

Reconnecting generations through digital transformation

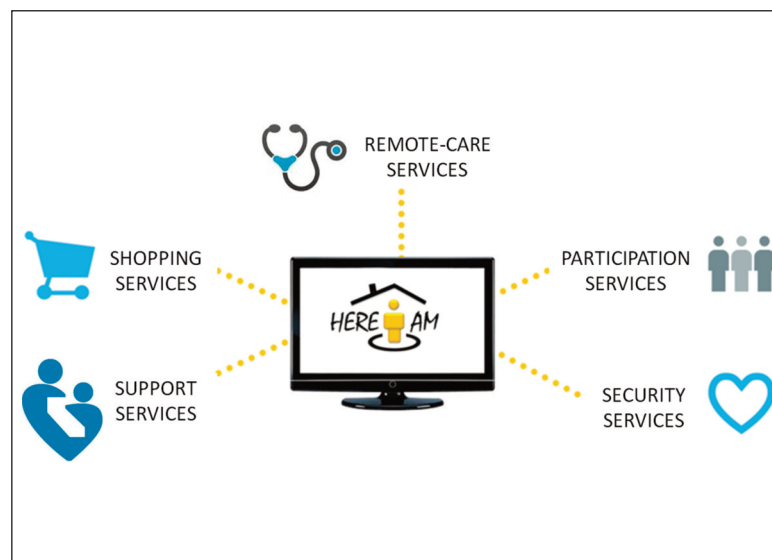
There is a lot of talk about the millennials. Their needs and wants, their options and prospects are being measured and met by every industry at the moment. Technology especially is spoiling them and catering to their every wish, shaping business models to what their anticipated decisions will be in the future.

Every other generation seems to be catching up to the millennials and the smart technologies surrounding them. This is not like any other generation in history. They are evolving fast due to the rise in technology and so a generation's evolution has been coupled with the evolution of society as a whole.

Today, the most poignant gap between generations is the way that they perceive and use technology. If in earlier times, two or three generations lived in the same lifestyle and environments, today, the nearest past is very much outdated and the world is more advanced each day. Parents do not even know many of the modern technologies and equipment children use.

The "digital gap" expression no longer refers to the difference between the technological development of country or regions. There is a gap now between the way different generations perceive and allow innovation to improve their lives. Just think about all of the changes in technology that have occurred in the past 20 years. Many individuals from older generations are having trouble keeping up with the modern, smart technologies that Millennials have become accustomed to.

The most visible gap in digital skills is between the Baby Boomers (55-65) and Digital Natives (up to the age of 18) or Millennials (18-34). A clash of generations is particularly evident in the workplace where the inter-generational transfer of knowledge is a real challenge. With boomers retiring increasingly early, the younger generations are arriving on the labor market with new tools and new ways of doing things that no longer correspond to the traditional methods of business. This is just one example, a starting point from



which the gap spreads.

In the past, senior citizens lived with their kids and grandkids in the same house, and then they lived in the same town, now we have families who are living across the world from each other. The rest of us adapted by staying in touch through technology, but they've been left behind and left out of that. As they get older, they can't move around as much. The internet and related technologies help them to reconnect with family members that they don't get to do that often.

According to Marius Popa, Innovation Manager at Teamnet, *"the most significant potential of technology, that of improving our lives on a large scale, making it not only more comfortable, but also safer and healthier, remains untapped. Nowadays, we depend on technology in everything that we do. We use technology to communicate, to make our lives easier, but also to support the evolution and transformation of the world around us. In a nutshell, technology inspires us to evolve and brings innovation in all aspects of our daily lives, so it is important to build*

on the needs of every generation."

Believing that digital transformation can bridge this gap, Teamnet and other companies and institutions from Europe, got involved in HEREiAM, an R&D project that aims at developing ICT based services for elderly people. HEREiAM facilitates the coordination and provision of home-based care services to older adults, improving and prolonging their expectation of an autonomous and independent life. Practically, the product assists older adults in their daily life activities by offering a combination of health, social, comfort and safety services. Moreover, it allows the inclusion of additional services and modules, customized to the needs of the user.

Involving a television set, which is the device that the targeted generations use the most and the easiest, HEREiAM offers access to a series of services covering different aspects of their life. Video calls, appointments, grocery shopping services, the latest news and events are just a remote control button away. And while these services all relate to

the comfort and social inclusion of senior generations, HEREiAM also focuses on serious healthcare and personal safety related issues. Besides offering reminders for medication intake, the platform makes it possible for users to self-monitor their health status by measuring their blood pressure, heart rate and body weight with the help of a network of integrated Bluetooth medical devices. Through an integrated network of motion sensors monitoring their day-time and night-time mobility trends around the house, HEREiAM supports their personal safety.

A prototype of HEREiAM is currently doing field trials in Italy, Belgium and The Netherlands. The first results are very encouraging and indicate that there is significant potential for the product to improve the quality of life, reduce loneliness and decrease the burden of care, impacting both older adults and their families. A team of international experts from Unica, Dedalus, Comune di Cagliari (Italy), Remedus, Snauwaert-Maes&co (Belgium), Teamnet Group (Romania), Smart-Homes and KempenLIFE (The Netherlands) work together to make this happen.

HEREiAM is supported by the AAL Programme, the funding activity that aims to create better conditions of life for the older adults and to strengthen the industrial opportunities in Europe through the use of information and communication technology.

Taking into consideration that the number of people aged from 65 to 80 will rise by nearly 40% by 2030, according to the EU studies, implementing already such pilot projects and adopting these technologies represents also an opportunity of preserving a better and healthier lifestyle for the next generations.