

Press Release

Socially Enabled Products

Creating a Direct Link Between The Virtual World and The Real World

For Immediate Release

TORONTO, ON- MARCH 1, 2010- A new wave of product designs that collect, communicate and respond to data are increasingly narrowing the gap and providing a direct link between the virtual world and the real world. The Resident Futures Team at Idea Couture, a strategic innovation and experience design firm have completed a thorough exploration of socially enabled products and have forecasted 5 key points, trends, and weak signals that define this new space.

Social products are part of an entirely new “social information economy” that integrate both on and offline lifestyles, meaningful experiences, and relationships by adding the capabilities and benefits of social media to physical media. The quality that makes these products interesting is the way in which they connect the physical world with the world of information- they include data information capabilities between the product or user and different networks of people, online platforms, systems, applications, intelligent environments and even other objects. The functions and forms of social products are literally being defined by our social relationships, interactions, and our patterns of behavior as consumers.

Products designed with social aspects are providing opportunities for both consumers and businesses. Companies are mastering research and design processes associated with the development of social products and in turn are acquiring new expertise for competitiveness. Social products are also providing opportunities for companies to connect with consumers in new contexts- during emotional moments and critical times of need. These newfound interactions are bringing businesses deeper into personal networks and are creating intimate and more meaningful engagements. Furthermore, People naturally want to see, hear, touch, and feel what was once not there. Socially enabled products create a connection for consumers to satisfy curiosity and supply a means for new relationships that will emerge and grow with the world and each other. Mathew Lincez, Resident Futurist at Idea Couture says, “This is an exciting and inspiring time for all creative disciplines: art, design, sciences, humanities and business. You basically have an increasingly diverse supply of raw materials representing behaviors, emotions, relationships, environmental phenomenon to spur new product and service innovation”.

Social objects are getting smarter and the data they provide is not only functional but in style. Idea Couture’s Resident Future Team has identified 5 key characteristics, all of which highlight the importance of objects that interact with users or the environment.

5 Key Characteristics of Socially Enabled Products

Note: The listed values are in no particular order

Context Awareness

Products designed with social aspects are GPS (global positioning system) enabled and can combine personal information such as preferences and social network contacts with geographic information as well as web based applications and services.

Personal and Social Data

The formal qualities of socially connected products are being defined and represented by the behavioral activities and social patterns of their users. There is a direct relationship between a physical object and information– form follows data.

Affective Data

Through socially connected products, personal wearables and various diagnostic technologies are able to sense and communicate personal affective data. These devices have the ability to perceive the consumer's physical and emotional states.

Ability To Record and Share

Socially enabled products have the ability to record and share personal data with open (public) or closed (private) networks and have both passive and active engagement with the user.

Ambience

The function and purpose of these objects is to communicate and or interpret meaningful information, such as status updates, social activity, stock market updates, and weather to their users.

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IDEA COUTURE

Idea Couture is a global strategic innovation and experience design firm. The company brings together interdisciplinary thinkers to fill a void in the marketplace between strategic consultants, customer insight firms and design studios. They leverage design thinking, social technologies and deep customer insights to help transform business. Idea Couture works across a broad spectrum of industries, including fast-moving consumer goods, electronics, telecommunications, healthcare, financial services, media and publishing, and luxury goods. Clients include Fortune 500 companies in the US, Canada, UK and China. The company is currently expanding its global footprints and opening offices in Shanghai and Mumbai.

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