



## Increasing Engagement, Outreach, and Education for an Online Community for LGBTQ Seniors

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## Abstract

Elderly LGBTQ individuals struggle to find connection in today's increasingly isolated world. Our sponsor, OutstandingLife, has created an online senior program to help address this issue. The goal of our project was to help address issues of digital literacy and engagement within the platform. We conducted board member interviews, a community member focus group, and an online heuristic assessment. To cultivate a healthy online program, our research revealed that the organization suffers from a lack of website updates, a low sense of community, and a need for member education. To address these challenges, we developed a series of online resources and made recommendations to OutstandingLife for increasing community support and responsibly growing the organization.

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Appendix A	All
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## Executive Summary

### Increasing Engagement, Outreach, and Education for an Online Community of LGBTQ Seniors

**Figure 1**

*Authors from left to right: Ethan Edmondson, Tanner Thatcher, and CJ Andres*



## Problem

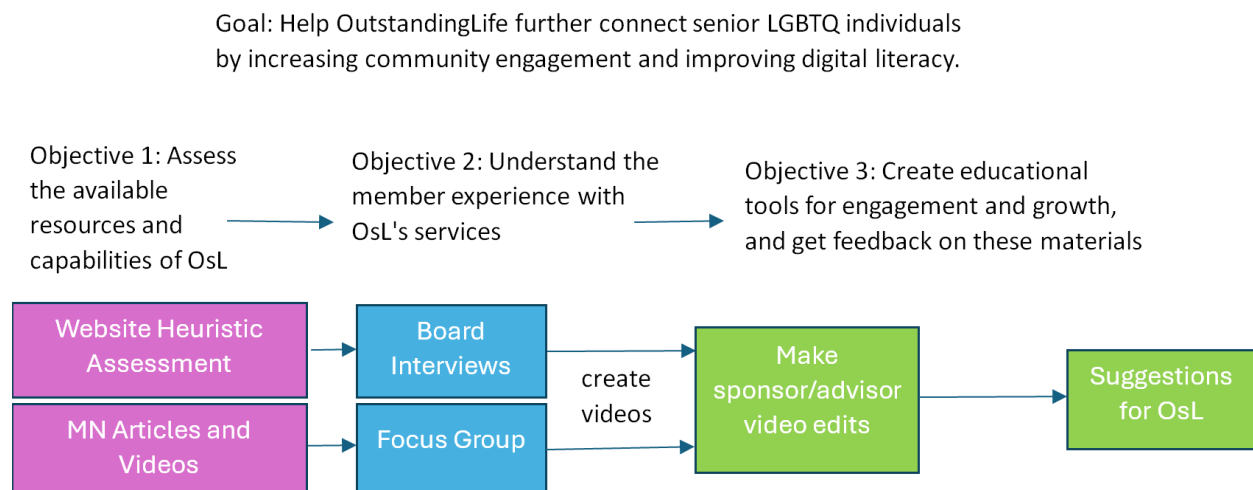
Senior LGBTQ+ members struggle with digital literacy and loneliness due to many different biases and discrimination within society that they face. They also often have fewer friends and family to lean on for support, leading to more struggles with social connection (Fokkema et al., 2009). Finally, they struggle with technology since it advances faster than they can learn it, and they feel that it doesn't apply to their life (Mostaghal & Oghazi, 2016). In the face of these challenges, OutstandingLife (OsL) is an online nonprofit organization aiming to improve the lives of older LGBTQ individuals through the creation of an online senior center. OsL was launched in June of 2023, and there are currently 300 members. The MightyNetworks platform helps address the struggles this group is facing by offering spaces for users to engage with each other in chats and Zoom programs. OsL fosters a community where conversations can occur, and people can increase their mental well-being through social connections.

## Goal and Objectives

Despite the progress that OsL has made, they are still facing challenges with community engagement within their platform and members are still struggling with digital literacy. Therefore, the team hoped to help with these roadblocks and provide educational tools and recommendations.

### Figure 2

*Goal and Objectives in Flow chart format*



## Methodology

The first step to assessing available resources was to assess the public presence of OutstandingLife on their public website, which they run through WordPress, their Facebook, and



Instagram page. The team evaluated the five components of usability for the different pages and scored them on a scale from one to five, where one was not usable and five was very user-friendly. For the second step in assessing available resources, outreach, engagement, the GUI ratings, and overall usefulness were the critiques used to assess the articles and MightyCommunity video ratings of four out of five in usefulness were deemed worthy of a how-to video for MightyNetwork members.

The second method was interviewing board members of the OutstandingLife community. Similar answers were coded into the four categories that later made up the four findings (Berg, 2012). For the member focus group, we interviewed four members, coding their answers in the same manner as the previous board member interviews. Based on our research and feedback from our first two objectives, our group made a collection of 9 how-to walkthrough videos for topics such as registering for events, Direct Messaging, customizing their profile, posting on the platform, syncing their events calendar to their personal calendar, and reaching the help section. We also went over some extra skills, like an overview of how to use Zoom features, definitions of common technological terms, and how to join OutstandingLife from the public website.

## Findings

OutstandingLife is an online nonprofit organization aiming to improve the lives of the older LGBTQ community by using an application called MightyNetworks. From conducting different methods, the team found four common themes among almost all our research and conversations. Addressing these issues will help improve the experience of members in MightyNetworks.

### 1) **Updates to the public presence are needed**

- a) There are inconsistencies within the presence of OutstandingLife when it comes to being active and updating the WordPress website. Communication is very important to members and potential members in relaying which events are active and what they are about. While Instagram is not as popular as Facebook for this demographic, if the page is not active, it shows users visiting the site a lack of communication.

### 2) **There is little sense of community**

- a) Within the community, activity is high when it comes to the feeling of community in events; however, the sense of community is quite diminished outside of the events. In the community, only one Direct Message has been sent member-to-member. This is the biggest way for members to form better relationships and meet in-person. The engagement of contributing members was quite small, as seen below in Figure 3. Participation peaked on days with events, while no events meant little to no log-ins.

**Figure 3***Contributing Members vs. Active Members*

*Note:* MightyInsights contributors and percent of active members from January to April 2024

### 3) **Members struggle with Digital Literacy**

- a) The demographic was aware of how hard it is to keep up with technology. Navigation of the website was a clear struggle, as well as having confidence and overall confusion. The focus group members were aware of the capabilities of being taught and were open to learning about new things. The team realized this area was where we could make the biggest impact and help with educational tools in the form of how-to videos.

### 4) **There are help resources available**

- a) The community members in the focus group told the team they were not using the resources available to them in MightyNetworks. This may have come from their inability to navigate there, or the fact they did not know they existed. Either way, the team created videos to guide members to the help section and brought the help section to them with other how-to guides such as Syncing your Calendar with Outstanding Life, in Figure 4. The other resources the participants wanted were contacts of trustworthy people nearby with different disciplines or any publications that act as free resources for the community. This is an example of the potential of OutstandingLife.

**Figure 4***Outstanding Life Help Video*

*Note:* Video explaining how to sync your personal calendar with OutstandingLife' events

## Deliverables

Our deliverables for this project were the help videos we created and the recommendations that we provided to the board members. The help videos were uploaded during week six of the term and the recommendations were given to the board members during the final presentation.

## Recommendations

Our recommendations for the community were split into three groups:

- 1) Resources
  - a. We recommended they provide resources such as weekly help sessions, providing professional contacts, and encourage people to join the MightyCommunity. We chose to recommend these resources because they were either not provided to the community members or they were unheard of.
- 2) Focus on the OutstandingLife community
  - a. We recommended they implement making more events based on the community members' interests, creating a landing page that shows their events, and celebrating the community members. We chose these because if the community feels more recognized, they will develop a stronger bond with others in their community.

- 3) Marketing options
  - a. We recommended they regularly update their WordPress website, increase their social media presence, and add a member's experience page to their WordPress Website. We chose these because we wanted to help them by bringing more people into the community.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Most people feel lonely at some point in their lives. In a survey of 23,000 people in Eastern Europe, an average of 28% of participants reported feelings of loneliness (Surkalim et al., 2022). Similarly, in the United States and multiple European countries, about 15% of participants reported loneliness (Surkalim et al., 2022). However, the LGBTQ senior demographic faces loneliness far more than others (Perone, et al., 2020), and this population experiences a multitude of mental and cognitive struggles from a variety of sources (Greene, et al., 2016; Lin, et al., 2022; Ribeiro, et al., 2022). Evidence shows that discrimination, exclusion, and victimization impact these groups, leading to a depleted sense of community and more loneliness.

Online communities can provide a safe space for marginalized groups to nurture each other with support and activities (Nimrod, 2012). These communities offer opportunities for connection, decreasing loneliness, and strengthening social and personal well-being in the process. However, even in developed countries, some populations struggle to engage in online activities. Research shows that the elderly population is less capable of navigating the internet and exhibits less digital literacy online (Salman, et al., 2018) and as a result, it is more challenging to access the virtual resources available to them. The organization called OutstandingLife (OsL) is becoming an epicenter for the elderly LGBTQ online communities, giving them a space to interact and socialize with others safely.

Our goal was to work with OutstandingLife to increase online engagement and create a program to teach members the basics of using their platform. To prepare for this work, the team has researched loneliness, online communities, and seniors using the internet. This helped prepare for our study, which included a heuristic assessment, followed by board interviews and a member focus group. The team found that updates to the online presence of OutstandingLife are needed, there is little sense of community, members struggle with digital literacy, and there are resources available to members that they may not know about. We created an educational program to make it easier for LGBTQ seniors to utilize online resources. The team created scripts that coincided with the educational videos as the final deliverable, as well as providing suggestions to the project sponsors.

## Chapter 2: Background

### 2.1 Seniors Face Many Difficulties

As people age, loneliness, isolation, and dissatisfaction with life often increase (Greene, 2016). In 2023, one-third of people aged 65+ had feelings of loneliness (Hutchens, 2023), which is defined as “a situation when a person does not gain support in others as well as in his inner world” (Skierkowska, 2020, p.645). This can be further complicated by both physical and cognitive limitations that develop as people age. Due to a history of discrimination and other social challenges, this is often felt even more strongly by LGBTQ populations (Lin, et al., 2022).

LGBTQ people of all ages and seniors of all sexualities find trouble staying connected with friendships as they age (Greene, et al., 2016). The connections these people previously had are lost when they change living spaces, resulting in fewer friends as they grow older. Without social support, seniors are more often to become separate from the community, and therefore lonely. Social isolation decreases lifespan because seniors live longer the more social interactions they have (Pynnönen, et al., 2012).

Gerontology, or the study of aging, has found that the elderly demographic is less social in their daily lives due to the lack of ability to go outside, form new relationships, and have things to look forward to (Perone, et al., 2019). Fokkema et al (2009) explains that due to decreased physical capabilities, seniors may not be able to leave the house as much as when younger. Physical capabilities and decreased motivation result in elderly people being less willing to partake in social events and becoming socially isolated. Another study revealed many events such as the loss of loved ones, moving to a senior home, or no longer working decrease social interactions (Lindsay-Smith, et al., 2018).

Seniors also have less support socially, especially if they do not have children to take care of them. For those who do have a family, social events with family members do not always suffice (Lindsay-Smith, et al., 2018). Generally, seniors experience “... significantly less intensive contact with their children (especially gay men) and other family members, if any, and were significantly less frequent churchgoers” (Fokkema et al., 2009, p. 268). The study population lives alone twice as often and lives without children four times as often as heterosexual people; therefore, double the number of homosexual people worry about who will take care of them when they need care (Perone, et al., 2020). This means that they have less contact with friends, family, and even peers because they don’t go out in public as much.

Self-transcendence is the feeling of satisfaction with life and having things in life to look forward to. As their lives go on, seniors lose self-transcendence, as it typically worsens with age; this plays a larger role in their well-being than physical health (Lindsay-Smith et al., 2018). While mental positivity is important to lower levels of loneliness, activating the brain is another way to accomplish self-transcendence. Participating in productive activities can also improve mental health, providing seniors with feelings of purpose and pride in “contributing to a common goal and being part of a functional group” (Pynnönen, et al., 2012, p 766). Pynnönen concluded that these positive emotions negate the potential feelings of worthlessness and not being useful.

Cognitive health, directly related to the ability to learn new things, also contributes to mental health and allows older members to do things on their own. Seniors who did not attend secondary education are found to be lonelier, while more cognitive seniors tend to be less lonely

(Lin, et al., 2022). One way that cognitive health is maintained is with mind-activating games and memory activities while increasing social connection and friendships simultaneously.

Different activities can be planned in social groups to strengthen seniors mentally, cognitively, and physically. Senior centers can act as social outlets with the potential to promote social engagement, while social connections in nursing homes come from creating new networks through individual friendships and group settings.

## 2.2 Traditional Ways of Addressing Mental Health

Many positive outcomes result from in-person interaction within a community of seniors. Traditionally, seniors have gone to senior centers as they age to aid their mental and physical health. Research by Beisgen and Kraitchman has shown that senior centers allow their members to participate in productive group activities and connect with others, leading to increased mental stimulation and satisfaction (2003). In addition, these senior centers allow the population to learn new skills and spend their time engaging in activities that increase their mental health and well-being, improving their enjoyment of life in later years by finding support from others. Research shows that doing this maintains their cognitive abilities and provides more fulfillment, or self-transcendence as mentioned before (Beisgen & Kraitchman, 2003). Historically, senior centers offer a great space for seniors to collaborate, socialize with peers, and be themselves in a safe space.

These practices are great ways to address mental health, especially for this demographic. However, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 presented another obstacle. Without being able to do activities in-person with others, the mental health of many people took a toll, especially the LGBTQ community (Greene, et al., 2016). Specifically on Twitter during this pandemic, author Darrell Green found a multitude of tweets referencing loneliness and depression by LGBTQ individuals. This population took to the internet to find support during the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic challenged traditional methods for addressing mental health in seniors and made it clear that a more accessible service was needed. Online communities are a spawn of social media and social networks and have become a new avenue for helping people connect and improve their well-being together. Research has shown that members of the LGBTQ community of all ages can benefit from online communities (McInroy, et al., 2019). Not only can online communities allow members to come together in this way, but these environments also give the potential for many benefits.

## 2.3 Online Communities Provide Many Benefits for Users

While traditional place-based senior centers have many proven benefits as discussed above, it is not always possible for people to participate in in-person activities. Illness, physical limitations, lack of transportation, or other factors should not prevent individuals from engaging in social activities. This is where online communities provide an alternative option.

A study conducted by gerontology expert Galit Nimrod researched sixteen online communities from all over the world. All groups had similar support communities in place and helped people work through personal issues, demonstrating the impact of connecting with others and the capabilities for worldwide connection on the internet (Nimrod, 2012). Researchers found that users went to online communities for various reasons, such as grieving the death of a loved



one or seeking support in their battle with illness (Graziani & Petrini, 2018). These communities allowed users to overcome spatial and physical boundaries to connect no matter what they were struggling with. In a study on how using the internet affects people, elderly citizens who used the internet found it better than previous in-person activities because they were able to contact people they would not have been able to in the past (Benvenuto, 2020).

A large part of the reason these online communities are used is because they have positive impacts on people's lives. These groups are extremely beneficial in fostering social connections and increasing social well-being. Ungar (2021) found that social connectedness between pairs of individuals had grown significantly as part of a telephonic peer-to-peer program. Online communities also provide a source of structure for senior users. An online group of senior citizens led by gerontologist Galit Nimrod gave participants a deep sense of belonging. They also reported having more structure in their day-to-day lives away from the computer (Nimrod, 2012). The simple meetings allowed seniors to build their day around this time block, gifting them a greater sense of purpose and more interest in other unrelated activities. In a similar study, seniors in a care facility experienced improved social connections and greater feelings of self-worth and friendship after being educated on the use of supportive online communities (Hasan & Linger, 2016). The connections fostered by online communities helped increase well-being in a social sense.

Along with social health, mental health is also greatly improved through these internet communities. Seniors who enhanced their technological capabilities and accessed online communities and support groups experienced a range of mental benefits (Hasan & Linger, 2016). These benefits included increased feelings of self-sufficiency, less loneliness, more companionship, and higher self-esteem; all these improvements also led to a happier mindset among the care facility's members (Hasan & Linger, 2016). Gerontology expert Galit Nimrod also finds affirming results:

The communities may provide social support, contribute to self-preservation, and serve as an opportunity for self-discovery and growth. Because they offer both leisure activities and an expanded social network, it is suggested that active participation in the communities may contribute to the well-being of older adults (Nimrod, 2010, p. 1).

The benefits of online communities span far and wide and can help people live a more fulfilling life, especially the ones in the senior demographic. This even extends to physical health. During the COVID-19 pandemic, author Albermany conducted a study of elderly males suffering from high blood pressure; members who participated in a light virtual exercise program together experienced lower blood pressure after several weeks (Albermany, et al., 2021). This senior group overcame physical barriers using an online community to better their lives physically.

Online communities also have their challenges, however. Cyberbullying can be a big obstacle, especially for isolated demographics like senior LGBTQ individuals. Bullying is one of the many experiences that cause homonegativity and results in loneliness. As a result, LGBTQ people have a "29% likelihood of presenting clinically significant depressive symptomatology" (Ribeiro-Gonçalves, et al., 2022, p. 207). Due to these negative interactions, author Darrell Greene explains how sexual minorities are more likely to experience sleep loss, drug abuse, and suicidal ideologies (2016). These are results of mental distress and loneliness, which add to preexisting elderly depression and societal separation. It is for these reasons that online

communities must have strategies in place to prevent negative interactions from members outside the group.

Overall, internet communities grant social, physical, and emotional benefits that are much needed for struggling demographics. While these benefits are exceptional for senior LBGTQs, this community may not have as much experience or confidence in technology, preventing them from reaching these untapped benefits.

## 2.4 Creating Cohesive and Engaging Online Communities

Overall, a cohesive online environment is derived from the want to use resources available to them. To create this want, developers must foster a desirable community feeling through programs and posts that people want to be involved in (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). However, this same source points to the importance of having a large enough audience to grow a community. The challenge with this is that you need to have a large enough number of users to let people connect freely, but you also need enough content that people are engaged and willing to take part in discussions or engage with advertisements (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). There is a balance that must be met between good content and a satisfactory number of users to make it possible. This is a problem that many social networking platforms and individual pages fail to effectively address (Brooks, et al., 2020).

Along with this, another challenge is the ability to engage members of the online community. This is difficult because many seniors lack trust in internet platforms or the internet in general due to their lack of frequent use or expertise (Brooks, et al., 2020). To address this, users must feel comfortable in their environment and be able to easily find trusted resources. If made available to the masses of this online community, it can have a positive effect on overall community use and therefore engagement. Brooks explains that one way to gain the trust of users and keep them engaged is through weekly notifications that encourage participation for all users; “This tactic helped us direct people to our website who may have never heard about us otherwise, all while providing a service to our members who were in need of capable employees” (2020, p. 8).

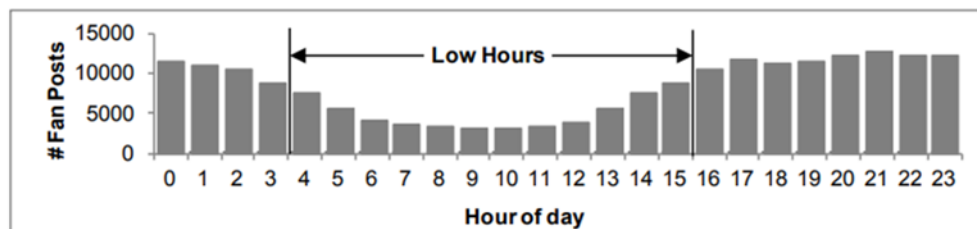
According to Broner and Neijer, engagement in web-based platforms also depends on the emotional and perceptive experiences that seniors have on the site or online community. “These experiences can be multidimensional, such as satisfying the need to find useful information, fill empty moments, and do or share something with others” (Broner, et. al., 2006). If online communities can offer valuable experiences that satisfy this emotional interest and cause users to perceive the resources as helpful and effective, they are more likely to use the platform and take part in it.

To increase engagement in a more technical way, there are a variety of factors that should be considered. One study found that focusing on which content is posted and the time of day is important for increasing online engagement which was measured in this study by number of likes, comments, shares, and the duration of users’ interactions (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). In terms of media content, the most popular type of media was entertainment, followed by informative posts and remuneration. The media format was mostly photos, while status posts, links, and videos followed respectively. Most posts in the research found 80 percent were posted during workdays and almost two-thirds during peak hours. Their data analysis found that activity

and engagement was highest between 4:00 pm and 4:00 am, while there was a “low level” of activity from 4:00 am to 4:00 pm, as shown in the figure below.

**Figure 1**

*Distribution of user posts on Facebook over an average weekday*



*Note:* Cvijikj & Micahelles, 2013, p. 12

Even with these strategies for building community and creating engagement, it can still be difficult for seniors to interact with others online. Seniors often face challenges navigating sites or effectively using these resources for various reasons.

## 2.5 Seniors Face Unique Challenges with Technology and Digital Literacy

Online communities can be a great way to increase well-being and enjoyment for seniors and can offer support to marginalized groups as well. Unfortunately, a limitation to the use of these communities is the lack of skills that seniors have when using technology.

While technology has become increasingly influential in society, this has not been the case for older generations (Mostaghal & Oghazi, 2016). On the integration of technology into the lives of the older demographic, Mostaghal and Oghazi state, “Findings revealed that the elderly do not believe that technology can significantly improve their life quality; therefore, they are not ready to use these solutions” (2016, p. 4). Understandably, the rapid evolution of technology is difficult to keep up with and their belief in technological uselessness pushes them away from wanting to further their knowledge of recent technology. If seniors do not find the capabilities of modern-day technology useful, future digital illiteracy will continue to increase. For example, it has been found that when smartphone developers fail to make an “elderly-friendly” piece of technology, they are more reluctant to use this technology in the future (Salman, et al., 2018, p. 1). However, addressing these challenges is the way to bridge the digital divide.

### 2.5.1 Making Technology Elderly-Friendly

For seniors to learn these potential benefits, educational tools are necessary to directly improve digital literacy. Assessing motivation and usability for seniors is key to determining the effectiveness of their ability to learn. Confidence and terminology are two big issues when it comes to learning how to use technology (Loorbach, 2007). The lack of confidence is legitimate because the struggles seniors had with learning were numerous (Loorbach, 2007). On the other hand, the motivational aspects of the educational tools were helpful for the confidence of the participants. Three aspects of effectiveness are visual attractiveness, relevance, and confidence.

According to a graphic user interface (GUI) study, there are components of visualization, communication, socialization, personalization, and navigation that need to be present to make pages elderly-friendly. (Alonso-Ríos et al., 2018). For example, the minimum size for a font is 14-point font for people aged 50+ to easily see the text (Age-Friendly DC, 2016). See Figure 1 below for these five parameters.

**Figure 2**

*GUI Parameters for visualization, communication, socialization, personalization, and navigation*

Graphic User Interface components	Parameters
visualization	spacing between text, clear headings and relevant graphics were described and critiqued.
communication	topics such as clear error messages, word-based interface, simple language, and avoiding irrelevant information on-screen were noted
socialization	allow reviews, provide activity feed, able to follow/interact with others, and provide discussion were looked at and described
personalization	whether the user can easily make interface elements larger, text-to-speech option, able to adjust volume, and ample time to read were all assessed
navigation	the ability to easily click and move deeper or to different pages within a website was observed

In general, an inefficient user interface (UI) will not satisfy the senior demographic. LGBTQ seniors experiencing different UI of social networking websites can expose their issues with the websites. “One of the defining features of social media is the central role that the audience plays in it” (Fisher, 2015, p. 2). This article states the involvement and pivotal role that the users play in making sure the target audience is found. This quote also shows that the audience of the website likes the content they see directed towards them (Fisher, 2015). Examples of this include the content being driven to the user in social networking websites such as TikTok's “For You” page or Instagram’s “Explore” page. This caters to the audience as it gives specific content based on the subjects of the previous videos they watched. This goes full circle to a satisfactory UI that could help the user base feel involved in the community. The main way to show that simpler UI is more beneficial to the consumer is to consider the consumer-to-consumer interaction. A simpler UI and educating digitally illiterate users are two ways to improve the networking of a website (Yanqing, 2012). Websites for the senior demographic especially need to simplify UI to increase their website’s networking.

## 2.5.2 Online Risk for the Elderly

Seniors lack technical expertise, and this also puts them at risk of exploitation and scams on the internet. Older users tend to lack knowledge about Internet risks (Alwanain, 2020), and this can be an expensive risk; for example, in 2019 the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) received 68,013 complaints from victims over the age of 60, amounting to personal losses of around \$835 million (Alwanain, 2020). Studies show that senior citizens' declines in health and mobility have increased the usage of online services for this demographic, exposing them to higher risks in identity theft (Blackwood-Brown, et al., 2019). Many internet scams, such as "phishing" emails or fake shopping advertisements, propose financial and identity security risks. Additionally, seniors are especially vulnerable to these ploys because they often lack training in state-of-the-art technology and are inexperienced in its use (Alwanain, 2020). According to Zulkpli's study, the skill gaps exist due to the advances in hardware and software which make it harder for seniors to "adjust settings on their devices which enhances the security, managing browsing history, clearing cache and internet cookies" (2021, p. 1776). In this way, the issue exists because a lack of experience and knowledge surround browsers and website use.

The main solution to this widespread issue is awareness and internet training. According to Alwanain's study, improving the level of security awareness was found to be crucial for being able to spot and report scam attempts (2020). Education can help teach seniors what to watch for, but this has unfortunately also caused a lot of distrust and paranoia in seniors when navigating the internet (Blackwood-Brown, et al., 2019). Along with awareness and educational programs, many third-party monitoring systems have been in the works to hopefully help seniors who cannot protect themselves. For example, Mu-Yen Chen has proposed an at-home monitoring system that stores personal information in a local server and alerts authorities and family members if there is a deemed risk of scam to an elderly user (2022). Innovation like this is starting to take advantage of fast-moving technology to get ahead of scammers.

## 2.6 OutstandingLife Offers These Services to LGBTQ Seniors Nationwide

The demographic groups of seniors and LGBTQ community members both experience societal challenges, as well as hurdles in mental and physical health. When combined, these joint demographics experience an even more robust and unique set of challenges. Online communities stretch everywhere, benefiting this demographic and others alike. Without assistance, seniors are typically less experienced in scrolling the web and may find it difficult to access such online communities. If they can increase their digital literacy, they may be able to access online communities and improve their well-being and enjoyment of life. Improvements in platform integration and user interfaces of these platforms can also aid community members, allowing them to find the support and companionship they desire.

Our sponsor, OutstandingLife is working to make this process easy and accessible for all members of their demographic community nationwide. They need assistance increasing member engagement for their online communities for senior LGBTQ members, as well as improving the overall experience of their members. Currently, there are 300 members in MightyNetworks, along with 860 on the mailing list. Through collaboration with OutstandingLife, this project will enhance the member engagement and user experience of their senior LGBTQ online community

by increasing user traffic and implementing an educational program for users. Both objectives will increase the outreach of OsL and hopefully improve the community's connectedness. The first step in data collection was documenting OutstandingLife's online presence. A strategy to collect information will be implemented through a focus group to hear from OutstandingLife members on technical struggles. The process of methods and data collection is described beginning on the next page.

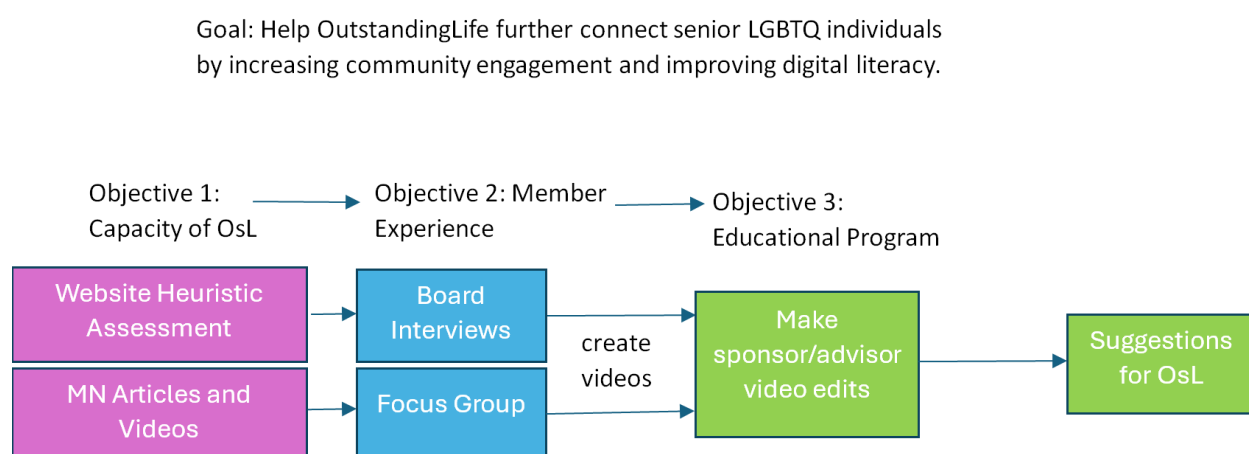
## Chapter 3: Methodology

The goal of this project was to help OutstandingLife further connect senior LGBTQ individuals by increasing community engagement and improving digital literacy. To accomplish this goal, we had three objectives:

- 1) Assess the available resources and capabilities of OutstandingLife’s MightyNetworks and Mailchimp platforms for hosts and users
- 2) Understand the community’s experience with OutstandingLife’s services
- 3) Create educational tools for engagement and growth, and get feedback on these materials

**Figure 3**

*Flow Chart of Methods*



*Note:* See Appendix D for the dates the methods were conducted

### 3.1 Objective 1: Assess Available Resources and Capabilities of MightyNetworks, Mailchimp for Hosts and Members

#### Website Heuristic Assessment

The first objective required learning about all the resources that OutstandingLife (OsL) can offer its members by taking an environmental scan of OutstandingLife’s online presence. The website was assessed for technically challenging areas. Each page of the website was evaluated depending on the level of user-friendly applications or features it contained (Alonso-Ríos et al., 2018). The websites assessed were the public Outstandinglife.com site, the private MightyNetworks (MN) platform (OutstandingLife.mn.com), as well as the Facebook and Instagram for OutstandingLife. The focus of this assessment was on beneficial characteristics for seniors online, such as visualization, personalization, and communication (Alonso-Ríos et al., 2018). In order to quantitatively assess the different pages on the internet, we evaluated the five components of usability and scored them on a scale from one to five, where one was not usable and five was very user friendly. Then, each page was averaged from the scores each category was given and the pages with less than 3 were deemed necessary to give recommendations. The more characteristics that a page had, the better the usability was for the senior demographic (Rot,



2017). For our full heuristic assessment guidelines please see Appendix A, which observes the graphic user interface (GUI).

### MightyNetworks Help Articles and Videos Breakdown

Inside the MightyNetworks, subsets of informative tools such as the help section for hosts and members and the Mighty Co-Host and MightyInsights websites for hosts were assessed. The team read 12 help articles for hosts and 21 for members. These were separated as such. For hosts, Mighty Community provides videos on how to use Mighty Networks. The team watched all videos, wrote descriptions to summarize, and made a checklist to see which topics were covered (Appendix A). The videos were rated on a scale from one to five, where one was least useful for members and five was most useful. The videos were rated based on GUI, outreach, engagement, and usefulness for members as seen in Appendix A. Videos with ratings of four or five were considered worthy of a how-to video for MightyNetworks members.

## 3.2 Objective 2: Understand Community Experience with OutstandingLife's Services

### Board Member Interview

The second method was interviewing members on the board. Four of the nine board members were interviewed, all with different experiences including the Board President and Organization Co-Founder, an expert in technology and digital equity, a disability rights activist, and OutstandingLife's program coordinator. Each of the four interviews spanned about 30 to 40 minutes and used a semi-structured approach (Beebe, 2012). This allowed the team to ask additional questions without having to totally adhere to a script. See Appendix B for the prepared questions and any other personalized questions for each person. The interviews were conducted through Zoom and were recorded with consent for the team's analysis and future referral (Appendix B). Our goal was to obtain a broader perspective of the organization and determine what they see as issues or concerns regarding outreach and community engagement. While two of the group members asked questions, the other took notes on the interviewee's answers. We also wanted to learn about understanding their perspective. When we analyzed the data, we tried to find common themes throughout the answers given by the board members. We coded the data, paying attention to similar phrases, terms, and beliefs held by the leaders of the community. Specifically, the greatest challenges in using MightyNetworks, other needs for members, and solutions such as certain resources to these challenges. These similarities were qualitatively analyzed and grouped together to help us understand the engagement problems and suggestions that they described (Berg, 2012).

### Member Focus Group

Research shows that focus groups may lead to more honesty and deeper conversations thanks to the sense of community and togetherness that comes from having similar experiences and struggles (Beebe, 2012). We held a focus group with four seniors of OutstandingLife, to get a firmer grasp of their technological background and experiences with technology. The members were requested in an email through Mailchimp. It was conducted in a Zoom meeting at noon and ran for an hour and fifteen minutes.

After we established a connection with the audience, we asked about the technical difficulties with the website and the platforms accessible through it. To record the data, we had a

scribe recording the group's responses. Follow-up questions based on their responses were very valuable when unexpected topics arose and a question needed more clarification. We paid attention to how others reacted to the answers of the community, such as their body language or even possibly giving more input (Beebe, 2012). The Zoom was recorded with consent for our team's feedback and reporting purposes. See Appendix C for Focus Group informed consent and questions. We used qualitative analysis to analyze focus group members' emotions and frustrations (Berg, 2012). We grouped these by category and related them by grounded theory to increase our understanding of the bigger picture of their experiences.

### 3.3 Objective 3: Create Educational Tools for Engagement and Growth and Receive Feedback

#### Post Educational Tools on MightyNetworks

Another objective in achieving our project goal was to create an educational program to help users understand how to use the internet and the online community offered by OutstandingLife. Once we determined the needs based on objectives one and two, we then started working on the educational materials. The first step to the program was creating scripts for each video. Based on the previous objectives, we determined the topics of the videos to be as follows: How to join the MightyNetworks community through the OutstandingLife website, Creating a profile, Signing Up for Outstanding Life events, Get to help section (members), Sending DMs, How to make a post, Features within zoom, Sync calendars, Acronyms and technological terms. As the team created resources each day, we posted them up to MightyNetworks for the members. All the videos were posted in the space the team created, titled "Tips for OutstandingLife". This took about two weeks and respective scripts were posted under each video in MightyNetworks.

#### Feedback on How-To Videos

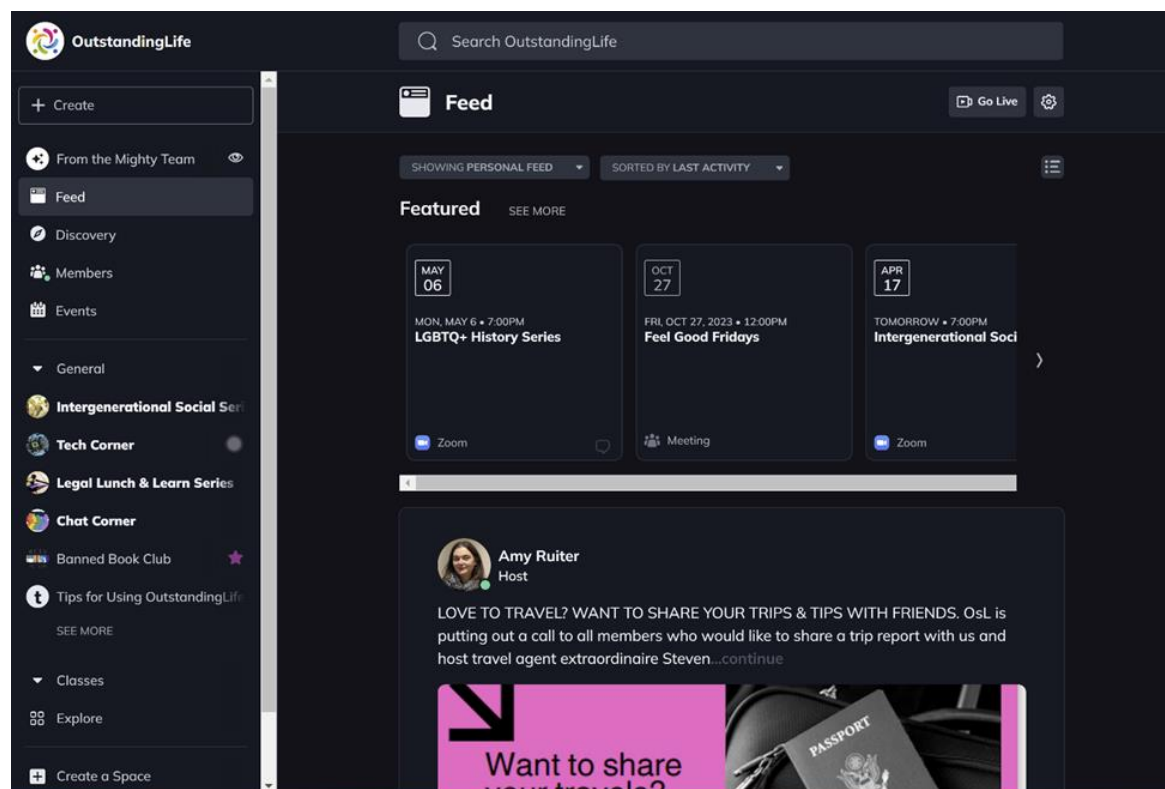
Before the videos and scripts were shared with the MightyNetworks community, the team sent the resources to the sponsor and advisor. The team was given feedback to make changes to the online resources. Based on this feedback, we updated colors to match OutstandingLife's color scheme for logos, talked slower and louder, and were more enthusiastic when talking. Closed captions were added, and some of the language needed changes to better convey what the team was trying to discuss. See Appendix E for the link to our videos, as well as their coinciding scripts.

## Chapter 4: Findings

OutstandingLife is a virtual senior center that holds Zoom events and online discussions to help connect LGBTQ seniors. This nonprofit organization's goal is to improve the lives of the demographic community by creating a platform on an application called MightyNetworks. There is just one paid employee, while the rest of the board members contribute as volunteers. All board members have very high accolades and are leaders of LGBTQ organizations around Massachusetts. OutstandingLife was founded in the beginning of 2023 but did not launch until June of that year. The number of members on MightyNetworks has been steadily increasing since then. One outreach for OutstandingLife is a public website (through WordPress) which conveys the programs, board members, a donate page, and a way to request to sign up. The other large engagement website is Facebook, where a large part of the older demographic visit. However, limitations in terms of growing the website come from the threat of scammers and cyberbullies, and is the reason why the private MightyNetworks website has a security system for the public. MightyNetworks helps build online communities and can be a source of interactions regarding chatting or joining events through Zoom. Once you join the community, the user has access to different "spaces" and can request to join even more various spaces. A space has a specific topic of interest and includes a chat room, unique groups of people interested in the space, and specifically tailored events for its members. Below is a visual of the private MightyNetworks platform for OutstandingLife.

**Figure 4**

*The interface of OutstandingLife's MightyNetworks site*



Joining the community is as simple as giving your email and creating a password. Members are either invited to join by someone inside the community or they can join themselves and answer some screening questions to make sure they are part of the demographic and don't have bad intentions such as cyberbullying or hacking. After members join, they can do many things. As mentioned, they can access spaces to find events and chatrooms about topics that may interest them. The Tech Corner and Chat Corner are two examples of spaces. They can also view the feed, which shows all the content and posts from the community and any spaces they are a part of. The events in spaces are held on Zoom, and it is as easy as clicking register. The Zoom link will be emailed to the email address affiliated with your account, and you will receive a reminder on the day of the program.

Through vast assessments of the online presence of OutstandingLife, and by looking into the lives of the members and leaders that make up the community, the team came up with four overarching findings: Updates to the public presence are needed, there is little sense of community, members struggle with digital literacy, and there are help resources available. From conducting different methods, the team found these four common themes among almost all our research and conversations. The first finding was observed through community members and board members, and finally we confirmed online ourselves.

## Finding 1: Updates to the Public Presence are Needed

One of the first things we learned is that there is a lack of consistency across the different components of the Outstanding Life Platforms. The different branches of OsL such as Mighty Networks, the WordPress site, and Facebook do not all have updated content. One of the focus group participants told the team about how WordPress has dates that are not updated. They say, "They really need to think about the fact that the dates underneath each one of the programs say May 2023, which kind of implies nothing has been updated since then" (29:47-29:59). See Appendix C for the video recording of the focus group.

Once the team accessed the public website, or WordPress website, we immediately noticed the lack of updates and communication. The programs were old, and each program took the user to the same weather program. The team observed this through the heuristic assessment firsthand, where the programs page on WordPress received an average of 1.5 (1 being the least usable and 5 the most usable). The Instagram page was the other online presence that was scored below a 3, earning a 2 because of minimal followers and zero posts. See Table 1 below for each category's ranking to find the averages.

**Figure 5***Heuristic Assessment of OsL's Online Presence*

Website	Page	Visualization	Communication	Socialization	Personalization	Navigation	average
Outstandinglife.org	The team	2	3	4	N/A	4	3.25
<b>Outstandinglife.org</b>	<b>Programs</b>	2	1	2	N/A	1	<b>1.5</b>
Outstandinglife.org	Partners	3	4	3	N/A	2	3
Outstandinglife.org	Donate	4	3	N/A	N/A	3	<b>3.3</b>
Outstandinglife.org	Contact us	3	4	N/A	5	4	4
MightyNetworks	Feed	2	2	4	4	2	3
MightyNetworks	Discovery	2	4	3	N/A	5	4
MightyNetworks	Members	4	4	4	4	4	4
MightyNetworks	Events	4	4	4	4	4	4
Facebook	OutstandingLife	4	4	4	4	4	4
<b>Instagram</b>	<b>outstandinglifelgbtq</b>	3	3	1	N/A	1	<b>2</b>

Legend: 5=most useful, 4=useful, 3=neither, 2=not as useful, 1= least useful

**Below rank of 3 will get recommendations**

*Note:* The OsL Programs page and Instagram page were rated below a 3 and given recommendations

## Finding 2: There is Little Sense of Community

OutstandingLife has built itself up with members and events, but through our focus group, we learned that the members prefer in-person meetings. Not only are there challenges to joining OutstandingLife, but engaging in the community as well. We found that, while the members are fine with the online events as some do not like to leave their homes, they want to feel this sense of community within OutstandingLife and are willing to leave their homes and meet up with others if it means developing a stronger feeling of community. They prefer to be in person because physical contact lets people interact more than if they were talking through a computer in a Zoom call.

The technology board member stated, “There is the potential that OutstandingLife can be a real community for LGBTQ+ adults... but the focus on the local is important so people can meet their nearby neighbors.” (2:45-3:30). She can see that OutstandingLife has the potential to feel more like a community and she thinks this can be accomplished through real life means. The events help people learn about each other and start to interact, but it comes down to the members who can meet in real life and get to know each other face to face. The first step in meeting people in real life is through Direct Messaging, where in the year 2024, only one member-to-member Direct Message was sent within the MightyNetworks platform.

To further assess engagement with the community, the team looked at MightyInsights, the data website provided by the MightyNetworks. We also looked at MailChimp, the application that OsL uses to manage its mailing list and send emails to members. Both sources gave descriptive details on which members interacted with one another and which spaces, emails, or events get the most attention. It was very evident the number of contributing members was below ten most days. Most of the event participation came from advertisements via email; members often didn't feel the need to log in, since they could register and join events from their personal email account. See Figure 6 below for the contributing members in the past four

months. A contributing member is one that posts or engages with posts in any way, while an active member is one that signs in.

**Figure 6**

*Contributors vs. Active Members*



*Note:* MightyInsights contributors and percent of active members from January to April 2024

Only on big event days would the number of visiting member's peak, and this was often only for the programs and not for engaging in chats and feed posts. This demographic is familiar with having a sense of community as OutstandingLife programs director said "Community trumps everything. It's here, it's within the LGBTQ+ community, it trumps everything." (5:40-6:15). This shows that they all believe the community feeling is the most important thing to help them grow. She has made an impact in this area since joining the community with creating new programs people are interested in and explains how "pushing that kind of programming causes people to be more involved in the site" (19:37-19:42). With consistent networking and outreach for new members, in addition to popular programs and new events, a larger, more engaged community will form.

### Finding 3: Members struggle with Digital Literacy

Through our research, the group found that there is a drastic need for digital education among the participants. As we've seen in our background, seniors benefit greatly from



connecting online. However, they experience trouble using technology and this limits their ability to connect. Even when they do log onto the MightyNetworks that OutstandingLife offers, they struggle to navigate through the platform. Overall, members struggle with Digital Literacy.

The first example of this comes from our focus group, where they expressed their experience with technology as they aged. The participant used to program computers the size of basketball courts, with less capability and power than today's cell phones. They go on to explain, "Now that I'm retired, I don't study it anymore. And now I feel like the technology is chasing me. Technology is showing up in things that I anticipated, and in things that I did not anticipate" (4:51-5:06). Going off this, participant then explained the need for learning for this older demographic, saying, "The key is education. These people aren't stupid, they just need the knowledge." (07:48-07:54). Another focus group participant agreed:

There is just the assumption that we know how to do everything... and I don't. I started back in college using computers and it's been a very long time but there's still a lot that I miss.... doing classes or maybe even an 'open for questions for a couple hours and how do you handle this with particular programs' I think would be really useful (13:20-14:00)

The program coordinator is very active on the MightyNetworks platform because she sets up and runs most of the programs and conversations. Through this experience, she has witnessed a variety of struggles for members. When asked about specific examples, she gave some challenges that she has witnessed members having. "A lot of it is 'turn on your microphone', how to use your microphone, moving all around and not understanding where the camera is, asking me to turn captions on...I'm working with a gentleman right now who can't change his profile picture, so this morning I did a bunch of screenshots and sent them to him with circles and arrows... Occasionally, someone will just send me an email that says 'register me for this' " (11:30-12:30). There are many areas of confusion from our conversations with the focus group and the board members.

The technology committee expert knows the untapped potential of the marketing side in terms of increasing outreach. She told the team "It's kind of a chicken and egg, people are joining but they're not coming back... we don't have a lot of traffic, actual engagement, once people join" (17:43-18:02). See Appendix G for marketing barriers. This board member, along with other board members, feel the MightyNetworks platform can show potential members why they should want to join the community.

#### **Finding 4: There are Help Resources Available**

To help address this problem, the team researched what resources are available to help members. In doing so, we were able to identify a variety of MightyNetworks help articles. We evaluated them based on the usefulness of the info for members and the results were nine topics. Below in Figure 7 are the nine topics, reasoning, and explanations on how they will specifically help the community.

**Figure 7**  
*How-To Videos with Reasoning*

Video Topics	How to join the Mighty Networks community through the OutstandingLife website	Creating a profile	Signing Up for Outstanding Life events	Get to help section (members)	Sending DMs	How to make a post	Features within zoom	Sync calendars	Acronyms and confusing words	All
evidence	sponsor	sponsor	sponsor	board members	board members, MightyInsights	sponsor, board members	board members	board members, sponsor	board members, sponsor	sponsor, board members, MightyInsights
what will they help with?	Confused people to easily join the community	Members to have their face and bio attached to their name, to trust the community	More engagement and ability for members to sign up for events they want to partake in	Decrease load of questions to sponsor and allow for quick resolving of member struggles	More engagement and increase chances of in person meet ups	More engagement and ability for members to share articles or their feelings	Allow for members to remember they signed up for the event and when it is, the ability to have the MN events in with their other calendars	Ability for members to interact in events easier in terms of communicating, their camera, and chatting in Zoom	Many confusing word that are technical and older adults have not have the exposure to	allow sponsor to point direction of video for support on "how-to" do these actions in MN

*Note:* We chose topics based on evidence from our methods, and explained what each video would teach members.

As you can see, articles that we decided ranked a 4 (useful) or 5 (very useful) were used as templates for making how-to videos for our members. In total, we found 13 that broke this threshold and deserved to be covered with our video materials. Each article included navigation lessons for the MightyNetworks platform. These articles are available to members of the MightyNetworks community, but we fear that they have not been able to access these because they don't know that they are there, or they are unable to find them.

We cross-referenced these lessons with what we heard in our board member interviews and focus group results to ensure that they would effectively address the problems that members were having while on OutstandingLife.

We heard from our focus group that they want more educational opportunities within the community to be held for them, but they aren't being given these opportunities. This was organized in a table as well and can be seen below in Figure 8.



**Figure 8***Focus Group Members Organized by Findings*

Participant	Change to OsL?	Need education that doesn't gloss over small stuff.	Love the programs.	All come from experienced technical backgrounds	Wish there was more people on there- make it a real community: Why OsL?
Brian Walker	Wordpress has dates that aren't updated, more education (tech), Bulletin board on home page, if interested click on it- laws pertaining to community, doctor who can help. Not staffed, user-driven. DAMRON guide- book for gay establishments nationwide, more in person	The key is education, they are not stupid they just need the knowledge, Has to be interactive or else they will gloss over the thing that they are truly, Feel uncomfortable being taught by someone much younger	see Outstanding Life having courses to teach people, weather series, learned a lot		a lot of it is word of mouth (WOM)
Maida Tilchen	Send a monthly newsletter of what is going on, talks about what other organizations around the US are doing		give people something to talk about they will participate more. Love class programs. Rainbow Lifelong Learning	"convenience" of tech	Support idea, programs, people online
Mike DelaVega	get publications online that are resources for the community, would save seniors a lot of money (more resources) "If you need this, go to OsL, if you need that go to OsL" - resources: museums/offerings, get spokespersons from Big Pharma to address the stigma surrounding HIV		easy to use	frustrating with online fraud	twice-weekly seniors meeting on Mondays and Thursdays, found it very interesting
Kelley Ready	suggests classes or open Q+A, Also need meeting space for organizations. Also have the space be open to ALL, with a FOCUS on LGBTQ community				Pride housing introduced her, happy to see the space and what they were doing

*Note:* Not all Focus Group participants spoke on all four categories

## Limitations to Our Findings

The size of the focus group was half the size of the expected participants (8). This altered some of the questions, for the four members that showed up all agreed on some questions. All four participants had a history of using computers and seemed to be well above average in terms of using technology. For example, when asking “Do you find yourself unsure how to use any features in OutstandingLife? If yes, how so?” (29:20), each member gave a straightforward no, besides the one participant who was not on the MightyNetworks (also a limitation to the focus group). Based on this, the team could not completely claim that everyone has issues using MightyNetworks. This leads to people who aren't tech savvy not being able to express their opinions (not in MN). The people we are talking to are literate enough to have joined the community, which makes it difficult to get true feedback from the people who are really struggling and aren't even able to log on or participate in our groups because they are not present online at all.

Finally, none of the team members are seniors nor homosexual, creating some sort of barrier. Not being part of either demographic caused a small disconnect in how these people feel and in how they identify.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

The biggest challenge we see facing OsL based on our research is how they should move forward as an organization. There is a debate between growing and expanding to include new members and increasing member engagement. One of the challenges faced is the lack of community.

The feeling of community drives people to get to know each other and become friends and, in general, become the community they seek. The feeling of community is also good for the senior demographic because they have reduced social interaction (Pynnönen et al., 2012). If they focus on bringing more people in and don't increase engagement in the community, the members who are already in the community may not feel seen. A sense of community also helps with the senior demographic's interactions with each other, as their ability to interact with one another will increase and so will their feeling of community (Foster & Walker, 2015). The board members must focus on them because their community itself will grow. If the current members are enjoying their time and feel like this could benefit their demographic, they will invite friends to join the community. This may also help the population grow slowly, in addition to other actions that are being taken to grow the community numbers. The members have a very strong sense of community in and during events, but the hard part is the translation to the platform and chatrooms in MightyNetworks.

The lack of community can also be addressed by encouraging community members to meet each other in person. The members of OutstandingLife could benefit from having these meetings because they could exchange personal information and interact with each other outside of community events. This can increase their bond with one another and therefore increase their community. While this may be beyond the scope of OutstandingLife, MightyNetworks allows users to see other members who live relatively close to themselves.

The poor online presence impacts the level of engagement and website traffic (Fisher, 2015) for OutstandingLife. The board members and members were very aware of this and hoped that improving the WordPress website could also increase membership. While it's important to grow the population to increase that community feel, it is also necessary to educate and encourage existing members to engage with each other (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). They go hand in hand, for more people make it easier to engage with others and feel togetherness, but more engagement also increases the want to be part of the community.

One board member feels there needs to be a larger outreach in terms of bringing more diverse programs until they are popular, like the weather program. This was a favorite among our focus group participants, where one member told the team "For a while they had the weather one [program], I liked that a lot, because I learned a lot" (37:08-37:13). The rest of the participants agreed, which showed how a consistent program that increased engagement also increased the community. We heard from our focus group that they want more educational opportunities within the community to be held for them, but they aren't being given these opportunities.

As we've seen, education is an important component of growing the community and increasing engagement and socialization between members. If they are comfortable using the site, they may feel more inclined to access the resources and programs that the site has to offer.

Educational materials allow seniors to connect in online communities much easier which leads to increased social connections and overall well-being of users (Hasan & Linger, 2016), so we think adding more educational materials will create a positive environment that makes more people want to join, increasing diversity in the community by adding more and more people. A challenge of this is educating people virtually; in-person gives much more opportunity to ask follow-up questions that are relevant to a specific problem a member is having. It also makes it easier to demonstrate on someone's screen or show them a live step-by-step walkthrough. In this way, virtual education may be a limitation.

Which is best for the success of OutstandingLife? The meetings with our sponsors revealed to us that there was some disconnect between the board members and the members of the community. Some board members felt the main solution to the community's problems was to increase the number of people, and this was communicated to us during our meetings and in our board interviews. On the other hand, the community members said the main solution was increasing community engagement, as discussed above.

In our opinion and learning throughout this project, we have found that starting an organization and fostering a community like this is not so cut and dry. There are a lot of factors to consider, and it is very difficult to get off the ground which is why they are experiencing issues in both the engagement and the community's size.

## Chapter 6: Recommendations and Conclusion

The main recommendations the team came up with were to have resources inside OutstandingLife's community and encourage engagement, and also to implement edits and additions to the WordPress website. Details on how to implement each recommendation can be found in Appendix F.

### Provide Resources for Community Support

1. Email video of "How to join the MightyNetworks community through the OutstandingLife website" video through MailChimp and publish on the WordPress website
2. Highlight professional contacts as a resource in MightyNetworks
3. Encourage OutstandingLife members to sign up for the MightyCommunity.
4. The same demographic teaching members in certain events.
5. A weekly event help session.

### Focus On Community Within OutstandingLife

1. Make more events members want such as photography, travel, etc.
2. Encourage connecting off the network.
3. Create a landing page for weekly events.
4. Highlight and celebrate the members.

### Responsibly Grow the Organization with Proper Marketing

Some things on WordPress need to be reevaluated and other things could be added to increase the use of their site and make it easier to navigate.

1. Regularly update the WordPress website.
2. Add a member's experience on the WordPress OutstandingLife Website.
3. Integrating Facebook on the Public Page through push marketing.
4. Be more active on the Instagram page.

## Conclusion

The loneliness of LGBTQ seniors creates an additional need for connectedness online. A barrier that many seniors face is illiteracy on the web. The team's research aimed to improve digital literacy and educate LGBTQ seniors on this topic. We also provided recommendations to update the OutstandingLife website. To achieve these goals, the board and community members were interviewed, and a heuristic online assessment was conducted. With the data gathered and the how-to videos created, senior LGBTQs will be able to strategically use the internet. The overarching end goal was to improve the overall Quality of Life of LGBTQ seniors.

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## Appendix A: Heuristic Assessment

**Heuristic Assessment** is a methods practice comparing the functionality of user interfaces with broad “rules of thumb” to increase website usability (Alonso-Ríos et al., 2018).

### 1. Categories for WordPress, Instagram, Facebook, and MightyNetworks

Website / Page	Visualization	Communication	Socialization	Personalization	Navigation

The categories included are defined as the following (Rot et al., 2017):

Visualization: spacing between text, clear headings, relevant graphics

Communication: Clear error messages, word-based interface, simple language, avoid irrelevant information on-screen

Socialization: allow reviews, provide activity feed, able to follow/interact with others, provide discussion

Personalization: user can easily make interface elements larger, text-to-speech option, able to adjust volume, ample time to read

Navigation: ability to easily click and move deeper or to different pages within a website



## 2. MightyCommunity Videos Library for Hosts

Video Section	Subsection	Descriptions	Video Section	Subsection	Descriptions	Video Section	Subsection	Descriptions
What is a MN?	Intro	cultural software delivered in network made up of spaces holding features. Features are webpages, chat, content, Can change the names of spaces, and public, private,	Events	Posting Event Replays	To check livestream recording, go to your profile and choose livestream recordings, you can also post the recordings you want to specific communities.	Payments & Revenue	Invite Members, Moderators, or Co-Hosts for Free	Profile photo>network settings>plans and payments> new plan with plus- include access to network, add spaces they can join, internal note for who plan is for, imagery, branding... gates toggle off payments to make it free. Click create plan, Share tab in far right can be used to create a link. Keep plan toggled to hidden
What is a MN?	What are spaces?	How to make spaces. Can customize features to add different sections, can rename these sections/features. Chat, table of contents, discovery, welcome page, feed, members page. Can then add lessons and course materials to these sections (videos, articles, etc)	Events	Charge For An Events	For events, they can be free or paid. To dictate this, you can change the settings in event and you can change the type of meeting. Mighty networks integrates with zoom. You can also collect RSVPs for the event. To charge, you can go to settings and payments.	Navigation	Custom Navigation Links	Profile photo>network settings>navigation> custom links> can add up to four links, related to community or your own websites. Visible to members from left-hand navigation
What is a MN?	What spaces Can I Create?	Teaches you how to create a space step-by-step with templates. There are several templates with specific features already turned on. Can customize everything from there or you can start from scratch without a template. More in depth version of "What are spaces" above.	Events	Tips and Tricks for Livestreaming	You can go live on mobile.	Navigation	Search In Your Mighty Networks	Top center click on bar and type what you want to find. You can search specific spaces, only members, posts, near you, or events
What is a MN?	What Does Being a Member Mean?	"What members can do". Collections have spaces within them, in these spaces you have feature tabs discussed above. Walks members through navigating collections and spaces (from a member standpoint). Bolded text on spaces and chats means there is activity that you haven't seen yet	Events	How to Run a Webinar	A webinar should have the topic in the title that is not broad. You want the title to be enticing so the conversion rate is high. you need a landing page that has the title and description of the webinar. Also give background information about yourself to help increase the people joining.	Navigation	Pin a Post to the Top of Your Feed	Feature a post: open space, click three dots, add to, then select <b>featured section</b> , to remove, three dot menu, add to, unselect featured section
What is a MN?	What Should I Name My Mighty Network?	"Find your community name". 3 part formula to find the perfect name. Walks you through an activity, writing down thoughts on sticky notes. <b>Question 1:</b> Who is your community for? <b>Question 2:</b> One adjective that captures what makes them unique? <b>Question 3:</b> What do you want them to do together in your community? Then put all sticky notes on a wall, add words to connect them	Engage Your Member with People Magic	Boost Regular Engagement By Creating & Scheduling Posts	You can put formatting in a post to make it more engaging. You can only add one media image to a post. There is a dropdown menu that lets you choose topics and send out a scheduled post. You can also choose the post to give a notification.	Navigation	Promote a Space	Left hand navigation bar: to get members into spaces, click three dots of space, promote in, then select navigation panel, it will have a sparkle icon in the left hand navigation bar for new members.
What is a MN?	Mighty Introduction- The Full Tour	long video, everything talked about here is addressed in shorter vids. Discovery: top posts, top members, (leaderboard), Global features: top left, can adjust order. Mighty Co-Host get you started, help member connection with similarity, who's more in common, icebreaker. This was also a presentation about pricing and plans but that doesn't apply to us.	Engage Your Member with People Magic	Message All Members	To message all members of a MN, select "All Members" option for the post in a certain community.	Understand Your Members	Course Analytics (New!)	Three new charts, Network settings>mighty insights>spaces>tables of contents. TOC completion chart, which courses have the highest completion (what is resonating?) highest and lowest members, How course material is performing. Lessons data with completion and how many started. Single space shows best lessons in that space. All spaces, quiz completion shows best quiz or highest grade for each quiz.
Events	How to Create an Event	Turn on events tab in your space. Toggle on the "events" feature and save. Click on the tab and click create, then event. Name event, date and time, repetition? Or custom date range, event type, toggle RSVPs, select event image, and save. Step by step and very easy	Engage Your Member with People Magic	Create Questions & Polls	To make a question or poll, go to space setting then features and manage feed. then go to polls and questions and enable them. you can then go to create and select polls and questions and fill in them as you wish.	Replays: Weekly Product Walkthrough	Questions & Polls, Bulk Reach-Out and more	People Magic, Member of the month for badges, Tags are internal only (hosts) Canva templates for making badges, Member categories organizes by job etc. AI shows similarities with members when you click on them in members, profiles have people explorer too. Click on badge to see who has it and how to get it, Member list-tags and badges> Toggle both on>Three dots> add tags to members, or create, Tags can be internal sorting database. Coming soon, daily image generation with badges, Sort members by profession, tags and badges, filter by badges (can send message directly) More mass actions coming soon. Feed>Features>Infinite question engine turn on> description, big purpose, generate question and polls. Can refresh, edit them, schedule them to post, Can turn auto-post on. Business plan- single sign on, can connect same log on with other website and Mighty, Can have emails coming from your own domain instead of mn.co.
Events	How to Livestream	To livestream, you can go into the host creation box or go directly to the community. You can provide a title and a camera for the stream. You can record the stream and notify people when you are live streaming. You can also share screen and adjust settings mid stream.	Engage Your Member with People Magic	Using the Infinite Question Engine	To open the infinite question engine you go to community feed and enable the engine, which will generate suggestions and polls for you to implement in your feed.	Replays: Weekly Product Walkthrough	How to Livestream, Free Access, and more	Shows you how to livestream from a space. When you do this shows a banner on the left saying you're live. Integrated directly with Zoom as well under event type. Quizzes can be useful for making sure your members retain info and can apply it, or just to keep people engaged, and these can be easily set up.
			Engage Your Member with People Magic	Create Badges with DALL-E suggestions	to create badges you go to network settings and enable badges. from there, you can create badges by naming and describing them and giving them their own image.	Replays: Weekly Product Walkthrough	Assigning Badges, Introductions, and more	Clicking on someone's profile displays their description in the relation it has to you. The badges are a newer feature that can be assigned to people when you create the badges. The badge has a description and once clicked, you can see members who also have the badge. There are also tags which can help hosts keep the users organized Introductions lets you introduce a new member to the community by recommending certain things for them to check within the community.

### 3. MailChimp Assessment and Observations

- Campaign-SMS a potential addition to marketing?
  - o 1,088 contacts, 866 subs (222 unsub)
  - o Can see who clicks on links
- Automations- AI Journey, sends out automatic emails
  - o Website
  - o Landing Page- collect new contacts
  - o Creative Assistant- for designs
- Audience: Breaks down your members into groups: “target with campaign” to email certain groups
  - o **Location**: #1: Ashburn, VA, #2: Boston, MA, #3: Lockport, NY
  - o **Age group**: 60% 65+, 10% 55-60, 5% 45-54, 5% 35-44
  - o **Gender**: 43 Female, 40 Male,
  - o **Email clients**: 85% desktop (58% gmail), 15% phone
  - o **Tags**: groups, “attendees” or “donors” to organize
  - o **Sign up forms**: “create a form to learn more about your audience”, pop-up sign up, landing page, embedded sign-up form
  - o **Segments**- \*MAILCHIMP HAS A CRM\*
  - o **Surveys**- post event/Where did you hear about us?
  - o **Ads**- facebook/instagram- target new contacts, google- need to link account
  - o **Inbox**- not used
- Analytics:
  - o **marketing dashboard**: 47% of 14,000 emails opened. Click conversions by channel etc.
  - o **Audience**: subscribers. Net sub growth
  - o **Reports**: Social Posts are used through Facebook- can see impressions and engagement,  
**Custom report**: bounce is when an email does not send,
- Website: “built-in marketing tools”, can offer services, view reports to see who visits and interacts. This is not where OsL created their website?
- Content: Create designs
  - o **My files**:
    - o Instagram: Pride Worcester, Queer the scene, Giphy and Uploads are used
    - o **Email templates**: Can create a template for an email: Events, Holidays, Newsletter, notifications etc.Integrations:!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Connect apps
    - o **Discover**: Zapier (pass data to and from other web services without code): connected
    - o \*WordPress- not connected but can be (boost visitor engagement and grow your audience; Autopopulate website with Mailchimp). Also X, Woocommerce, squarespace, shopify other popular ones
- Manage: Facebook is connected- Connect Facebook to publish ads, post directly to your social channels, add signup forms, and use photos in Mailchimp’s Content Studio.
- Profile:
  - o **Integrations**: “other connections” Zapier and shopware 5
  - o Generate API key to intergrate apps, About API Keys: <https://eepurl.com/dyijVH>

### 4. MN Help Articles and Videos

Assess MightyNetworks Capabilities for hosts and members.

		Legenda:			
				1= least useful	
				2=not as useful	
				3=neither	
				4=useful	
				5=most useful	4 or 5 rank= how-to video
		Section	Title		
		How do I join a Mighty Network?	How do I join a Mighty Network?		
	Outreach				
	engagement with/ between community				
	communication				
	navigation				
	for new members				
	organization				
	special feature in MN				
	Accessibility				
	Usefulness for members				

### 5. Grading of Help Articles in the MightyCommunity

Section	Title	Outreach	engagement with/ between community	communication	navigation	for new members	organization	special feature in MN	Accessibility	Usefulness for members	Legend: 1=least useful 2=not as useful 3=useful 4=useful 5=most useful
How do I join a Mighty Network?	How do I join a Mighty Network?				X	X	X			5	4 or 5 rank= how-to video
What is a MN?	What is A Mighty Network?					X	X			4	
	Can I access a Mighty Network from an app?	X			X				X	4	
	How can I get technical support as a member?		X	X					X	4	
How do I navigate Mighty Networks as a member?	How do I RSVP and attend events in a Mighty Network?			X	X	X	X			5	
	How does the feed work in mighty networks?					X	X			4	
	How do I create events in Mighty Networks?		X		X					4	
How do I manage my account and purchases as a member?	What kind of notifications will I receive as a member of a Mighty Network?			X	X	X			X	5	
	How do I leave a Mighty Network?				X					3	
How do I interact in MN?	How do I set up my profile?		X		X	X				5	
	What are the badges I'm seeing on my profile?	X	X					X		3	
	How do I post in a MN?	X	X					X		5	
	How to take a quiz		X			X				3	
Under how to take a quiz	How to take a course		X		X	X				3	
	How do I use hashtags		X		X	X				3	
	Can I Tag another member?	X	X			X				4	
	How do I follow a Member?		X			X				4	
	All Features?							X	X	3	
How do I manage my account and purchases as a member?	Why Can't I Log In to My Mighty Network?				X	X			X	4	
	What Kind of Notifications Will I Receive as a Member of a Mighty Network?	X	X	X	X	X				2	
	Browser and Device Support	X				X			X	2	

## Appendix B: Board Member Interviews

Hello, our names are Ethan, Tanner, and CJ and we are conducting research for Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Worcester, Massachusetts, and for Outstanding Life. In our project, we are aiming to increase online engagement among its users, and as a board member, you will heavily contribute with your interview. First off, since we are using Zoom, there is a recording option; do we have your permission to record this meeting? Do we have permission to use your name in our report, or would you like to remain confidential? The team will use the data and recordings from this interview to create an educational program. This interview should take about 15 minutes, and you can stop it, leave, or refuse to answer a question if you feel uncomfortable.

If you would like to contact our team in the future, we can be reached at:

[gr-OutstandingLifeD24@wpi.edu](mailto:gr-OutstandingLifeD24@wpi.edu)

Advisor contact: Courtney Kurlanska, [cbkurlanska@wpi.edu](mailto:cbkurlanska@wpi.edu)

### Interview Questions

#### First four questions were the same for all interviewees:

1. What inspired you to contribute to founding Outstandinglife?
2. What is your vision? What is your “why”?
3. What is your understanding of an online senior center? How do you think LGBTQ seniors benefit from this project?
4. We know you are a board member in OsL, do you have any certain area of expertise that you bring to the table?

#### Extra, personalized questions for each interview:

##### Tuesday March 19, 11am with Board President and Organization Co-Founder

1. What did you learn from your advocacy and volunteer work?
2. How do you use the website? How active are you?
3. What areas of struggle have you seen in yourself and other users?
4. Do you think OsL has accessibility issues? What are they?
  - a. To log in?
  - b. To create a profile?
5. What have you done to address the digital literacy issue amongst your members?
6. What is your perspective on the best way to solve these technical problems?
7. If you could teach members one thing about the website, what would it be?
8. How can we help people understand why they would want to be a part of a social center like OsL?
9. How have you marketed OsL and what ways do you plan to increase this in the future?
10. Any other questions or suggestions you have?

##### Thursday March 21, 12pm with Board Member for Technology and Digital Equity

1. What have you found to be the best ways to go about showing seniors how to use tech?
  - a. Cost a challenge?

2. What have been some roadblocks that you have faced while trying to teach the seniors new technology and different features?
3. Can you give a few examples of how you bridge the divide between seniors and technology to find digital equity?
4. We are observing a lack of engagement and activity on MN among members. Through your experience, what have you found to be the best way to communicate with seniors? Any other ways you are trying to address this?
5. We have found events are the main reason people log on to MN, how do you think people can connect to form a community in MN rather than just for the programs?
6. Have you seen an increase in the digital literacy of the group members since they joined the Outstanding Life community?
7. From your interactions with members, what are the main limitations for them in terms of the accessibility of MN and the website?
8. If there is one thing on the website that you could change, what would it be?
9. Any other questions or suggestions?

### **Wednesday April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1pm with Online Program Coordinator**

1. How can we help people understand why they would want to be a part of a social center like OsL?
2. Do you have any certain area of expertise that you bring to the table?
3. Did it take you long to get used to using MN, such as posting, etc?
4. What areas of struggle have you experienced yourself?
  1. Seen in other users?\*
5. Through your experience, what have you found to be the best way to communicate with seniors? Any other ways you are trying to address this?
6. We have found events are the main reason people log on to MN, how do you think people can connect to form a community in MN rather than just for the programs?
7. How to increase engagement?
8. From your interactions with members, what are the main limitations for them in terms of the accessibility of MN and the website?
9. Any anecdotes you have about digital literacy?
10. If you could teach members one thing about the website, what would it be?
11. Any other questions or suggestions you have?

### **Thursday April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1pm with Board Member and Disability Rights Activist**

1. In what ways are you able to exercise your role as the disability rights advocate in the Outstanding Life community?
2. As a Stonewall Board member, we understand you provide housing and fight for equality for LGBTQ members. Are there ways stonewall is a community?
3. What is your understanding of an online senior center? How do you think LGBTQ seniors benefit from this project?
4. What challenges have you seen members face when navigating the website?
5. What feedback, if any, have you received about the community as a whole? Sense of community or lack thereof?
6. How do you think we can grow OsL?

7. Any other questions or suggestions?

Thank you so much for sacrificing your time to meet with us and give us feedback. We really appreciate it and look forward to improving this program to help bring a better experience to your online community. We hope this has been a constructive experience for you, and you will hear from us again soon!

**Coding for Board Member Interviews**

The excel used to organize information from 3 interviews with the board members correlated to the three findings.

	David		Amy		Cynthia	
to encourage community, have a passion for making a difference	2:15 , 4:14 More people joining will increase feeling of community	25:35 says there is not really any communication that they can do to personally contact one another	2:02: Wants to see engagement between members and in different topics, satisfy hierarchy of needs, 5:40: maintaining community is most important	19:50: "listening creates community engagement"	2:45, 18:15 explain the zooms have a very good community but "it does not translate to MightyNetworks".	
education	6:18 (helping people navigate the electronic world better), 10:25: sees struggles with the various different tabs. most people dont know how to sync their emails.	11:00 mentions to create these how to videos to help educate, 16:34 says they have done some educational programming but they need more	11:30: issues that members are having using MN and zoom.		5:50 barriers, 8:45 in person training important,	15:55 seniors have to see potential: inspiration and fuel to keep learning, 22:00 Learn more,
poor online presence	3:30 there needs to be more programming, a wider geographical reach,	9:10 doesnt go to alot of the events	6:30 wants to see program everyday for people to check in if they need it, 16:50: strategies for engagement ,	19:30 recommendations for us: pusing programming that people are interested in. listening created community engagement.	5:15 online ads, 17:45 need more volume to create engagement, chicken and an egg, 20:20 barrier: Desire to be there participating,	23:20-24:30 programs over, activites, events ,groups, register, need a why, 26:40 current programming, register for intro to MN, open house

## Appendix C: Member Focus Group

**Video Link:** [Focus Group Zoom Recording](#)

### Consent:

Hello, our names are Ethan, Tanner, and CJ and we are conducting research for Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Worcester, Massachusetts, and for Outstanding Life. In our project, we are aiming to increase online engagement among its users, and as a member, you volunteered to be part of our workshop. Now, we would like to ask you some questions. First off, since we are using Zoom there is a recording option; do we have your permission to record this meeting? Do we have permission to use your name in our report, or would you like to remain confidential? The team will use the data and recordings from this focus group to assess technical difficulties, create educational resources, and eventually publish our work online. This workshop should take about one hour, and you of course have the choice to stop the Zoom, leave, or refuse to answer a question if you feel uncomfortable.

If you would like to contact our team in the future, we can be reached at:

[gr-OutstandingLifed24@wpi.edu](mailto:gr-OutstandingLifed24@wpi.edu)

Advisor contact: Courtney Kurlanska [cbkurlanska@wpi.edu](mailto:cbkurlanska@wpi.edu)

April 2nd from 12-1pm

### Focus Group Questions:

1. How do you use technology in your daily life?
2. What do you like about technology? \*
  - a. What do you not like about Technology?
3. How would you describe your experience with technology?
  - a. What would have improved the experience?
4. Do you find yourself unsure how to use any features in OutstandingLife? If yes, how so?
 

\* follow-up: What features would you like to see added?
5. What might be a reason you join an online community (rather than just for programs)
  - a. Do you feel there is a sense of community in OutstandingLife? What can we do?
6. What type of learning material would you benefit from the most?
7. Do you use Direct Messaging to communicate with other people?
8. What was your favorite OsL program and why?
9. What do you think about video call services such as Skype or Zoom?
  - a. What did you like about the experience?
  - b. What did you dislike about the experience? \*
  - c. What would have improved the experience?
  - d. Which ways are most effective?
10. How often should notifications go out (How often do people want to be reminded of things)?
  - a. Best way to mass communicate? \*
11. In your mind, what would the “ideal” online community website have? \*
  - a. What would make it different than other websites?



Thank you so much for sacrificing your time to meet with us and give us feedback. We really appreciate it and look forward to improving this program to help bring a better experience to your online community. We hope this has been a constructive experience for you!

### Coding for Focus Group:

Participant	Change to OsL?	Need education that doesn't gloss over small stuff.	Love the programs.	All come from experienced technical backgrounds	Wish there was more people on there- make it a real community: Why OsL?
Brian Walker	Wordpress has dates that aren't updated, more education (tech), Bulletin board on home page, if interested click on it- laws pertaining to community, doctor who can help. Not staffed, user-driven. DAMRON guide- book for gay establishments nationwide, more in person	The key is education, they are not stupid they just need the knowledge, Has to be interactive or else they will gloss over the thing that they are truly, Feel uncomfortable being taught by someone much younger	see Outstanding Life having courses to teach people, weather series, learned a lot		a lot of it is word of mouth (WOM)
Maida Tilchen	Send a monthly newsletter of what is going on, talks about what other organizations around the US are doing		give people something to talk about they will participate more. Love class programs. Rainbow Lifelong Learning	"convenience" of tech	Support idea, programs, people online
Mike DelaVega	get publications online that are resources for the community, would save seniors a lot of money (more resources) "If you need this, go to OsL, if you need that go to OsL" - resources: museums/offering, get spokespersons from Big Pharma to address the stigma surrounding HIV		easy to use	frustrating with online fraud	twice-weekly seniors meeting on Mondays and Thursdays, found it very interesting
Kelley Ready	suggests classes or open Q+A, Also need meeting space for organizations. Also have the space be open to ALL, with a FOCUS on LGBTQ community				Pride housing introduced her, happy to see the space and what they were doing



## Appendix E: Online Resources for MightyNetworks Videos

**Video Link:** [Google Drive Folder with nine Videos](#)

### Scripts

We taught them about the potential of MightyNetworks in terms of different features and applications the website allows its members to engage in. For example, the team made sure users knew how to create their profile, add a picture and short bio, as well as join and features inside the zoom events.

Each of the 9 scripts were headed with the OutstandingLife's Logo, as pictured below:



These scripts were attached to each video for the textual learners of OutstandingLife.

### Topic 1: Joining MightyNetworks through the OutstandingLife public website

Description: To join the Mighty Networks community through the OutstandingLife community, follow these easy steps:

Step 1. Go to <https://outstandinglife.org/>

Step 2. Once you reach the website, go to the section “Join” that is to at the bottom of the page to the right. This will open a new page.

Step 3. On this new page, you will see a purple “Go to This Network” button at the bottom of your screen. If you do not have an account, this button will say “Request to Join”.

Step 3a. If the button says, “Go to This Network”, this means you already have an account with MightyNetworks and clicking the button will immediately take you to the Outstanding Life MightyNetworks page.

Step 3b. If the button says, “Request To Join”, this means you do not have a MightyNetworks account and clicking the button will take you to a page where you can create your own MightyNetworks account. It will ask you to enter your email, provide a password, and enter your first and last name so you can set up an account on the MightyNetworks platform. Once created, you must wait for a host from the Outstanding Life community to approve your entry. This wait time is so we can make sure the community maintains its feeling of safety.



# OutstandingLife: A Virtual Community for LGBTQ+ Older Adults

Join us in our Mighty Network

[Request to Join](#)

## Topic 2: Creating a profile

Your profile shows who YOU are to the Outstanding Life community.

The following section details how you can upload a profile picture and describe yourself by creating a profile on the Outstanding Life community. This may worry you, since providing a picture of your face and revealing information about yourself on the internet could be scary. Do not worry! Everyone in this community has been permitted by the hosts within the community to ensure that this is a safe space for you to interact with and share experiences with people just like you.

### How to edit your profile

Step 1. Click the icon in the upper right-hand corner of your screen. This will expand a small window named “Account”.

Step 2. Once you get to this window, click the “View Your Profile” button that is directly below your name.

Step 3. Once you get to the “Profile” section, click the purple “Edit” button that is in the upper right corner of your screen. This will let you edit your profile.

### Uploading a Profile Picture

Step 1. To upload a profile picture, click the circular image with a square pencil icon that is above the words “First Name”. This will open a new window with your files.

Step 2. You will see the “pictures” section with all your photos on your computer. You can choose an image of yourself and upload it by selecting the picture and clicking the “Open” button on the bottom corner of the window that was opened.

### Changing your Bio and About Me

Step 1. Back in your “Profile” window, you can add info about yourself for others to see. To enter a brief description of yourself, you can choose to type in either the “Mini Bio” or “About Me” text box.

Step 2. In these boxes you can give a brief description of yourself. Some examples of what can go here are where you are from, your hobbies and interests, organizations you are a part of, work experience, and much more. Whatever you are comfortable sharing with the community!

### Saving your changes

Step 1. Once you are satisfied with your profile, you can look in the upper right corner for a white button that says “Save”. Once you click this button, your changes will be saved. Your “About me” and “Mini Bio” will be posted on the feed so that others can get to know you!

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to the Tech Corner chat or to Amy Ruiter, program coordinator, inside OutstandingLife and you will be promptly assisted.

## Topic 3: Signing Up for OutstandingLife Events

How to sign up for an upcoming Outstanding Life community event!

### How to RSVP for an Event in OutstandingLife

**Step 1:** Go to the events section on the left side of your screen and click the word “Events” next to the small calendar icon.

**Step 2:** This will display all the upcoming events. From here, you will click whichever event you would like to attend. A menu will appear for you on the right side of your screen.

**Step 3:** From this menu, you want to scroll to where you are given three options, which are “Going”, “Maybe”, and “Not Going”, located on the right side of the screen. From here, you will choose which option you would like to do.

**Step 4:** If you choose the "Going" option meaning that you will be attending, you will be notified the day of the event that you have this event you wish to attend. Attached to the event is a zoom link. Click the zoom link on the day of the event to join!

### Registering for the Event

**Step 1:** Once you add the event to your calendar, click on the Zoom link

**Step 2:** Type your first and last name, as well as your email in the new tab

**Step 3:** Click Register and you will be expected at the Zoom!

The screenshot displays a list of four events in a mobile application. Each event card contains the following information:

- Event 1:** "Storm Chasing, Weather Patterns, Nor'easters, and More!" (part of "THE LIMIT WEATHER SERIES"). Date: WED, MAY 8 • 11:00AM • Multiple Day Event. 4 going.
- Event 2:** "When the Emperor Was Divine by Julie Otsuka". Date: TUE, MAY 14 • 7:00PM. 1 going.
- Event 3:** "Intergenerational Social Series". Date: WED, MAY 15 • 7:00PM • Repeat Event. 14 going.
- Event 4:** "Tech Talk". Date: WED, MAY 22 • 6:00PM • Repeat Event. 4 going.

## Topic 4: Get to help section

How to get to the help section, speak to a customary advocacy team member, and read different help articles!

If you need to know any technical details in OutstandingLife, the help section allows you to message real people and read articles from “What is a Mighty Networks?” to “How do I navigate MightyNetworks?”

Step 1: On the bottom right corner in the black box is a “Need Help”? Button, click this.

Step 2: From this pop-up, click the help in the bottom right again to find the articles for hosts and members

Step 3: You may search in this bar

Step 4: Click for members and five different sections pop up

Step 5: For example, if I am interested in how I interact in a Mighty Networks, I can hover over and click on this one, then this brings up 13 articles on interacting.

Step 6: If you were looking how to set up my member profile, you would click on the first one, and an article with pictures for each step appears.

Step 7: If you want to open the help center in another tab, scroll to the bottom of the article and click “open in help center”. Here you can find all the articles under their same 5 sections.

Step 8: You may send customary advocacy team a question and they will reply within 24 hours. For example, you may ask “Can you help me engage with my community?”

### How to Get to The Help Section

Step 1: First, scroll down to the bottom right corner of Mighty Networks and click the need help button (Button with Ring Buoy)

Step 2: You want to click on the help with a question mark.

Step 3: Here click on members where there are 41 articles for you. Then, for example, we might ask, how do I interact in a mighty network?

Step 4: You can use any of these different 13 articles, maybe how to set up my profile. In the article, you will find a description and pictures to help you along your way.

### Getting to the Help Section in a Different Tab

Step 1: After you read this, you may need further assistance or with different videos, so you can open in the help center.

Step 2: Here you can look at all the videos for members when you click on for members. These are all 41 articles for you!

### How to access the Customary Advocacy Team

Step 1: Click on messages.

Step 2: Here you can speak with a customary advocacy team.

Step 3: Click messages, then click “send us a message” and you can type something.

Step 4: You can send a gif., an emoji, or attach different links for them. For example, you can ask them “how can I interact with members in my community?” You will receive an automated response, but regardless, they should get back within 24 hours.

## Topic 5: Sending DMs

You can direct message, new members to welcome them, ask questions to your hosts, or just chat with other members!

Step 1: You want to find all the members you can chat with, so click on members, so that the top and nearby members pop up.

Step 2: Hover over these members and either directly click chat, or you can click view profile and chat from there.

Step 3: In your message, click on the bar at the bottom to start typing or at the bottom left

- a. You can send fun GIFs, you never know what you will find here.
- b. You can also add pictures and files from either your computer or phone (You can share pictures of your vacations or share anything
- c. At the bottom right, click on the smiley face to access emojis you can send such as different face, animals, places, foods, activities, objects, and flags!

These chats are confidential and no one else can see your direct chats, hence why they are called direct messages!



## Topic 6: How to Create a Post

This is important for community engagement!

Step 1: Go to the top left by the plus and click create. Here you can choose different spaces to post.

Step 2: Then you click on a quick post.

Step 3: Here you can share what's on your mind. You can do different features like in the direct messages such as add a picture video, file, add a gif, insert emoji, or add hashtags. Also, you can tag or mention people that you want to see, then see this post by clicking the hashtag or typing in the pound.

Step 4: Inside the quick post, other features include a poll. This gives you the option to ask a question. You can give it multiple choice with different choices, hot or cold, or a percentage. You can also go live in a post by clicking the livestream button.

### Creating an article

If you have more than one article or more than one link, you can expand here to an article or when you create a post you can click create an article!

Step 1: You can click expand in a quick post to create an article. For an article you need a title, so click where it says title and type one in! If you click enter, a plus will show up and you can quickly insert different things such as pictures, video links, embedded links, a bolder list or numbered list.

Step 2: You can add a picture by clicking the photo icon and selecting a picture or file in your folder. Under the picture, you can also add more such as text including mentions and tags.

Step 3: In terms of saving, it automatically will save. You can either schedule your posts or post them right away. When scheduling, type in the date and the time.

Step 4: If you don't want to post right away and look at your drafts, click “view drafts” and you can look at this article that you saved, along with other previous saved drafts.

## Topic 7: Common features within Zoom

Zoom is an integral part of the online programs offered within OutstandingLife. Here are some of the basic features!

**Step 1:** When you register for an event, you will be sent an email reminder with the Zoom link. To join, simply click the link. In the pop-up window, click “Join Zoom Meetings” and you will join.

**Step 2:** Once you join the Zoom, click “Join with Computer Audio” in the pop-up window so that you are able to hear your fellow participants.

**Muting:** To mute yourself, move your mouse to the lower left corner of your screen and click “Mute”. This means that people won’t be able to hear you. To unmute yourself so that people can hear you speak, go to the same lower left corner and click “Unmute”.

**Camera:** To turn on your camera, go to “Start Video” in the lower left corner. To turn it off, click “Stop Video” in the same spot.

If you’d like to blur your background or add a virtual wallpaper, click the arrow in the upper right corner of the Start/Stop Video button, then select “Choose Virtual Background”

**Your Name:** To change your name in Zoom, click the “Participants” button on the bottom of your screen. This will open a sidebar on the right and you will appear at the top. Hover over your name and click the three dots icon, then click “Rename” and type your new name. Click “Change” and it will be saved.

**Profile Pic:** To change your profile picture, click the same three dots next to your name. Then, click “Add Profile Picture”. This will open your computer folder. You can navigate to where your picture is located, usually in the “Pictures” folder, and double click it to upload. Finally, click “Save”

**Chat:** To chat with others, open the “Chat” icon on the lower bar. By default, it opens to a chat with everyone in the meeting. If you’d like to message one person directly, click the blue dropdown menu that says “Meeting Group Chat” and you can choose who to message individually.

**Reacting:** To raise your hand or broadcast an emoticon, click the “Reactions” tab on the bottom of your screen. Click “Raise Hand” to raise your hand and this will be seen by other people. You can click “Lower Hand” to lower your hand. You can also give a thumbs up, thumbs down, and many other emotions by selecting the corresponding icon.

**Closed Captions:** To turn on captions, go to the bottom right corner of your screen and click the “More” button with the three dots. Then, click “Captions” in the menu that pops up, and click “Show captions”. Zoom may default to English, or you might be asked to choose your language. Select your preferred language and “Save”.

**Step 3:** Finally, to leave the Zoom call, go to the bottom right corner and select the red “Leave” button. Select “Leave Meeting” and you will exit.

## Topic 8: How to Sync Your OutstandingLife Calendar with Your Personal Calendar

Learn how to sync events in your calendar to your own personal calendar so you never miss an event!

Step 1: From the Feed page, click “Events” in the sidebar on the left.

Step 2: To get to the calendar, click the calendar icon on the upper right corner of the Events list. This will show you your calendar with all events, dates, and times.

Step 3: Click the gear icon in the top right corner above the calendar. In the dropdown menu that appears, select “Sync to My Calendar.”

Step 4: From here, you have multiple options. First, select “Sync Only My RSVPs” to sync only events that you have replied to and are in your calendar. Or, you can select “Sync All Events” to sync all events offered in OutstandingLife’s calendar.

Step 5: Next, you can choose which external calendar to sync to. See below for each option.

### Sync to Google Calendar

Step 1: Click the “Google Calendar” tab on your screen and you will be taken to the Google Calendar website. NOTE: You need to log into your google account with your username and password, it is as simple as typing them in their respective text boxes and clicking login.

Step 2: Once you log in, a pop-up “Add calendar” will appear. Click the blue “Add” button and the events will appear in your calendar.

### Sync to Apple Calendar

Step 1: Click “Apple Calendar” and instructions will appear. NOTE: You can only do this from your mobile iPhone device, so I recommend using one of the other two calendars to sync on your computer.

Step 2: If you’d like to sync to Apple, copy the link on your mobile device.

Step 3: Open your “Calendar” application on your phone.

Step 4: Click “Calendars” on the bottom of your Calendar app.

Step 5: Click “Add Calendar” in the bottom left corner of your screen. From the menu that pops up, select “Add Subscription Calendar”.

Step 6: Paste the link in the text box by clicking your blinking cursor. Click “Paste”.

Step 7: Hit “Subscribe” and your events will appear in your Apple calendar.

### Sync to Outlook Calendar

Step 1: Click the “Outlook” button and instructions will appear.

Step 2: Copy the link by selecting the “Copy” button.

Step 3: In a separate tab, open your Outlook email account. You will have to sign in with your username and password.

Step 4: Once you are in your email, go to the sidebar on the left and click the “Calendar” icon below your Email icon to show your calendar.

Step 5: On the left, click “Add calendar”.

Step 6: On the left side of the pop-up window that appears, select “Subscribe from web”.

Step 7: Paste your link in the text box. To do this, right click on your mouse or mousepad and select “Paste”.

Step 8: Give your calendar a name in the “Calendar name” field. After this, you can also customize the appearance by choosing a color and an icon if you want to, but this is not required.

Step 9: Click “Import” and the events will appear in your calendar.

Syncing your calendar is useful because any changes that are made to events in OutstandingLife will automatically be updated in your personal calendar as well.

## Topic 9: Acronyms and Technological Terms

The internet has a lot of confusing terms and phrases, so let’s review some!

**Platform:** a digital service that allows users to interact with each other through the internet

**MightyNetworks (MN):** the platform that OutstandingLife uses to connect its users

**Event/Program:** these are the Zoom meetings offered within OutstandingLife, based on specific topics (Example: intergenerational Social Series)

**Space:** topic areas within OutstandingLife where events and chatrooms can be found

**Link:** clickable words and/or characters that automatically take you to a new page, usually colored and underlined

**PDF:** stands for “Portable Document Format”, it is a file format that cannot be edited and is easy to present and exchange documents

**RSVP:** meaning “répondez s'il vous plaît” which is French for “respond if you please”, used to confirm or decline attendance to online events in OutstandingLife

## Appendix F: Details of Recommendations

### Provide Resources for Community Support

1. Email video of “How to join the MightyNetworks community through the OutstandingLife website” video through MailChimp and publish on the WordPress website
  - a. One video that applied to non-members, the “How to join the MightyNetworks community through the OutstandingLife website” video, was emailed through MailChimp and published right on the WordPress website for people outside of the community to access.
2. Resources inside MN: highlight professional contacts
  - a. The team recommends the inclusion of a multitude of resources for its members. This involves contacts and other public resources in MightyNetworks. This will result in more engagement in the community and people going to the MightyNetworks will be able to easily find trusted resources for local doctors, healthcare, lawyers, and financial resources.
3. Encourage MightyCommunity sign up
  - a. The team assessed the MightyCommunity videos on what MightyNetworks is and how hosts and members can use their website to increase community and engagement. These videos do pertain to the community and may be helpful if they are looking for different content than the team provided with the how-to videos.
4. Same demographic teaching members in certain events
  - b. After listening to our focus group members, we learned that they prefer someone closer to their age to teach them how to do things they struggle with. We recommend the board members let the community members host their own event for one another to teach their fellow members how to do things that the others struggle with. This will also help develop a stronger sense of community.
5. Weekly event help session
  - c. An event meant to answer the questions community members need is another recommendation. Having an event available for them once a week when they get to something that they don't understand would help them feel that they are seen and will help them interact more with the community.

### Focus On Community Within OutstandingLife

1. Make more events that community members want such as photography, travel, etc.
  - a. One recommendation we have for the OutstandingLife board is that they should hold more events than the members of the community want. The members requested technological classes as a topic for further educational programs. Another class specifically mentioned by two members of the focus group was a photography “club,” and a third was a travel segment with travel experts. We were told by Amy Ruitter that this travel group is currently in the works for the near future, and we hope to see this come to fruition.
  - b. If possible, sometime in the future members would also be able to host and lead events of their own. Ideally, there would be an application similar to what they have on the WordPress website that allows people to volunteer to help run events.

2. Encourage connecting off the network
  - c. In person meetups allow people to connect better than virtually. We understand that OsL is a virtual community so this may be outside of the scope of the organization and its goals. However, an idea we have is that OsL could provide information for people in nearby towns such as zip codes to connect and organize their own events. This could also allow existing members to invite their outside friends and expose them to the support of these groups, which could motivate them to join the community themselves. One worry with this is safety: how can OsL guarantee the safety of their members if they are not able to oversee the in-person events? This would need to be addressed if it is seen as a limitation or safety risk.
3. Create a landing page for weekly events
  - d. A landing page would be an easy way for members to have a reminder of which events are occurring in the week, along with the day of the week and the time they are planned. Another recommendation for the landing page involves what other organizations in the country are doing.
4. Highlight and celebrate the members
  - a. One way to focus efforts on the community is making members feel special by holding events that celebrate them being a part of OutstandingLife. Another way to make the community stronger is by hearing their complaints and their suggestions for improvements. We heard some of these suggestions in our focus group that we ran, and we believe this could be beneficial for members to vent and communicate each week.

## Responsibly Grow the Organization, Marketing

Some things on WordPress need to be reevaluated and other things could be added to increase use of their site and make it easier to navigate.

1. Take old dates off programs page and give the programs the correct descriptions
  - a. The team noticed this recommendation has been followed through with and the programs have “examples” now and nothing clickable; however, before, any of the links you click take you to the weather program.
  - b. During the week of April 15<sup>th</sup> that the programs were fixed. However, we then noticed that the button for “Join Us” was at the bottom of the page and not at the top where it used to be easily accessed.
2. Regularly update the WordPress website
  - a. Need to have a “Home” button to be able to navigate from the “Programs” page back to the home page without relying on the back button on the web browser.
  - b. The “Contact Us” page for people inputting their event ideas should be easier to navigate. It may be hard for some of the demographic to navigate to the contact us section of the website and input their recommendations for new programs, for it is not obvious this is where they need to go.
3. Add a member’s experience on the WordPress OutstandingLife Website
  - a. The team has interviewed many members and in doing so, recommends the best way to increase the number of people in the MightyNetworks would be to have a quote directly from a member and their experience using the website. We have received a quote from David Aronstein and a few options of pictures to add to the

public website. But we feel that having a community member's photo and quote would be more valuable, since they are not a part of the board members and may be seen as more of a community member than a community leader.

4. Integrating Facebook on the Public Page through push marketing
  - a. An easy way to advertise on Facebook, one of the most popular areas for the demographic to visit.
5. Be more active on the Instagram page.
  - a. Instagram can bring in more people to the MightyNetworks and grow the community from the outside, but we noticed that this page has no posts and has very little followers. It is important that all board members are aware of the issue and that it is a problem because this social media site is used by many people and is a missed opportunity for online exposure across platforms. For example, the Facebook page is very active and used by a lot of people, and we would like to see this happening on Instagram as well. Instagram and Facebook are both owned by Meta and are already integrated, so it is very easy to post the same content on both platforms at the same time.
  - b. Marketing the diversity and flexibility of OutstandingLife in creating new programs and ease of access is crucial for growing OutstandingLife. This is possible on all platforms if done correctly.

## Appendix G: Research Outside of the Scope

### **Integrating OutstandingLife**

The potential to integrate OsL has very few limitations. With access to an emailing service called MailChimp, the integration to other apps is available for automated messages, target of specific members, and its very own CRM. It collects and organizes OutstandingLife's data and allows the user to collect more information with post event surveys, for example. The largest breakdown of information is on the emails sent out by MailChimp, where the user can see how many people open and engage with emails. Other services that can be integrated include Twitter, Facebook, Woocommerce, squarespace, shopify, and many others. WordPress is another web service which MailChimp can integrate. WordPress is a website building service where the user can reference stats on engagement and impressions. There are also the most popular time and day options to analyze how effective your website is and when.

Currently, OsL has integrated Facebook and Zapier with MailChimp. The benefits of integrating different web services come through advertisement, direct posts, sign ups, all which are enabled through integrating Facebook. Zapier is another service that will directly improve the integration of OsL. The power of this tool is to pass data from one application to another, or integrating, without code. The public online website made through WordPress has not been integrated with the MightyNetworks community.

The application programming interface (API) for MightyNetworks permits personalization, but only to a certain degree. MightyNetworks allows hosts to add their own spaces and add certain members to specific spaces. Events can be created in space and time, zoom link, and RSVP can be attached. Anyone can create their own posts which uploads on the feed, as well as like and comment on posts.

### **Online Services Are Offered by Other Organizations for LGBTQ Seniors**

In 1978, a nationwide online service and advocate for LGBTQ seniors formed in New York City known as SAGE. They play a large role in changing laws for the better of this community. With technological improvements throughout the years, SAGE has expanded to the internet, offering many resources for those in need. SAGE provides online programming for technical assistance and educational purposes. These programs exist and take place in subsections to SAGE, like SAGEcare, SAGEcents, and SAGEconnect. SAGEcare offers health care services such as hospice, while SAGEcents offers a platform for financial classes and resources for decision making. Finally, SAGEconnect offers a phone buddy program that connects LGBTQ seniors with volunteers on the telephone, promoting socialization and addressing the isolation and loneliness this group may feel. SAGE is just one example of services that are offered online for LGBTQ seniors, and it is

Since 2001, a health center Fenway Health in Boston has been working to bring support and assistance to the disconnected LGBTQ elderly. They are aware of the care LGBTQ seniors will benefit from and provide a sense of community through various efforts. One unique event Fenway Health hosts is weekly community meals throughout Massachusetts. Like SAGE, Fenway Health offers one-on-one Zoom drop ins with their professional team; however, they also provide a free program for those with a bereaved loss for eight weeks.



The sense of community is a key piece of connectedness to improve wellbeing that SAGE and Fenway Health do not provide through the web. A fully online LGBTQ elder community and social platform has never been created, until June of 2023.

### **Barriers to Increasing Marketing**

OutstandingLife uses Mailchimp for mail services, Zapier to cross-sync some of its website information, and WordPress to originally build the website. One way to decrease technical barriers is through training to create more digital equity among the older population. Problems in growing the community come from seniors having technical and psychological barriers. One of the said barriers includes the idea that OutstandingLife will charge the seniors, where it is a free sign-up. Another includes the fear of logging in because the user will have to create a profile. Lessons on how to deal with cyberbullying are one way to reduce stress and technophobia. Another course that can be taught includes smart scrolling to avoid scammers and other fraud.

The community that currently runs in MightyNetworks is hoping to expand through the participants and through various access points to the meetings run through Zoom. This would synchronize the systems together, along with keeping a private feeling in the community to prevent negativity.