

KEY FACTORS IN
**MAKING TECHNOLOGY
WORK FOR SENIORS**

Addressing challenges that
prevent seniors from effectively
using and embracing mobile devices.



“The findings are clear: frustration with standard technology makes older adults unsure about their ability to use it and unmotivated to even try. The purpose-built design of GrandPad not only alleviates this frustration, but brings joy into the lives of seniors.”

Dr. Kerry Burnight
GrandPad Chief Gerontologist

KEY POINTS

- ▶ Seniors may struggle with technology that was not designed for them.
- ▶ The effects of isolation on physical and mental health are significant concerns for older adults.
- ▶ Physiological changes such as dry skin make it difficult to operate touchscreen technology on most smartphones and tablets.
- ▶ 77% of seniors would need help learning to use a smartphone or tablet.
- ▶ Many seniors lack access to WiFi connections.

Takeaways for CARE PROVIDERS

- ▶ Smartphones and tablets can help connect otherwise isolated seniors to friends, family and care networks, but tools need to be designed with seniors in mind.
- ▶ GrandPad was purpose-built for older adults and the product design is continually evolving based on the input of seniors to ensure it addresses their needs and interests.
- ▶ GrandPad arrives ready to use right out of the box, with no setup needed for the senior user.
- ▶ GrandPad follows a “90/90” design principle, in that a 90 year old can be up and running on the device within 90 seconds after opening the box.

Modern communication tools like smartphones and tablets provide essential connections for millions. But for one segment of the world's population that is already vulnerable to the effects of isolation and loneliness, technology can increase feelings of confinement because it is difficult or impossible to use. As adults age, they face a number of barriers that keep them from taking full advantage of technology that might otherwise keep them connected to friends, family, and the world around them.

The continued isolation of seniors is a serious concern. [Nearly a quarter](#) of adults 65 and older are considered socially isolated, while one-third of adults 45 and older feel lonely, and that lack of human contact is associated with multiple significant [health risks](#). Social isolation increases risk of premature death roughly as much as smoking, obesity, and inactivity. It's associated with a 50% increase in risk of dementia, and with a 29% increased risk of heart disease. Social isolation has only increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, as many seniors are still on lockdown and restricted contact with family and caregivers.



25%
age 65+ are
socially isolated

Many seniors are predisposed against technology

Yet, the same individuals who would benefit most from connected technology are least likely to use it. Part of that reluctance stems from a failure to see the value of technology. [In many cases](#), older adults simply believe they are not missing anything important if they don't go online, and others consider online tools [arduous and time consuming](#). Meanwhile, with [people over 70](#) hit hardest by financial scams, others worry about the possibility that going online could expose them to a new world of security concerns. The FBI estimates that seniors lose more than [\\$3 billion each year](#) to elder fraud, and many seniors [lack confidence](#) in their ability to navigate those risks.



\$3 Billion
loss each year to
elder fraud

While the use of mobile devices and the internet is slowly increasing among older adults, with [51% reporting](#) the purchase of a tech product in 2019, intimidation may also be a factor in older adults' reluctance to embrace technology. Consider that [77% of seniors](#) say they would need help to learn how to use a smartphone or tablet. That reluctance is evident in the numbers of seniors who actually own a smartphone. While seniors over age 65 have broadly adopted cell phone technology — [an estimated 91%](#) own one — just over than half own a smartphone. Among individuals aged 75 to 79, [only 31%](#) use a smartphone, and for users over 80, that drops to 17%.

SENIORS' TECHNOLOGY PURCHASES:

A 2019 AARP survey found that, in the past year, seniors had purchased:

Smartphones	23%
Computer or Laptop	12%
Smart Television	11%
Tablet	10%
Smart Home Technology or Device	12%
Wearable Device	7%

Physical limitations present hurdles to adoption and engagement



23%
have difficulty
reading screens

For many other older adults, however, the barriers to adopting new technology are physical rather than technical or emotional. For example, cell phones notoriously [have trouble](#) registering touches when skin lacks moisture, and older adults are [more likely](#) to have dry skin. This makes what would otherwise be simple, intuitive interaction on a touchscreen device a frustrating ordeal. In addition, as people age, many [may struggle](#) to read the fonts on small screens. In fact, an estimated [23% of older adults](#) in the United States have a condition that makes reading difficult.

Those small-screen interfaces create problems in other areas as well. For example, older users are [more likely](#) to develop thumb fatigue as they try to tap the small icons on smartphone and tablet screens. That lack of dexterity may also make it difficult to plug in charging cables, as may the development of tremors and other physical impairments.



50%
experience
hearing loss
after age 75

Finally, hearing loss is a barrier for many older adults, who struggle to make sense of what is coming out of small device speakers that often lack in volume and clarity of sounds and tones. This is a significant factor, as [roughly one third](#) of people between 65 and 74 have hearing loss, and nearly half of individuals older than 75 have trouble hearing.

Lack of technology use can limit access to telehealth

Adapting to modern technology isn't just about connecting with family and friends, though there are clear [benefits](#) to such socialization, including improved physical and mental health. Resistance to or an inability to use mobile communication devices can also prevent seniors from taking advantage of telehealth offerings, which have increased dramatically during COVID-19.

[Prior to the pandemic](#), telehealth was primarily a resource for rural populations, due to a lack of nearby healthcare providers. In the wake of COVID-19, however, the value of remote care has become more broadly evident. Today, telehealth services are available to all 36 million Medicare beneficiaries and providers are seeing [50 to 175 times](#) the number of telehealth patients that they did prior to COVID-19.

Telehealth is also available for an expanded list of services, including therapeutic exercises, home visits, wheelchair management training, and speech therapy. As a result, adoption has [grown](#) from about 11% of US consumers in 2019 to 46% today. Telehealth services are particularly important for seniors, who are at greater risk of negative outcomes should they contract the disease.



Even in the absence of a pandemic, telehealth can be a benefit for seniors. With an estimated [600,000 older adults](#) giving up their driver's license each year, physically getting to healthcare appointments has become a logistical burden and challenge for many seniors and their families. Consider the fact that about 40% of caregivers spend at least five hours a week providing or arranging transport for their loved ones, and it becomes clear how this can impact all areas of life for family caregivers.



50-175x
telehealth visits
pre-COVID

GrandPad delivers: Breaking down barriers and driving ongoing engagement

The benefits of keeping older adults connected is clear, but the question that remains is how best to accomplish this when traditional smartphones and tablets [don't work](#) for them. GrandPad is a purpose-built tablet that was designed specifically to address accessibility issues for seniors in the following ways.

 Challenge	 GrandPad Solution
Vision loss	GrandPad offers a bright, low-glare 8-inch screen that falls in the sweet spot of being big enough for legibility and small enough for portability.
Hearing loss	GrandPad has two, loud, front-facing speakers that make it easy for seniors to hear.
Reduced dexterity	GrandPad eliminates small, hard-to-find, power and volume buttons and charging ports. An easy-to-use wireless charger means users never have to plug their GrandPad in, and the user merely has to open the cover to turn on the device.
Internet access	GrandPad features reliable, built-in 4G LTE service, so users do not need in-home internet. No extra costs or contracts apply. GrandPad also can be used on WiFi.
Complicated, hard-to-open packaging	GrandPad is ready to use right out of the easy-to-open box. A 90 year old can open and be using the device within 90 seconds.

Improving access and continuity of care for seniors

GrandPad's ease of use leads to increased engagement. GrandPad users, average 1.3 hours of use and more than 650 screen taps each day. Users have also reported being closer than ever with their loved ones, and having a stronger sense of independence.

GrandPad continues to fine-tune offerings to meet seniors' needs. The company employs a team of senior super-users who help them identify pain points and how to address them.

The easy-to-use video chat feature and secure, closed network have made GrandPad a popular solution for healthcare organizations—including specialty clinics, home health, and companion care companies—all of which had to overcome COVID-19 restrictions and find ways to deliver care to clients in early 2020.

A key factor that has made GrandPad an ideal solution for healthcare organizations? Engagement.



1.3
hours of use
per day



650
GrandPad screen
taps per day

Facilitating Care and Connections: GrandPad Delivers Real-World Results

The GrandPad approach to improving accessibility for seniors

GrandPad succeeds because it is designed for and by seniors. Rather than requiring users to adapt to the GrandPad design and interface, the creators of GrandPad have adapted technology to the needs of elderly users.

This commitment to improving accessibility breaks down barriers that have previously prevented older adults from using technology that could improve their health and quality of life. GrandPad has accomplished this by:

- ▶ Developing hardware that addresses the biggest points of frustration for older adults.
- ▶ Creating software solutions that are engaging and interesting for users and that do not require external apps or purchases for users.
- ▶ Continuing to listen to and engage with users to ensure GrandPad meets the needs and interests of seniors.
- ▶ Creating a closed, yet flexible environment, that surrounds the senior user in a circle of trust to eliminate security concerns.
- ▶ Offering built-in 4G LTE service provides reliable, always-on connection without the additional cost of in-home WiFi.

Northeast Iowa Area Agency

The Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging turned to GrandPad specifically to address isolation among its clients. In one case, a client who had been calling his local senior center 10 times a day just to chat used his GrandPad, now used the device to connect with family and an old Army buddy, filling a void and making daily interactions easy.

"Because our clients have embraced the devices so quickly, it's become their tool as much as it is ours."

– Donna Harvey, CEO, The Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging

PACE Southeast Michigan

GrandPad allows PACE Southeast Michigan to maintain a personal connection with clients even when in-person visits are not possible. The organization initially ordered 50 GrandPads, but added another 75 within three weeks of their initial order. In one remarkable instance, a GrandPad user ended up connected to a GrandPad customer support worker while trying to call 911. The employee called an after-hours EMS provider and stayed on the call until help arrived.

"That emergency call spoke volumes to me. It tells me GrandPad is not just a product and a help desk. That representative's willingness to go the extra mile directly aligns with our organization's priorities and values."

– Roger Anderson, Director of Operational Support and Innovation, PACE Southeast Michigan

Prospero Health Partners

Prospero Health Partners initially turned to Grandpad to continue serving clients after covid-19 made in-home visits impossible, but users embraced non-clinical uses as well. Prospero clients have used their Grandpads to call family and friends at nearly twice the rate they connect with caregivers. One client used her Grandpad to see her son face-to-face for the first time in six years.

"Patients really like having this kind of access to their care team, and it's exciting to think about how we can use this technology to facilitate a patient's access to both their care team and their family for added support and connection."

– David Moen, President of Prospero Health Partners.

To learn how GrandPad can enhance your organization's telehealth offering and client engagement outcomes, visit [GrandPad.biz](https://www.GrandPad.biz) today.