

LATER LIFE STORIES

THE DIGITAL DIVA

Angela Laws, 71

Social media champion

AFTER A CAREER IN MARKETING IN THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY, ANGELA LAWS CAME OUT OF RETIREMENT TO BECOME SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER FOR TRUSTEDHOUSESITTERS, A GLOBAL DIGITAL BUSINESS THAT MATCHES HOUSE AND PET-SITTERS, AND LEARNED HOW TO CREATE ONLINE CONTENT AND MANAGE DIGITAL COMMUNITIES

Someone said to me: "You must be the oldest social media manager alive" – and I probably am. I took on social media when I was 64, after the young man who started TrustedHousesitters convinced me it was worth coming back to work for. Since I joined, we've gone from a staff of two to 50. I get new energy and a fresh outlook from our team. My closest colleague is 22 and together we've been nominated for a social media award – I'm pretty proud of that.

When you connect with younger people, you realise how amazing they are. We learn from each other. If they are developing some new website function, I'll say "Hold on, have you 'granny tested' that?" I've travelled to so many different places, I've had so much life experience, I can bring things they couldn't possibly know yet. My day is a very long one. Social media never sleeps, and I work seven days a week, but that's my choice. But I couldn't do this for anything else; I'd never feel so impassioned about gaming, for



instance. You can't sell to people on social media; it doesn't work. You have to care, and I care very much about animals. We are a community of pet lovers, but we are so much more than that.

Recently I heard from a woman who lived beside Lake Geneva and whose father was terminally ill and didn't have long to live. She was desperate to fly to see him in Australia, but couldn't leave her home empty. I put out a message and our members came up with someone within the hour. These stories happen all the time. I can't tell you how good that makes you feel.

Social media is a way of reaching thousands more people than I ever could before. We have 200,000 highly-engaged followers across our channels. We've had thousands

of five star reviews. One of our videos has been viewed five million times, received 3,700 comments and I've responded to every single one. Nothing on our pages goes unanswered. There are a lot of lonely people out there. My motivation comes from wanting to do a good job; I'm probably still trying to prove myself at the age of 71, possibly because I am 71. I've had demanding jobs for most of my life and have always given 110%. My children think I work too hard, but they're also proud of me.

My husband probably wishes I'd close my computer and walk away, but this is my time now. It's

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probably easier than when I had a young family, dogs, horses, cats, the mortgage and a school run to worry about. You hear stories of how people die mentally when they retire; I get that. Suddenly you've nothing to do but put the rubbish out and make the tea. We've made friends through pet sitting, which I do alongside the social media. This year I've sat 20 houses and more than 70 dogs, cats, horses, ducks and chickens, all the while working remotely. We've been to Vancouver, San Diego and Washington State. If you want to switch off, go on a cruise. This is a way of travelling with a purpose.

I attend social media conferences and courses and I'm probably the oldest there, but people tell me I look 20 years younger. I still love fashion; I still love my Louboutins. I've never felt "Oh my goodness, I'm too old for this". That might be naive, but I just haven't felt it.

This is the latest in a series of profiles of individuals who are redefining later life that will appear in FT Weekend Magazine and at laterlifestories.ft.com.

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