
IdleBot: Exploring Non-Engaging Interaction Design in Personal Spaces

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Abstract

In our personal spaces, we are increasingly surrounded by interactive, connected and engaging “things” that increasingly demand attention and convey a sense of continuous pace. This work showcases how things could be designed from a different perspective: seemingly aware, but intentionally non-engaging. IdleBot is a very furry robotic puppet that is waiting. Unlike many applications in social robotics, IdleBot has neither clear purpose, nor explicit functionality—it merely exists and waits. The subtleness of its interaction, consisting of mostly idle motions, is the starting point to investigate forms of interaction bordering non-interaction situated in a personal context. In two iterations, we designed a fully working interactive prototype that embodies different modes of waiting. The design of waiting behaviors is based on a prior observation study with 20 participants, whose waiting behavior was recorded for each one minute under the false pretense of having to wait for a “real” experiment to start. A Kinect device tracks people in close proximity and allows IdleBot to glance at them in serendipity. The video shows what happened when we released IdleBot into the wild.

Author Keywords

Designing Things; Interaction Design; Social Robots; User Experience.

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H.5.2. User Interfaces.