

THE MULTI-GENERATION NETWORKED FAMILY

Underwriting Proposal

Summary

Grunwald Associates, in collaboration with People & Technology, proposes to conduct a national survey that will explore, for the first time, the role of new technologies in creating what we describe as the **multi-generation networked family (MGNF)**.

The convergence of two major trends is leading to the emergence of the multi-generation networked family: First, the Internet, cell phones, digital cameras and other technologies are providing new channels of communication among family generations. The use of these technologies is becoming commonplace. And we know that the desire to stay connected with children and grandchildren is one of the most powerful motivators for older adults to use technology. Second, with the aging of the Baby Boomers, the number of grandparents is growing rapidly: There are currently about 70 million grandparents in the US today, and that number will increase to 80 million by 2010. This group is much more comfortable with the use of technology than earlier generations.

As a result, members of multiple generations are connecting and communicating with each other in new ways that are changing the dynamics of relationships within families. This study will be the first to explore and describe this new phenomenon.

Grunwald Associates conducts a series of surveys that have garnered extraordinary media notice and influenced the debate concerning family use of electronic media. Richard Adler, principal of People & Technology has been a leader in the field of aging and technology for more than a decade and is a pioneer in research on the use of computers by older adults.

Previous research by Grunwald Associates has documented the impact that new technologies have had on parents and children. This new study will build on that work by exploring how Internet and other new technologies are changing the relationships and communication patterns within multiple generations of families, through a focus on the role of grandparents.

Key survey results will be released in a high visibility public report with prominent acknowledgement of underwriters. Wide distribution of the report and promotion of findings will help position underwriters as leaders in defining and serving the new MGNF market. Underwriters will be able to influence public discussion about technology use across family generations. Underwriters will also enjoy exclusive access to the full database of results from this survey.

Public Affairs Background

Major organizations and companies interested in families and/or media confront several major challenges, including:

1. **A difficult public affairs and positioning climate.** Important organizational messages risk getting lost amidst the “noise” from new national security concerns and a highly fragmented media environment.
2. **Policymaker and corporate ignorance** regarding multi-generational media use, as well as seniors’ impact on the economy and their role in establishing new consumer and media use patterns.
3. Seniors present a promising **market** for technology companies at a time when other demographic segments are reaching saturation levels of penetration. But efforts to tap this market are already engendering a **backlash** because of inappropriate PR positioning and ignorance of the real benefits to seniors offered by new technologies.

A high-visibility public survey is a very effective way of addressing these challenges. A well crafted survey is ideal for cutting through the media noise while simultaneously influencing public discussion of technology. We propose such a survey of grandparent media use and attitudes.

This survey will be conducted by Grunwald Associates, a respected source of survey research for both public and industry audiences. The survey will be on the latest in a series of high impact surveys conducted since 1995 by Grunwald Associates with partners such as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National School Boards Association. These surveys reflect a unique combination of elements:

- Carefully designed methodology generating data that can legitimately be projected to a national population;
- Analysis and interpretation of the results by “hands on” industry leaders; and
- Results positioned to generate maximum trust – and impact – within several distinct audiences: the general public, opinion leaders, policy experts, and key industry strategists.

The Grunwald Associates survey series has an unbroken track record of generating extensive media coverage and attracting serious attention from opinion leaders. Underwriters that have benefited from association with this survey series include The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Kodak, BellSouth, AT&T, Microsoft, Sesame Workshop, Educational Testing Service, and others.

Benefits to Partner/Underwriters

- Ability to influence perceptions about technology use across family generations.
- Effective PR and “halo effect” via broad public release of results and prominent mention of underwriters in a widely distributed public report that will be the first to identify and explore the emergence of the “multi-generation networked family.”
- Opportunities to use selected survey results for policy statements, promotional materials and presentations.
- Exclusive access to our underlying statistical database of results to use in business planning, and to identify effective marketing messages.
- Association with the most respected--and methodologically sound--series of industry surveys; this includes acknowledgement in any Grunwald Associates commercial report, which would be offered widely in the industry.

Research Rationale

Previous research from Grunwald Associates has provided important insights into the role of technology within families. For example, the Grunwald 2004 survey on “Children, Families and the Internet” found that a substantial number of online children ages 6-17 said that they often or always go online with one of their parents. And a majority of online children said that their parents had “a great deal of influence” on their online behavior. Conversely, the survey showed that many online kids are conducting product searches for parents, and influencing family purchases. The survey also showed that nearly 40 percent of online children aged 6-17 either had built their own Web site or planned to do so. And a majority of children online whose parents own digital cameras have used them themselves.

This research clearly shows that new technologies are having major impact on parents and children. We now wish to expand our understanding of the role of technology in families by focusing on grandparents and how they are using technology to connect with family members in new ways.

Older adults are often portrayed as set in their media usage habits and slow to adopt new technologies. In fact, older adults have generally been late adopters of computer technology and have been less likely than younger people to use new tools like e-mail. But in recent years, older adults have been one of the fastest growing groups of new Internet users. Today, more than 60 percent of those in their 50s and nearly half of those in their 60s are online.* Even among 70 year-olds, more than one-third are now online. And being able to communicate better with children and grandchildren is a major motivation for the adoption of new technologies by older adults.

* See, for example, *A Nation Online: How Americans are Expanding their Use of the Internet*, US Department of Commerce, 2002.

We also know that many grandparents are actively involved in the lives of their grandchildren. Grandparents who live near their grandchildren visit frequently and often play a significant role in raising them. But a 2002 AARP survey found that more than half of all grandparents have at least one grandchild who lives more than 100 miles away.[†] Electronic media are playing an increasingly important role in allowing grandparents who are geographically separated from the children and grandchildren to remain connected with them. The AARP survey found that a majority of grandparents who live at a distance from their grandchildren spoke regularly with them by phone and that about one-third of grandparents were using e-mail to communicate with their grandchildren. Today, these numbers are undoubtedly significantly larger.

We believe that the time is right to explore how the Internet and other new technologies are impacting multiple generations of families. While existing research clearly indicates that new communications technologies are being widely used by older as well as younger family members, it does not tell us very much about *how* these technologies are being used or what influence they are having on relationships within families. Therefore, we are proposing to focus on the influence of technology on the relationships between grandparents and their families which we believe is creating a new kind of family structure: the multi-generation networked family.

Our proposed survey will examine how grandparents are using the Internet and other technologies such as cell phones and digital cameras to communicate with their children and grandchildren. It will go well beyond existing research to explore the attitudes and motivations of grandparents toward technology and their opinions about its impact on their lives and on their family dynamics.

The fact that more grandparents are getting online also has large potential economic implications. Grandparents currently spend some \$30 billion per year on their grandchildren, and are responsible for purchasing nearly 20% of all toys sold. We intend to explore the importance of technology on these purchases.

Methodology Overview

This groundbreaking survey will define and explore in unprecedented depth the Multi-Generational Networked Family.

We will survey adults age 50 and older – including both grandparents and non-grandparents, and combine these findings with relevant data from our existing database of survey results from parents and children.

We will conduct a national telephone survey and a carefully constructed online survey of adults 50 and over.

The telephone survey will generate population incidence data (e.g., how many grandparents use the Internet to communicate with family members). Depending on the level of

[†]AARP, *The Grandparent Study 2002 Report*.

underwriting, the telephone survey may also be used to contrast behavior and attitudes of online vs offline seniors.

The online survey will target online grandparents, as well as seniors in general, to develop a deeper understanding of their technology use and its impact on their family roles. (Internet-based surveys offer several important advantages, including respondent convenience, interview control/ precision, high response quality, timeliness, and cost-effectiveness.) We expect total interviews to exceed 1,000 senior respondents.

We plan to begin our research with several focus groups to help us refine our hypotheses and frame the survey questions more effectively. In addition, we plan to supplement the survey with descriptive profiles of approximately a half dozen multi-generation networked families to add “color” to the quantitative research findings. We expect that these profiles will provide vivid, concrete illustrations of the ways in which technology is changing family dynamics among multiple generations.

Potential Survey Topics

Among the topics we plan to cover in the survey:

- Technologies used, including Internet, cell phones, digital photography, etc.
- The impact of new technologies including the Internet on grandparents’ roles in extended families.
- Frequency of grandparents’ contact with children and grandchildren (correlated with distance and age of grandchildren):
 - In person
 - By phone
 - By mail
 - By e-mail
- Topics discussed by grand parents with children & grandchildren (online vs. other media)
- Key motivations for grandparents’ Internet and other technology/media use (e.g., reasons for grandparents’ technology adoption; attitudes toward the value of technology in supporting family communications)
- Differences in Internet and other media use between grandparents and non-grandparents (matched by age, gender, education level, etc.).
- Media trade-offs between Internet, television and other technologies.
- Seniors’ and grandparents’ influences on family economic behavior
- Grandparents’ online/offline expenditures on grandchildren
 - Amounts & types of purchases
 - frequency
 - future purchase intentions
 - Attitudes and behaviors regarding e-commerce

Deliverables

The main product of this effort will be a public report with multiple news “hooks.” The overall list of project deliverables includes:

- Public print report with prominent mention of underwriters. Released through one or more high-visibility press events, as well as ongoing promotion.
- Web-based report. (A model for the electronic report is the “*Safe and Smart*” report published by the National School Boards Foundation based on the last survey in this series. The report can be found at <http://www.nsbf.org/safe-smart/index.html>)
- News release and launch event, along with other promotional activities to highlight results.
- Promotion through presentations at key industry and policy conferences and other venues.
- Potential market research report with messages adapted for corporate buyers, including appropriate mention of underwriters.

Qualifications

Grunwald Associates

Grunwald Associates is one of the best-known sources of high quality research on family new media use and attitudes. An important part of Grunwald Associates’ success has been the ability to identify key findings, and package them in a compelling fashion for public consumption. As a result, Grunwald analysis and data have been featured on the front page of the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and in the Washington Post, CNN, Newsweek, New York Times, in Red Herring Magazine, Industry Standard, Ad Age, MSNBC, Education Week, E-School News, EduPage, Newsbytes and many other outlets.

The CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND THE INTERNET 2000 generated more than 70 million impressions for underwriters. Thousands of copies of the survey’s public report were distributed on Capitol Hill and to national and industry opinion leaders. (The report is still available electronically at <http://www.nsbf.org/safe-smart/index.html>). More recent international coverage has included the China News Agency, and publications in India, New Zealand, Canada, and other countries. Our recently released companion survey on School Internet use has received prominent coverage in the New York Times, San Jose Mercury News (front-page article), NPR, MSNBC, USA Today, AP, and many other outlets.

We work with prominent national organizations as our partners, including the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National School Boards Association. Underwriters for our recent surveys include: The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Kodak, BellSouth, AT&T, Microsoft, Sesame Workshop, and Educational Testing Service, and others.

Grunwald Associates has provided counseling on public positioning and alliances to clients such as AT&T, the Regional Bell Operating Companies, Fleet Financial Group, Family Education Network, Scholastic, and other nationally known companies. Grunwald Associates has also performed proprietary research for clients such as PBS, Microsoft, AT&T, Scholastic, Kaplan Education Centers, Gilat Satellite Networks, PLATO Learning, and others.

Grunwald Associates has co-published political campaign coverage with HotWired Magazine, and developed CNN FaxLine.

People & Technology

Richard Adler, principal of People & Technology, has been a national leader in the field of aging and technology for more than a decade.

From 1990 to 1997, Richard was Vice President for Development at SeniorNet, a pioneering non-profit organization that provides adults aged 55 and older with access to computer and telecommunication skills. While at SeniorNet, Richard designed and conducted the first national survey of computer use by older adults (1992). He also directed the MetLife Solutions Forum on SeniorNet, an award-winning project that enabled older adults to participate in online discussions of important national issues. He was also responsible for building a network of more than 100 SeniorNet Learning Centers around the country (there are now more than 225 in operation).

Richard's recent projects include acting as lead U.S. consultant to the Smart Senior Consortium, a multi-national initiative to develop business strategies for the mature market, and directing a year-long policy project on "The Future of Aging" for the State of the World Forum. His clients include the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, Civic Ventures, InfoWorld, Fujitsu, Japan Research Institute, Microsoft, Procter & Gamble, the Seniors Media Lab, Verizon, and Xerox PARC.

Prior to joining SeniorNet, Richard was a director at the Institute for the Future, where he conducted pioneering research on the impact of online services. He also served as a Research Fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and has taught communications at Stanford and UCLA.

He has written and spoken extensively about aging and information technologies. His recent publications include "The Age Wave Meets the Technology Wave: Broadband and Older Americans" (SeniorNet, 2002; sponsored by Verizon); "Looking Ahead: Older Adults, New Technology and Learning" (American Society on Aging, Winter 2001); and "Media Use by Older Adults" (Seniors Media Lab, 2000).

Richard holds a BA from Harvard, an MA from the University of California at Berkeley, and an MBA from the McLaren School of Business at the University of San Francisco.