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Introduction

Over the next two decades, the number of seniors 65 years of age or older will double to almost 70 million in the U.S. As seniors age, most of them (Almost 90%, according to a recent AARP survey) want to stay in their own homes, living an independent life as long as possible.

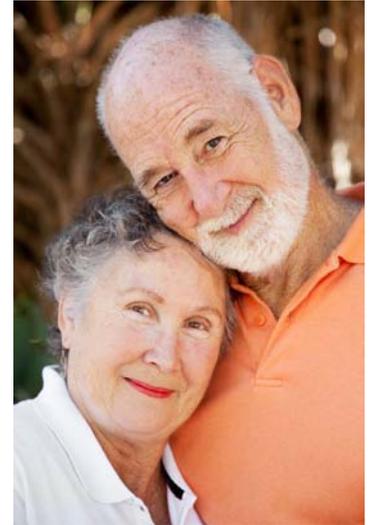
Unfortunately, one in three seniors over 65 falls each year. While most falls are minor, about one in five result in serious injury, particularly hip fractures and head trauma.

Over 2 million seniors are treated in hospital emergency departments for fall injuries each year. Of the seniors hospitalized for hip fracture, 40% never return home or live independently again and 25% will die within one year of their accident.

The loss of independence after a serious fall also contributes to a huge emotional cost for both seniors and their family and friends, to say nothing of the sizeable health care costs. For example, the average cost of hip fracture care is over \$35,000 and rising each year.

According to the Home Safety Council, each year preventable injuries in the home:

- Result in nearly 20,000 deaths.
- Cause nearly 21 million medical visits.
- Are the 5th leading cause of death overall.
- Are 2 ½ times more likely to cause injuries than car crashes.
- Cost almost \$400 billion.
- Are largely preventable with simple home safety practices.





Seniors are a higher risk for in-home injuries, as their balance, eyesight and flexibility are reduced by age. With a bit of education about home safety and some simple modifications to their homes, injuries can be largely prevented, allowing seniors to “age in place” for many years in the familiar surroundings of their own home.

Helping seniors to remain safe in their own homes is vital as the senior population continues to grow. It provides a wonderful opportunity for anyone who wants to create a senior service business providing home safety checks and referrals for products and services to enable seniors to stay safe at home.

Providing senior home safety checks is an ideal home-based business for individuals seeking a rewarding and profitable business. Because no formal training or expensive equipment is required, you can get started with just a small investment. As the opportunity in this growing field is wide open, so are income opportunities.

Some prefer to provide a basic home safety check for free, with the income coming entirely from referral fees for products and services. Others prefer to charge a “home safety survey” fee, typically ranging from \$60 to \$200, depending on the size of the house and the time involved. Both are explained in depth further on in this guide. No matter which you choose, you’ll be surprised at the demand for this vital senior service, as well as the respect you will gain in your community for helping seniors stay safe.

Retirement is often called the “Golden Years,” and your future could be golden as well, if you choose to become a Senior Home Safety Consultant.



Chapter 2 provides an overview of the senior home safety marketplace, so you can understand your customers, including their specific safety needs and the services you can provide to meet those needs.

Chapter 3 is all about market research – how many potential customers you’ll have, your competition and the regulations that affect your new business.

Chapter 4 explains how to set up your new business – everything from legal structure and choosing the best name to picking the right marketing materials, like flyers, brochures and other promotional items.

Chapter 5 will give you the framework for writing a simple business plan as well as help you determine if you even need one.

Chapter 6 explains how to set up your office with simple systems for bookkeeping, scheduling and other routine tasks so you can spend your time where you should be – actually doing home safety checks!

Chapter 7 covers the marketing tools that can bring a steady stream of new customers to your business.

Chapter 8 explains how to do a complete home safety survey, using the easy-to-use forms provided in this book.

Chapter 9 expands on the home safety basics, covering some important safety areas – electrical safety, fire safety, proper lighting and stair safety.

Chapter 10 explains the “Home Tour” sequence of room checks to make sure you don’t miss any part of the house.

Chapter 11 discusses how to explain the completed checklist to a customer.

Chapter 12 reveals the add-on profit centers that can provide additional income beyond the income from performing basic home safety checks, such as contractor referral fees, product referral fees and safety products you can supply directly to customers.

Chapter 13 lists resources for your business, such as where to find the best products and agencies that can help seniors stay safe at home.



Chapter Eight

How To Do a Senior Home Safety Survey

The home safety checklist covers an entire home, from exterior lighting to the small details inside, like door handles that are easier for seniors to operate. There's a lot of information to learn, but if you just focus on one area at a time, you can absorb and understand it all in no time.

If you follow the checklist, starting with the exterior of the home, and proceeding room-by-room, you will not miss any important safety issues. Keep in mind as you are doing the survey that the most important safety concern is spotting fall hazards anywhere in the home. A fall can be life-changing for a senior, and one out of three has had a fall in the last year. Your goal is to reduce that number through simple prevention. Spot the hazards and correct them before they can cause a fall.

Learn By Doing

When you're first starting out, practice on your family and friend's homes. Just offer them a free safety survey so you can practice learning the routine and the questions. Another approach is to offer free safety surveys at your local senior center, and limit the number to 10 or so. By the time you have completed at least 10 whole-house safety surveys, you'll feel much more confident and capable about your skills and knowledge of fall prevention and senior home safety. The checklist is designed to make the process as easy as possible, with room-by-room questions and answers for each item on the list.

Before you start a home survey, be sure to ask your customer about any specific safety concerns they may have, so you can focus on these areas in your evaluation. Ask if they have



any physical limitations, such as vision loss or dizziness, that may affect their ability to safely live at home.

Assistive Devices

There are hundreds of “assistive devices”, also called assistive technology, such as motion sensor light switches or grab bars in the bathroom, that can help seniors compensate for any physical limitations and allow them to live at home safely. After a home safety check is completed, you can review the checklist with your customer and suggest any items that may be needed.

Some items, such as an emergency alert, can simply be purchased. Other items, such as grab bars or pull-out shelves in the kitchen, will have to be installed. In chapter 12, we cover working with service providers, such as contractors, who can do the job properly. The resources chapter also includes several sources for hard-to find assistive devices, such as flashing doorbells for the hard-of-hearing.

The Home Tour

After you have discussed any special safety concerns your customer may have, ask them for a “home tour,” following the checklist format to make sure you don’t miss a room. For example, you start with the exterior, then to the stairs and steps, then the kitchen, and so on.

It’s always best if your customer accompanies you on the safety check home tour, as you or they can ask questions about specific safety items as they come up, rather than trying to remember everything at the end of the tour. If it’s not possible for the customer to come along, just be sure to make notes when you see a specific safety issue. After the home tour is complete, you’ll fill out the “Safety Survey Summary and Recommendations” checklist for your customer, so they will have a written list of exactly what your recommendations are.



Chapter Twelve

Add-On Profit Centers

A senior safety consultant wears many hats – house detective, counselor and senior advocate – but no one expects you to do it all. A good safety consultant knows when to call in outside help from service vendors like plumbers, carpenters and electricians in order to keep customers safe and secure.

When you have completed a senior home safety survey, there will almost always be items on the survey summary/recommendations page that require the services of a capable contractor. Installing new lighting requires an electrician, installing a walk-in tub requires a plumber and even basic modifications like installing swing-clear hinges or a ramp require a skilled carpenter.

One of the most important tasks for you when starting a senior safety consulting service is to find outside service providers and contractors that can help your customers with any required safety modifications. Service providers that can supply assistive technology such as mobility aids or a medical alert system can keep your customers safe and secure in their own homes.

If you handle this aspect of your senior safety consulting business well, you will have happy clients who are pleased that a project was well done, at an affordable price. The contractor you recommended is happy, because he or she got a profitable job from your referral. And you should be happy as well, if you pre-arranged a modest ten percent commission or referral fee in advance from your preferred service providers.