

“HUMAN-LIKE INTERACTION CONTEST” DESIGN COMPETITION 2007

An International Design Competition sponsored by Kallideas Group

INTRODUCTION

The virtual agent is an automated front-end agent that is playing an emerging role in helping companies build smart and customer-friendly self-service on the web, on the phone, on mobile devices also through video-call, thus integrating and assisting contact center agents.

Nowadays Virtual Assistants (VA) offer online users entertaining, yet competent professional services: for example browser-based consulting systems can be used from any computer to help in the area of customer care to reduce service inquiries. Natural language interaction, online translation, 3D-avatar technology and artificial intelligence create a powerful instrument to enable innovative services that are likely to find a wide acceptance among users. For example, the experience of an online and live communication, simulating a personal one-to-one dialogue with an avatar of an advisor, can provide personal and entertaining opportunities of use.

However the simplicity of interaction, the possibility of seamless integration into existing platforms and workflows, the very human-like nature of the avatar users, as well as the use of natural language to navigate within the application is an extremely remarkable challenge.

The development of intelligent persona systems using innovative application designs often leads to new technological problems. The more the advisor looks and behaves human-like, the more users will expect in terms of flexibility, knowledge and intelligence. Increasing the intelligence of a system usually involves adding knowledge sources and processes to handle them. The result is another challenge: ways to improve the filtering, indexing, retrieval and presentation of relevant external knowledge, for example documents from websites, as a natural continuation of the dialogue.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this design competition is to select a Human-like Interaction concept that better address the above mentioned challenges. The winning design will be presented at Frontiers of Interaction III (Milan, 28 June 2007) and CHI Italy (Padua, 30 June 2007).

The design challenge facing the competitors is to create an innovative, state-of-the-art design that responds to clear human requirements while meeting the technical performance.

The Kallideas group is sponsoring this international design competition as the best means to achieve the following objectives:

- Seek out and identify new ideas for Human-like Interaction applications in the area of Health care, Learning, Business, Public services.
- Define concepts which specifically address issues related to trust in, efficiency, reliability and engagement with Human-like Virtual Assistants.
- To envision cutting edge technologies fostering networking opportunities for VA with current data bases for public services.
- To study blended solutions integrating Human and Human-like On-line Assistants.

An additional design challenge is to create an imaginative, cost-effective, and enduring design with the capability, over time, to become a real widely used product.

REGISTRATION

Individuals (graduate and Phd students, researchers, practitioners and professionals) and teams may register by writing an email to: vaconcept2007@kallideas.it before stage 1 submission deadline, April 2nd, 2007. Competitors will receive a unique identification number by e-mail.

COMPETITION FORMAT

The Human-like Interaction Concept Competition is a two-stage international selection process to determine the design of an innovative VA concept.

Stage I of the Competition requires to submit an abstract illustrating their design approach and concept (deadline 2 April 2007). The Jury will review all of the Stage I Submissions in order to select eight Stage II Competitors.

Competitors in Stage II will be asked to develop their designs in much greater detail (web-based presentation), based upon their Stage I Submissions (deadline 2 May 2007). The Jury will then select three Competitors as the first three place winners at the conclusion of Stage II (28 May 2007). The finalists will be contacted by the Jury and asked to prepare a 15 min talk to be presented at a special session of Frontiers of Interaction III (Milan, 28 June 2007) and at CHI Italy (Padua, 30 June 2007).



SPONSOR AND PARTNER

SPONSOR: The Kallideas Group

PARTNER: Department of Communication Science, University of Siena

COMPETITION ADVISORS

Each team will be supported by a Competition advisor. The Competition Advisor's responsibilities include, but are not limited to the general conduct of the Competition, and instructions and suggestions issued to the Competitors.

List of Competition advisors:

Leandro Agrò, Tutor

Roberto Ostinelli, Dario Violi, Davide Casali, Samuel Zarbock, project advisors

COMPETITION JURY

The Jury shall consist of three members. They shall assess the Submissions in Stage I, select the Competitors for Stage II, and determine the first, second, and third place winners at the conclusion of Stage II. They will meet to determine which of the submitted projects, in their view, best satisfies the overall requirements of the Competition. The Jury shall base its Judgment on the evaluation criteria provided in the call.

THE COMPETITION JURY

Patrizia Marti, Department of communication Science, University of Siena

Fabio Sergio, Associate Creative Director, frog design

Giorgio Manfredi, Chairman Kallideas SpA

AWARDS

At the conclusion of Stage II the Jury shall select first, second, and third place winners. Following the announcement of the Competition results, the winner will receive € 1000,00 by the Sponsor. Such amount is deemed to include any and all expenses incurred in the performance of this public presentation.

In addition, there are other intangible rewards of participating in the Human-like Interaction Concept Design Competition.

All participants will have an exceptional opportunity to sharpen their communications skills in preparation of their projects.

These visual, organizational, oral, and aural communication skills will be of great value throughout one's working and thinking career.

Participants will have many opportunities to meet with researchers and professionals to share ideas and gain new insights.

Winners will be recognized for both their visual and oral presentations. They will have the opportunity of presenting their research in two conferences providing more visibility for their research.

ELIGIBILITY

Stage I of the HUMAN-LIKE INTERACTION Design Competition is open to the entire design community: Graduate and Phd Students, practitioners and professionals including architects; artists; engineers; managers; interaction designers, communication designers; marketing experts; computer scientists etc. Recognizing that the Human-like Interaction concept design relies on a certain technical complexity, the Sponsor encourages multi-disciplinary teams to participate.

OWNERSHIP, COPYRIGHT AND PATENT

All booklets, drawings, models, and other materials submitted in either Stage of the Competition shall become the property of the Sponsor and Partner. In addition, for Stage II Competitors, the Competitors and the Kallideas Group shall co-own the copyright and patent, if applicable, of the design. All physical materials and electronic copies of digital materials, which are furnished by the Competitor at no cost to the Sponsor and Partner, shall become the property of the Sponsor and Partner and will be published on the web.

TIMETABLE

The key dates for the Competition Stages are as follows:

Announcement of Competition	20 January 2007
Stage I Submission Deadline.....	2 April 2007
Stage I Jury	2 May 2007
Stage II Competitors Announced.....	28 May 2007
Awards and Presentation at Frontiers of Interaction III (Milan).....	28 June 2007
Presentation at CHI Italy (Padua)	30 June 2007



SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Submissions to Stage I are to be presented on a maximum of five single-sided A4 pages in pdf format.

The first page shall include a short text (no more than 300 words) summarizing the Competitor's design approach to the project (the vision). Imagery should be included in the Competitor's project.

The following information is required for Stage I Submission:

- Title and participants' names
- Overview of the concept
- A usage scenario

Submissions to Stage II are to be presented as a web-based presentation containing the following information:

- Title and participants' names
- Project vision
- Overview of the concept
- A brief description of the design process
- System model
- A usage scenario
- Illustrations of how designs accommodate user requirements
- Feedback from users

EVALUATION CRITERIA

As feedback to the participants about their design projects, and in choosing winner projects the following primary criteria will be used:

- Originality and significance of the Competitor's vision
- Creativity of the Competitor's strategy
- Quality of the Competitor's design
- Adaptation to theme
- Design process
- Quality of finish
- Technical feasibility
- User-centeredness
- Web-based Presentation.