

Oldies set to be biggest Internet surfers

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#)

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IT expert Colin Cullis, talking on presenter John Maytham's afternoon drive show on Cape Talk recently, came up with an item that certainly opened my eyes and brought a huge smile to my ageing face. You see, I have always thought that as someone who passed the age of 55 quite a long time ago, I was in the minority by a long shot in terms of someone who not only embraces modern technology with open arms but who uses the Internet to its maximum.

I've always had the impression that youngsters – the 16 – 25 years olds are the ones who surf the net most because that's what the online industry have been saying – not in so many words but certainly by implication given where their advertising and promotion is directed.

Silver Surfers

But, according to Cullis, the over 55's or "Silver Surfers" are soon going to be the biggest group of Internet users.

"The UK have so embraced these so-called Silver Surfers," said Cullis, "that they set up a special day, Friday 25 May 2007, as Silver Surfer's Day [to try] to encourage those that have not made the leap into the technology age yet."

In the UK, he said, the 55-plus market makes up 22% of the online community, the largest being the 35 – 44, which are 23 percent.

Removing fear

"The same is evident here," said Cullis. "Access is becoming less of a problem, the issue is showing the elderly the benefit and overcoming the fear of breaking anything. That fear is often the biggest barrier which UK Silver Surfer of the Year 2006 is hoping to remove.

"The opportunity here is not only to sell more gadgets to old people, but potentially allowing for us to maintain our independence for longer by remaining self-reliant. This includes the provision of services or even building a home that uses robots and other items to do things we can't."

Bigger buttons

Cullis said companies are starting to consider devices with the elderly in mind in terms of the size and weight of appliances. Fewer, but bigger buttons and handles and grips that work without needing a strong grip. Even manuals printed in bigger type are ways to tap into the growing market.

- John Maytham is on 567 Cape Talk every weekday from 3pm to 6pm and is, in my opinion one of the most knowledgeable radio talk show hosts in the country today. Colin Cullis joins him at 4.50pm every Tuesday for a feature called Hard Drive.

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on moerdykc@gmail.com and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).
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