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S1 00:11	[music] Hello and welcome to another episode of The Moxie Podcast, the companion webshow to the Moxie station, an Internet economy discussion group held once a month in Auckland, New Zealand. This is Episode 41, recorded on the 21st of September, 2016. Well, I'm Andrew Patterson with you here in Auckland. I'll introduce our panel shortly. But first, let me outline the topic we'll be considering in this session. We talk a lot about young people and technology, but what about those at the other end of the age spectrum. Are those not bored up with smartphones, potentially at a disadvantage. And does tech provide new solutions for a society that is steadily growing older? Well to discuss this, I'm joined by David Harvey, who was until recently, a district court judge. He's now the director of the New Zealand Institute for ICT Law at the University of Auckland. Wendy McLucas, a consultant who has worked extensively on commercial, regulatory, and contractual negotiations, particularly in the telecommunications sector. She's also an accredited visitor for Age Concern and has an interest in how new technology might help older people stay connected. And Grant Sidaway, has a background in telecommunications and is the executive officer of SeniorNet, the SeniorNet Federation of New Zealand, an organization devoted to helping upskill older people in technology. Welcome to you all. Wendy MacLucas, perhaps to you first, do you see this issue of older people and their ability to engage effectively with technology, as a problem or an opportunity or perhaps both?
S2 01:52	Look, I guess from my perspective I see it as an opportunity if the barriers to engaging with technology can be overcome, some of the things that Grant and SeniorNet help with. I see one of the social challenges of our society growing older is things like, how do we keep people connected? Loneliness has been recorded as a real issue for older people in particular, and it actually has real health consequences. So anything that technology can do to help older people stay connected and stay contributing to society has got to be a good thing.
S1 02:33	Come back to the issue of loneliness but Grant Sidaway, SeniorNet has obviously been very successful using a peer to peer model to help older people become more engaged with technology , but do you feel that perhaps you're only really scratching the surface? And what are some of the key issues in this area as you perceive them to be?
S3 02:56	I think the older you get, the more technology you need. And that's a phrase that perhaps a lot of people might want to ponder about for a while, but I've really believed in that for sometime now. SeniorNet, we've been going for something like 25 years. When we first started it was just a collection of a few people coming together to ask questions like how do I turn on a computer? But now, today seniors - and I'd use that category of really the 60s plus age group - are flocking to things such as smartphones and tablet PCs in the same as younger people are doing so as well. So the difference between the two age groups in terms of take up, there is a lag with older people moving a little slower to take up new technologies. But boy, they're catching up quite fast.

S1 03:51	And obviously being encouraged and cheered along by their children and grandchildren?
S3 03:57	Well, I think that's probably one of the things in the early days, they were nudged into it more or less by their children passing on their old devices to their parents and then trying to figure out how to connect and how to use it. But not so today. Today we're finding that, that 60 plus age group are making their purchases themselves. And not having other retired PC's or laptops being passed over to them, they're making their purchases more direct. So the speed of take up with the 60 plus age group has certainly increased in the last couple of years.
S1 04:35	Now, David Harvey's someone's who's had to adapt to technology throughout you judicial career. How are you considering this next phase of your life from a technology perspective? And have you, perhaps, set yourself some new goals in this area?
S4 04:50	First thing, I didn't have to adapt to technology, I was already with it because I have been a computer user since 1979. And I was 33 at about that stage, so I have always been part of. How am I going to use technology in the latter stage? Probably all the time. For example, researching is mostly done online these days and that's an academic interest as well as a hobby of mine. But the thing I think that really sort of crystallizes the whole technology for me, is that gradually we are becoming more and more technology or information technology dependent. For example, I'm reading, at the moment, a series of documents that have comes from the UK about the court system and what is happening there. They are going to be using technology basically for all things, including the commencement of court proceedings, which will be done online. All cases will be started online. What is beginning to happen or what in fact is happening, and the English example provides a good starting point, is that we're moving towards an online connected world. In that regard, there is a problem if you're not connected, if you're not online, if you're not digitally capable, or you are - as my father once put it many, many years ago when he introduced me to computers - digitally illiterate. And that to me is a potential problem.
S4 06:50	As far as the uptake of technology is concerned, I was interested to hear what Grant had to say. One of the factors I think that does play a part here is that tech is becoming a heck of a lot cheaper. You can buy a really powerful laptop for under a grand, and why would you want to buy a desktop computer when you can do everything that you need to do on a tablet or an iPad or something like that, which is portable of course, and which you can connect up on the move with the various wireless systems that are around? I think that it's not just a question of becoming confident in technology, I think it's a question of technology becoming more readily available and more readily accessible, and that can only be good. But once again, I emphasize the digital divide is something that has always concerned me, and continues to concern me, because what happens is that you get the digitally privileged - I hate the word privilege - but the digitally privileged on the one hand, and the digitally unprivileged on the other. And that, to me, isn't a good thing, because it creates problems as far as access to all sorts of things that we take for granted. [crosstalk] concerned.
S1 08:14	Let's come back to that. Wendy McLucas, you've raised the issue of loneliness, and that obviously is, as the research confirms, a significant problem with seniors. And yet it seems like technology should be an obvious solutions provider in that area. Does it surprise you, perhaps, that we haven't made a lot of progress necessarily in that space?

S2 08:42	Well, I think there's some things emerging overseas. And like he said, it's always going to be an enabler. To me it's a bit like the technological equivalent of physical transport system. It's something that enables people to connect, it gives them a way of connecting, but they still then got to - as Grant talked about - equip themselves and school themselves. I guess it's a mechanism where connections can be made in ways that perhaps they're a bit challenging when you're a bit older and it's hard to get out the house. But there's some good examples overseas that have enabled people to work or volunteer and continue to learn from a rest home or from home, and keep connected with people. There's a great example in the UK, the GoodGym, where people are basically keeping fit and keeping a commitment to themselves by going and visiting an older person and doing jobs. The technology, if you like, is matching those two needs. There's a couple of other examples where people in a rest homes are teaching English to people oversea. They've began speaking exchange where these residents in a rest home in the US who are helping students in Brazil learn English.
S2 10:10	Again, it's the benefits of a befriending service that doesn't rely entirely on volunteers. But I guess what's needed is some mechanism to enable that to be created in the first place, to connect those two needs, which is probably a combination of people skilling themselves up and just a awareness, I guess.
S1 10:39	I was interested, earlier this year, to be part of a youth camp. And there many boys, about 15, 16 year olds, and they had the morning spending the time with the Warriors at their gym. And the afternoon, spending their time with the elderly residents at a rest home. And when we asked them at the end of the day, which of the two visits they most preferred, I was very surprised, that the majority of them enjoyed the rest home visit much more than the time spent with the Warriors. And I wondered whether or not that's just another example of an opportunity where-- I saw in the discussion, it was raised about being able to talk to people who've lived through moments of history and so forth, that there isn't multiple ways that these two groups could be linked a lot more effectively.
S2 11:29	I think so. And I think that's one of the great examples. There's another one overseas where they've connected retired people, not exclusively, but primarily retired people in the UK. It's called Cloud Grannys, where basically, they've created a network of volunteers who are helping children in India to learn. So what you're giving an example of is, I guess-- I think still face-to-face interaction is preferable, but what technology enables is for people to interact when face-to-face connection just isn't possible. I think it's a mechanism to open up people's worlds and match needs in a way that couldn't be matched physically.
S1 12:19	Grant Sidaway, your thoughts around the potential for technology to perhaps bridge the loneliness gap more effectively?
S4 12:28	I think there is a huge potential to do a lot more in this area. One thing that is a delight to me is seeing a person who is in their senior years learning some technology for the first time and then using it to connect to their grandchildren in the classic kind of way. I can remember when my kids were growing up, my parents, their grandparents, would send them a birthday card in kind of a traditional way, and it took us all time to convince the kids to get on the phone and thank them for the card. But then I've seen what's happened at SeniorNet when some schools have been learned by the person to create a greeting card or a video card and send that to the grandchild. The connection is unbelievable. So much greater. You're on the same wavelength as the kids, and I think that's been a classic eye-opener to me. One thing

that I think we can do a lot better is to try and encourage older people to participate more strongly in social media or social network, thus I've been doing it for years even before the internet arrived, through all the clubs, and organizations that belong to a face-to-face world, but actually converting them across into a virtual environment that seems to be a little bit more difficult. Keeping in mind also that when you think about it, political elections will be won or lost on the candidate's ability to be able to use social media and connect with people in the electorate. And if we haven't got the older citizens of the countries of the world participating in social media, they're going to be left behind, and relying on more traditional forms of media which may or may not be satisfactory.

S1 14:18   I noticed when you formed SeniorNet you felt it would only probably need to go for five or six years because after that, everybody would be pretty literate, digitally literate, and yet that hasn't happened. But do you feel that this is a transition phase, and in another 10 or 15 years, the generation that are 65 now who will then be 80 will obviously be at a different phase?

S4 14:44   Well, it's one of the things that have been said to me all through the years. At the opening ceremony of the very first SeniorNet center that we had, I wish I had taken note of this chap's name, he whispered in my ear, and he said, "Look, it a fantastic thing you've started here lad," I was a lad in those days, "but it's not going to last any more than five years because we'll know everything." But the amazing thing that's happened, of course, and we've all witnessed, technology has changed and keeps changing, and keeps changing. One really simple example is that Microsoft just needs to bring out a new operating system, that bamboozles the heck out of most of us, and we have to learn some new skills again. So, I don't thing that something like SeniorNet is going to evaporate quite quickly. I can see it continuing, providing, providing we keep offering up new courses and new classes and new learning experiences, for this older group.

S1 15:38   And David Harvey, what are your thoughts on, perhaps, how that could be achieved more effectively? As somebody, as you've said, who has embraced technology throughout your career and now at a phase of your life where you're thinking about making contributions in other areas, how can that be, perhaps, undertaken more effectively?

S3 16:03   I think I was interested in the point about the senior sending the grand-kids the digital card, and stuff like that. The ability to create and develop with software, I think is quite incredible. That particular example that was given, together with a whole lot of others, like creating web pages, writing blogs and so on and so forth, is all done without actually cutting a single line of code. When I started back in '79, I had to write all of my own software, which meant learning software languages and stuff like that. And one of the things that I'm doing at the moment - now that I've got a wee bit more time on my hands - is picking up those software writing skills again simply because I enjoy doing it. I just enjoy cutting code and making things work. But I think that it's great that we've got these online learning systems that are coming through. The online software that allows you to create and develop. I think that the important thing that we've got to remember is that when you are connected and when you have been connected, the way in which that you can develop, that you can learn, that you can increase your skill set, and so on, and so forth, can all be done online. If you run into a problem with perhaps an application that isn't working the way it should, you can generally find out how to get around the problem just by googling your problem into the search box. And you'll find a whole lot of resources because people will have experienced the same sort of difficulty. So I think the delivery of learning systems is

going to happen online. Now, that doesn't actually answer the question of, "Well, how are we going to get started on this?" But I think the answer to that is that the new generation of seniors, if I can call them that, have been online, and although Grant says that they could well have faded away. I don't think that SeniorNet or any organization like it will, because I think that it will begin to develop and devolve into something maybe a little different from teaching people how to use computers, into becoming something a little bit more social, perhaps a problem-solving area or something like that.

S1 18:47	Grant.
S3 18:47	Once again, that's a delivery system that's online.
S1 18:51	Grant, one of the things that interests me is that we hear a lot of young people starting off businesses as startups, but we have plenty of capable people at the retirement phase of their life who are quite capable of starting up businesses well, too. Why do we not see so many people in the 65 plus jumping in and attempting to solve some of these issues themselves do you think?
S4 19:20	Well, I'm not sure that that has been successfully measured as to whether they're doing so or not. I've seen lots of examples of people once they've learned some basic skills in an online environment, creating businesses and websites to support their businesses to run small home businesses, whether it be a BnB facility or some sort of extension to their career that they've retired from. So I'm not sure that we're collecting enough statistical information to say yes or no on that subject. But David's quite right in terms of delivery and how we deliver it. That could change the way in which something like SeniorNet operates. But the one thing that I really noticed is that people in this age group - the 60 plus age group - really enjoy a face-to-face interaction. And the laughter that goes on in one of our learning sessions is incredible, because people actually learn from one another of the same age group in a much better way. It's as social as a learning environment as well. Yes, for sure, you can Google anything you like, and you can come up with an answer or solution to a problem that you've encountered, and many people do. But what I've witnessed is that a lot of people in the age group we're talking about still prefer to learn from their mates, or their buddies, in a face-to-face environment.
S1 20:47	Wendy McLucas, in your experience, are you finding greater willingness amongst seniors to engage in the space, perhaps compared to five or ten years ago, where this area of technology was one that they were pretty cautious about?
S2 21:07	Certainly, I guess the older people that I encounter in my life and have embraced it, and I think it goes back to the point that Grant raised earlier. I think he said in the talk about participating in the age in which you live. And I think even though we all prefer face-to-face contact, the fact of being technologically literate and quite being able to understand and relate means however the connection is made, you feel more connected, you feel more part of things. I've got an aunt in her 80s who's amazing. When she started off, she'd send me an email and it would be very brief, because she'd say she'd run out of room and she didn't know how to make more. She was really at the initial stages and now she's there playing Angry Birds, she's into all the things, and it's become when grandchildren visit or younger people visit, she has got a tablet and she can relate to the things. And she often gets them to help and teach her things, and it becomes a-- ass was raised earlier with the video card, it becomes something that connects you to something that's become very much a part of life.
S1 22:25	Grant Sidayway, I know you feel that the government should be more involved in funding organizations like SeniorNet, but I wondered about corporates that are

operating in this area - [Rhyme?], Somerset, and so forth - why the corporate sector perhaps are not embracing this opportunity than perhaps they are at the moment.

S4 22:47   We have received some support from government over many years. They changed their education priorities in the adult community education sector just last year and it excluded us. I do think it's a two-way thing or a partnership thing between any government of the world actually recognizing to continue to support organizations like SeniorNet to help the older seniors continue to be digitally literate. I think that that's an absolute government responsibility. I also see it to be a commercial responsibility to do so as well. Common sense [?] has that companies that are marketing or selling digital products, it would be certainly in their best interest to form partnerships with organizations such as SeniorNet so that they can assist them with the marketing process. The interesting thing that I've witnessed over the years is that marketing digital products still seems to be in the realm of the 15 to maybe 35 age group, and all that I'm seeing happening there, more often than not, is creating what I call marketing churn. One minute they will be with one company or one product, the next minute they'll be without this. It's an actual fact that marketing departments of companies, producing digital products all around the world, actually sat down and thought about it for five minutes, they'd realize that the fastest growing section of the community is the 60 plus age group. And an actual fact, in many aspects, they're the ones that have got the real money.

S1 24:21   David Harvey, is that an area that surprises you as well too?

S3 24:28   Probably not. I have a slightly different view about government responsibility and corporate responsibility. And I think that because I'm a great supporter of the open source movement, and I think that many of the solutions to these problems can be found within the technical community itself. Maybe we'll diverge on that point.

S1 25:02   And Wendy McLucas, a final word to you. If you were able to direct this issue a little bit more, where do you think the support, and perhaps the resourcing would be best placed?

S2 25:20   I think it probably is in helping people gain the skills, and it's probably-- I think it is perhaps an enabling function of helping with the awareness of what are the things that are available. Perhaps there is a role, and perhaps it's a combined role between business and local government. Everyone's acknowledging this problem of loneliness, but it's how to address it. And I just feel that there might be a way of collaborating to create more a forum of helping people to connect using this. It's a bit like a trade meet, but connecting people socially, I guess, over the Internet and using technology. Trying to match those needs, which I think is emerging gradually commercially. The aging population and the health and cost challenges of isolation I think might prompt us to [nudge their lung?] a bit.

S1 26:31   Indeed. Thank you all for joining us. Speaking to David Harvey, Director of the New Zealand Institute for ICT Law at the University of Auckland. Wendy McLucas, accredited [?] with Age concern. And Grant Sidaway, the Executive Officer of of the SeniorNet Federation of New Zealand. This has been a Moxie podcast. Thanks for joining us, and we hope you join us again at some time in the future.