations and agencies online
- I now look for best prices and shop online
- I feel less isolated
- I am more mentally stimulated
- I am inspired and motivated to continue learning new technology
- I now feel confident to continue learning about new technology

Your learning needs

5. How strongly do you disagree or agree that the following are important to you when it comes to learning new technology?
    (5 point scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree, strongly agree)
- I require teaching that is simple
- I benefit from being taught something more than once (repetition)
- I need to have access to a computer at home
- I believe it is important for older people to teach older people
- I benefit from being able to learn at my own pace
- I require teaching that avoids complicated technological jargon
- I like to come to an environment where I feel comfortable
- I learn better in an environment tailored specifically for older people

Classes available

6. How do you like to learn about new technology?
    (please click on *one or more* that best applies)
- I prefer to attend small classes that run over a period of 2–4 weeks
- I prefer to attend small classes that run over a period or 6–8 weeks
- I prefer workshops that are less 'hands-on' and which involve a number of members coming together to learn about special interest topics
- I prefer to attend question and answer sessions
- I prefer to attend in the daytime and during the week
- I prefer to attend in the evening or in the weekend

Q 6(a) only to be answered by those who at Q1 answered 'attend classes to learn'

6(a). Is the subject matter of SeniorNet courses, groups and/or sessions of relevance to you?
    (please click on *one only* that best applies)
- Yes the subject matter is of relevance to me
- Mostly the subject matter is of relevance to me
- Now and then the subject matter is of relevance to me
- No the subject matter is not of relevance to me

Q6(i) & (ii) not to be answered by those who at Q1 ONLY answered 'I attend classes', 'tutor's helper'

6(i) In the last 2 years has the number of members attending courses…?
    (please click on *one only* that best applies)
- Increased significantly
- Increased slightly
- Decreased slightly
- Decreased significantly   go to 6(ii)
- Don't know

6(ii) Why do you believe numbers have decreased significantly?
        (please click on *one or more* that best applies)
▪ The length of some courses are too long
▪ The subject matter of courses needs to be more relevant
▪ The potential opportunities and relevance of courses needs to be better communicated
▪ People are less able to come to classes during the day and on week days
▪ Other (please comment)
Added:
  – Older people more literate these days and less likely to need courses
  – Small population/not enough students

SeniorNet teaching

7. How would you describe the quality of teaching at SeniorNet?
        (please click on *one only* that best applies)
▪ Extremely high quality
▪ High quality
▪ Good quality
▪ Okay but could be improved
▪ Poor quality
▪ Don't know

Q7(a) only to be completed by those who at Q1 answered 'attended classes to learn'

7(a). After completing SeniorNet courses did you feel satisfied with what you have learnt?
        (please click on *one only* that best applies)
▪ Yes I learnt a great deal
▪ Yes I learnt a reasonable amount
▪ No I learnt very little
▪ No I did not learn anything

Succession planning

Q8(a) & (b) not for those who at Q1 answered 'committee member'

8(a). Do you know how to become a committee member or to have more of an active role in the running of your learning centre?
        (please click on *one only* that best applies)
▪ Yes
▪ No

8(b). What would encourage you to become a committee member or to have more of an active role in the running of your local learning centre?
       (please click on *one or more* that best applies)
▪ Being invited or encouraged to have such a role
▪ Being regularly told of available opportunities
▪ Knowing who to speak to about this or the process to follow
▪ Non-monetary recognition
▪ Availability of informal training opportunities
▪ Nothing as this is not something that would suit or interest me
▪ Other (please comment)
Added
  – Nothing as I am too busy/have other commitments/no time/not enough time
  – New member/not ready for such a role yet/not competent/not confident/not experienced enough/don't know enough yet
  – Too old/feel too old
  – Health issues/disability/poor eyesight/deaf

Q 8(i), (ii), (iii) only for those who at Q1 answered 'committee member'

8(i) In the last two years have you noticed that new members are less willing or able to volunteer as tutors or on committee roles?
(please tick *one only* that best applies)
- Yes this is particularly concerning and needs addressing
- I have noticed this somewhat and it may need some consideration in the future
- No I haven't noticed this to be happening

8(ii) Do you regularly encourage new people to sit on your learning centre's committee or encourage members to have active roles in the administration of your learning centre?
(please tick *one only* that best applies)
- Yes on a regular basis
- On an infrequent basis
- No we only do this when we need to replace members who leave or retire from their roles

8(iii) Does your learning centre have plans in place to deal with the situation where people leave or retire from key roles?
(please tick *one only* that best applies)
- Yes we have appropriate plans in place
- We do some planning but should do more
- No we have no such plans in place

Attracting membership

8(A). Does SeniorNet need to improve the way it advertises to attract new members?
(please click on *one only* that best applies)
- Yes, SeniorNet advertising needs to better show the benefits of joining SeniorNet
- Yes, SeniorNet needs to use other forms of advertising to reach more people
- No, I do not think any improvements are needed
- Don't know

9. How strongly do you disagree or agree that the following are of importance to attracting new members to SeniorNet?
(5 point scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree, strongly agree)
- Being able to join without having a computer at home
- Not having to first complete a SeniorNet introductory course
- A learning centre close to where people live
- An environment in which people know they will feel comfortable
- Knowing that there are courses of relevance
- Courses that do not run for too many weeks
- Availability of weekend or evening classes
- Able to obtain discounts on goods and services due to being a SeniorNet member
- Knowing about the costs of membership

Are there any other factors that you consider important to attracting new members to SeniorNet?
Added
- Being made aware of the type of learning environment SeniorNet provides
- Being aware of social aspects.

10. What type of discounts would you be most interested in obtaining as a SeniorNet member?
    (please click on *one or more* that best applies)
▪ Discounts on software (*added computer help)*
▪ Discounts on travel
▪ Discounts on entertainment
▪ Discounts on insurance
▪ Discounts on homeware
▪ Discounts on new technology (*added internet connections*)
▪ Other (please comment)
Added
   –   Computer hardware
   –   Telephone calls/accounts
   –   Electricity/utilities/rates
   –   Vehicle fuel/vehicle running costs
   –   Stationery/computer consumables
   –   Discounts on courses/teaching materials/services/facilities
   –   Medical-related costs
   –   All of above/anything/everything
   –   None/not necessary/not approve/not expect

11. Thinking about value for money, what do you think it would be reasonable to pay for…?
    (please click on *one only* that best applies)

	No more than $10	Between $10–$20	Between $30–$40	Between $40–$50	Between $50–$60	Between $60–$70	Up to $100
1 year's membership of SeniorNet							
Fees for a 2-week course							
Fees for a 4–6-week course							

Challenges

Q12(a) & (b) only for those who at Q1 answered 'committee member', 'tutor'

12(a) How strongly would you disagree or agree that the following are core challenges facing your learning centre?
    (5 point scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree)
▪ Keeping up with new technology
▪ Keeping manuals up-to-date
▪ Knowing what courses are of relevance to members
▪ Having tutors available to teach courses wanted by members
▪ Ensuring the quality of teaching is of a high standard
▪ The premises that we operate from (i.e. size, facilities)
▪ Understanding new members' level of existing knowledge
▪ Attracting sufficient sponsorship/funding
▪ Attracting new members
▪ Attracting volunteers
▪ Attracting volunteers with technical knowledge

Are there any other core challenges facing your learning centre?
Added

    –   Retaining existing members

The future

12(b) How much do you disagree or agree that the following are important considerations for the future?
    (5 point scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree, strongly agree)

- Availability of volunteers
- A government committed to supporting SeniorNet
- Local technical support people
- Committee members with strong leadership skills and knowledge
- Continuous ability to attract funding
- Funding from more than one source
- Keeping up with new technology
- Keeping abreast of members' preferences and interests
- Catering to members' different skill levels and knowledge

SeniorNet name

13. How strongly do you disagree or agree that the name 'SeniorNet' appropriately reflects what SeniorNet is all about?
    (please click on *one only* that best applies)

- I think that the name is an accurate reflection
- I think that the name only reflects some aspects of what SeniorNet is about
- I do not think that the name appropriately reflects what SeniorNet is all about

14. And thinking about the future, do you think that the name 'SeniorNet' is suitable for attracting the next generation of members?
    (please click on *one only* that best applies)

- Yes I think the name is suitable
- I don't think the name matters too much
- No I think that the name is likely to be off-putting

Ethnic diversity

15. Do you believe that SeniorNet needs to attract a greater ethnic diversity of membership?
    (please click on *one only* that best applies)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

About you

16. Do you have a computer at home?
    (please click on *one or more* that best applies)

- I have a desktop computer
- I have a laptop
- No. I do not have a desktop computer or a laptop

17. What best describes you?
    (please click on *one only* that best applies)

- I am currently in full-time paid employment
- I am currently in part-time paid employment
- I am not in paid employment

18. What age group do you come within?
      (please click on *one only* that best applies)
- 50–54 years
- 55–64 years
- 65–74 years
- 75–84 years
- 85–94 years
- 95 years plus
- Younger than 50 years

19. Which ethnicity do you identify with?
      (please click on *one or more* that best applies)
- European
- Māori
- Pacific Islander
- Asian
- Other

20. Are you…?
      (please click on *one only* that best applies)
- Male
- Female

Many thanks for taking the time to participate in this survey today. If you would like to enter the prize draw to **win one of three prizes of $100** please enter your email address here.

If you have any questions about the survey please contact Fleur Chauvel, at Litmus on 04-4733880, fleur@litmus.co.nz, or Grant Sidaway, Executive Officer, the Federation of New Zealand SeniorNet Societies on 0800 736 467, grant@seniornet.co.nz.

Appendix 3 Type of discounts preferred

Discounts of interest as SeniorNet member	Percentage of respondents
Discounts on software / computer help	83%
Discounts on new technology / internet connections	63%
Discounts on computer hardware	47%
Discounts on telephone calls/accounts	33%
Discounts on travel	33%
Discounts on insurance	27%
Discounts on entertainment	20%
Discounts on homeware	19%
Discounts on all of these/anything	1%
Discounts on stationery/computer consumables	1%