Introducing and Teaching Information Communication Technology to Senior Citizens

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Abstract
This poster examines older adults' acceptance of information communication technologies (ICTs) as well as strategies for educating older adults about how to use ICTs. Information communication technology has become a key component in our society (Hernandez-Encuentra, 2009). For the majority of people, it has become a pillar of their everyday lives (Trentin, 2004). Today however, many older adults are still reluctant to learn and integrate most information communication technology into their own lives (Gonzalez, 2012) as they have for years whenever new technology comes along. Research has shown that several different factors exist to explain why senior citizens do not welcome information communication technology (Loges, 2001). Even if they can be convinced to use this technology, there are still several factors that can prevent them from both properly and efficiently using it. Researchers have shown that there are numerous methods to teach senior citizens how to properly use information communication technology with varying degrees of success (Jones, 2011). This poster will summarize what I have discovered through both compiling information as well as my personal observation with teaching seniors through Dr. Magsamen-Conrad's Small Group Communication class and an internship at the Wood County Committee on Aging. During Dr. Magsamen-Conrad's class in the Spring 2014 semester, small groups of fifteen person classes took place over the course of five weeks. The topics of these classes were very broad, including how to access the internet and use the camera. Since the senior citizens caught on very fast while others needed more focused attention. By the end of the series of classes each senior citizen seemed pleased with what they learned.

Methods
Small Group Communication
To prepare for our first experience with the senior citizens our small group communication class went through sensitivity training. This involved wearing goggles to impair our vision and gloves to hinder our dexterity. This training gave the entire class an inside look at what the senior citizens would have to deal with while we were teaching them. We then started our group classes a few weeks later. These fifteen person classes took place over the course of five weeks. The topics of these classes were very broad, including how to access the internet and use the camera. The senior citizens reacted differently to every class setting and allowed me to help aid just about any tablet related problem a senior ran into.

Intership
Starting the following July I began my internship at the Wood County Committee on Aging. Over the seven weeks I was there I would partake in a variety of activities while simultaneously taking daily field notes. These included designing event fliers for the seniors, help run a call in service and most importantly teach more seniors. This time around the sessions were much smaller, usually one on one. This allowed me a much greater opportunity to connect with each senior citizen. The one on one sessions also let me gain massive insight on what areas seniors had troubles with their tablets. Since I was no longer bound by the group setting I could use more hands approaches. I could also give more in depth homework for any returning seniors. The additional time I spent at the senior center helped me connect with many of them on a personal level. This connection greatly transferred over to my teaching sessions and allowed me to help aid just about any tablet related problem a senior ran into.

Lessons Learned
Teaching styles
Through my time with Dr. Magsamen-Conrad’s class, my internship and the many academic journals I read, I have formed many important conclusions. Much like school children, each senior citizen has their own learning style. From personal experience I have noticed that seniors with only a few questions or minor concerns do much better in the larger group situations. This allows them to relax more in an open environment where not every question will apply to them. Conversely, one on one lessons worked much better for the senior citizens starting from scratch. This allows them to receive the proper attention and not overlook anything. In these cases the more you teach them, the more questions they will have. But in a one on one scenario these questions will be much easier to answer. For both teaching styles I have learned that assigning homework after every session is a great way to ensure that the senior citizens keep up with their tablets on a daily basis so they do not forget anything recently learned.

Marketing Ideas
Senior citizens are an often overlooked demographic by companies who sell ICT’s. This is a huge market these companies are not tapping into that historically has shown to have money and are willing to spend it. All the seniors would need is a tablet that is more sensitive to their dexterity and has a less “busy” screen similar to Samsung’s “easy mode”. If companies were willing to design a tablet for seniors, they could tap into an emerging massive market of baby boomers that could easily make them millions of dollars.

Selected References