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### **Baby Boomers Emerging as New Social Media Mavens, Continuum Crew Survey Finds**

New findings give insight into the online media consumption and behaviors of the mature consumer

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. – January 20, 2010 – Continuum Crew – Engaging Consumers > 40, the nation's only fully integrated communications firm focused on the mature consumer, announced today the findings of their 2009 survey conducted by CPH Research, LLC on behalf of Continuum Crew.

The survey<sup>1</sup> is a follow-up to their Economic Impact Study released in December 2008. Among the findings is that Baby Boomer-aged respondents' anxiety has shifted from the collapse of the economy to the cost of health care. Most significant is the shift in the media consumption of this age group, as the only media activity to rise dramatically was time spent on the Internet. This is one of several insights on the emergence of the new 'social media maven' among Baby Boomers, and indicates that social media has significantly carved out time generally reserved for traditional media.

Baby Boomers (Boomers) are defined as the generation born between 1946 and 1964, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Generation Jones, coined by television director Jonathan Pontell, is commonly considered to be *those* born between 1954 and 1964, representing the younger segment of Boomers. Generation Ike (Ikes) are those born between 1934 and 1945.

Highlight findings on anxiety and life events are:

- **Cost of healthcare surpasses the economy as major anxiety-inducing issue:** Anxiety about the economy has decreased in the past year (46% indicated it as the issue they were 'very nervous' about in 2008); now the issue of most concern is cost of healthcare (as indicated by 49% in 2009). This is particularly the case among Boomers, and more so for Ikes, who are Medicare eligible. Overall levels of anxiety are increasing.
- **For older parents more adult children are moving back home than are leaving it:** This is a previously unprecedented finding within this research series, and markedly shows that Boomers' lives are in transition.

In interpreting all the responses about anxiety, in terms of their mindset and behavior, it appears Boomers are now re-framing the notion of frugal living into the idea of simplicity. The national economic situation

has created a new ‘planner’ type personality among Boomers that engages more with institutions, such as financial services organizations and retirement communities. Children moving back in with parents, or delaying leaving their parent’s home, is likely having an effect on the family dynamic and household, which may mean an inclination to the return of the extended family structure of the World War II era.

Some of the highlight findings on media consumption are:

- **Gap in print media consumption among Boomers:** Ikes and Boomers still use traditional media more than those of Generation Jones or Generation X, but not all Boomers consume media in the same way – the biggest gap being between older and younger Boomers. This is most striking within traditional print media, with high consumption by older Boomers of newspapers and magazines.
- **Internet the last thing to go for Boomers:** Among all media services listed, Boomers were least willing to give up the Internet, versus the top response of the 2008 survey: their cell phone. This is not surprising as the survey shows they now spend more time than ever online (a rapid increase in one year from 38% to 62% stating they now spend more time online).
- **Boomers catching up with Generation X on social networking:** The majority of Ikes and Boomers have joined popular social networking site Facebook© within the last 6 months.

In interpreting all the responses about media consumption, they reflect the convergence of technology and content. Boomers are becoming more aware that national and local news, magazines, and to some extent television and movies, are available to them via the Internet. This may even indicate an increasing preference to access content this way. Also, these responses illustrate a seismic shift among older adults experimenting in the social media arena. This makes an inviting challenge to product marketers (beyond the platform networks themselves) as to how they will work to engage those users who are merely ‘lurking’ and not fully participating.

### **Emergence of the New Social Media Maven**

In the survey’s measurement of levels of social media involvement, clear respondent types appeared, based on levels of interpersonal contact (whether in-person or not) and levels of recommendation of products or services to those in their personal or social network. One of these respondent types forms a significant segment to emerge within the Boomer group, which is dubbed the new ‘Social Media Maven’: the Boomers who said they connected with the most contacts each day and made the most recommendations. The profile of this group is one that is heavily connected, exploring and expanding their networks.

These Social Media Mavens have more frequent contact with individuals across all types of groups within their social network, not just family or neighbors, but issue-oriented groups and co-workers as well (73% responded ‘People often come to me for advice’). Not merely amassing ‘friends’ or ‘connections’ within these networks, they are communicating regularly. They also have more face-to-face contact and use smart phones more than other Boomers or Generation Jones respondents (78% responded ‘New technology plays an important role in my life’). They are equally likely to be male as female, which defies the stereotypical female profile of the voracious social media consumer. Of this Social Media Maven group the majority are still working, more likely than the other segments to own their own business, most likely to engage in volunteer activity and to have the highest household income. Social Media Mavens are

more likely to try new products, technologies and seek new experiences. They are recommenders who embrace the role of technology in their connected lives.

“With more time being spent online, and the emergence of the new Social Media Mavens among Boomers, this is further confirmation for companies targeting the mature consumer that online media should be at the core of an integrated marketing campaign,” said Lori Bitter, President, Continuum Crew. “The aging of America is shaping global marketing trends and no one is fueling the zeitgeist more than Boomers, who are craving a story and a reason to align themselves with a brand. Although they are the ‘have-it-my-way’ generation, many companies are missing the invitation and the opportunity to personalize their message.”

### **About Continuum Crew**

Continuum Crew is the nation’s only fully integrated communications firm focused on the mature consumer. Continuum Crew has more than 15 years of experience specializing in helping businesses build lasting and profitable relationships with mature consumers. Continuum Crew lends clients their expertise in branding, message development, creative strategy and targeted engagement – both digital and traditional. Continuum Crew is based in San Francisco, CA. For more information about Continuum Crew, visit: [www.continuumcrew.com](http://www.continuumcrew.com), and Lori Bitter’s Boomers in the Wild blog at: [www.boomersblog.org](http://www.boomersblog.org).

*<sup>1</sup>The national (US) sample of 700 respondents was drawn from the Greenfield Online Panel and weighted to represent the population of the 35 and older age groups, and balanced with equal male and female respondents.*

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