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Baby boomers hit the Web, but not to find each other

Boston Business Journal - by [Jesse Noyes](#) Journal staff

In the rapidly expanding world of online social networking, "baby boomer" has become the latest buzz term.

Once seen as the exclusive realm of teens and college students, social networking sites catering to those kids' parents and elders have been amassing on the Web. What isn't clear is whether that graying generation wants a Web site of its own.

Despite receiving backing from venture capitalists, most social networking sites for baby boomers don't command the kind of traffic MySpace and Facebook do among people 45- to 64-years old, according to data supplied by online metric company comScore Inc.

Eons.com has averaged 320,500 unique visitors 50-years old or older in the six month period between March and August, according to comScore Inc. Charlestown-based Eons bills itself as a social networking community for people over 50. Meanwhile, **MySpace.com**, which is owned by News Corp., averaged about 11 million unique visitors among 50-plus users and **Facebook.com** averaged about 3.7 million for the same period.

Facebook has seen huge growth among unique visitors between 45- and 64- years old, jumping from 3.9 million in August 2006 to about 7.4 million in August 2007. **Multiply.com**, which also seeks an older crowd, saw about 342,000 unique visitors between 45-64 in August and **Boomj.com** saw 26,000 unique visitors among that age.

And then there are the sites for moms, such as **CafeMom.com**, which is backed by Lexington-based Highland Capital Partners, and **MayasMom.com**, which was recently bought by New Brunswick, N.J.-based Johnson & Johnson. CafeMom, which received \$5 million from Highland Capital and Menlo Park, Calif.-based Draper Fisher Jurveston in August, brought in about 304,000 45-64-year old unique visitors. MayasMom took in around 11,000.

Baby boomers are, indeed, heading online and onto social networks. But the underlying assumption that they want to mingle online only with other people their own age might be off-putting, some experts said.

"I think that is part of the backlash on these more age-specific sites," said Dan Miller, vice president of Naples, Fla.-based Neighborhood America Inc., which helps create social networking sites for major companies. "People don't necessarily define themselves by age. They define themselves primarily by groups, categories."

That hasn't stopped investors from pouring money into the sites. Eons, which is run by **Monster.com** founder Jeff Taylor, received \$22 million in Series B financing last year and is backed by Cambridge-based General Catalyst Partners and Waltham-based Charles River Ventures. The company, which also created content targeted those 50-years old and up, cut about 35 percent of its staff last month to focus on the social networking side of the business. It isn't that there's many players chasing after the same audience, said Jim Savage, partner at Waltham-based Longworth Venture Partners. It's that none of the sites have found a "killer" application to lure baby boomers, he said.

But Taylor said he is "feeling good about the way (Eons) is emerging and positioning within the marketplace." He argued that the number of people coming to the site is not as important as the amount of time they spend there. The average visitor to Eons spends about 20 minutes there, he added.

Jesse Noyes can be reached at jnoyes@bizjournals.com

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Social networking sites like Eons.com are made for baby boomers, but might find the audience elusive.

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