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Tech Post



The Future of
the Digital Watch

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March 31, 2009
Word Count: 1009
Tech 114 (D201)
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Future Thinking: The Future of the Digital Watch

In 2059, the electronic boxes that once sat in our homes and offices will become obsolete. Computers, laptops, televisions, and DVD players will become compacted into one device: a multi-media watch. This innovation will bring back the popularity and functionality of the digital watch.

Description

The M²W (multi-media watch) will combine the multitude of personal devices we have today into one all-encompassing device to be worn on the wrist. It will unify and compact mp3 players, USB flash drives, blackberries, cell phones, et cetera. The basis and interface of the M²W will build upon the archetype of smart phones. The purpose of this device is to allow users to watch over the transfer of data and information from other devices to their personal device, anywhere the user might be. Therefore, the M²W will eliminate the computer at home. When the device is not in use, it will have an idling state of a watch display. To avoid attempting to see a vast amount of information on a tiny screen, the M²W will have a built-in high resolution projector that can project images or texts where there is a solid surface. In addition, Bluetooth and voice activation will eliminate the need of a QWERTY keyboard. The innovation of the multi-media watch will be used by business people to keep track of their client's documents and everyday individuals as a personal information management device.

Development

The constraint of the physical size of a M²W will lead to greater an improvement in the form information is portrayed and how technology can promote the sustainability of the earth.

Firstly, the information age of today will overload and overwhelm society so that there will be a revolution to simplify information. As more information is generated on the internet and the prices of technology decrease, more people will be suffering from techno-stress (Marshall, 2007). This new form of psychiatric disorder will escalate the need for society to decrease information overload by simplifying and filtering unnecessary data. The revolution will be termed the age of abstraction, where information is condensed into its most simplistic form, but still capable of conveying an equivalent idea. For example, an e-mail's subject heading will become the most important piece of information. From the keyword of the subject heading, the receiver will decide if the email is worth reading or not. The multi-media watch's interface will have text displayed on the screen as metadata of the actual information. Consequently, the age of abstraction will enhance society's ability to manage both information and time in their daily life. As the public becomes able to filter only the information they need, they will attain more leisure time and have less headaches when searching for what they want.

Secondly, the wrist size attribute of the M²W makes it one of the first leading edge technologies to promote sustainability in a new way. Because the multi-media watch is a combination of personal devices, it reduces the amount of individual techno junk that will end up in the landfills. This sustainability movement will parallel society's need to reduce their carbon footprint on earth. The production of the M²W will influence other industries to miniaturize and merge devices into more efficient and eco-friendly products. Moreover, users will gain an increased amount of portability. The multi-media device worn on the wrist will enable users to carry only one device anywhere they go.

Rationale

Thought it seems like in the 21st century North American society has replaced watches with cell phones, the M²W will become the next generation of a digital watch and bring back the popularity of wrist watches. In 2059 cell phones will be like the pocket watch, providing the primitive technologies and mechanics to create the multi-media watch. The age of abstraction and the sustainability movement will enable the M²W to become a prominent technology of the future. The age of abstraction draws upon the idea of how time was simplified and made into a precise measurement in 1970 when the first digital watch was produced. The digital watch changed the “cultural understanding of time [and] allowed a simplification of the watch’s user interface” (Martin, 2002, p. 11). The M²W will simplify information similarly to how a watch display became more precise, allowing society to manage their time better. In Addition, the simplification of information will help users to evaluate information more efficiently. Tags created by a folksonomy will become the main texts that are displayed on the screen. The future interface will require society to change their mindset on how they view information. Society is already adapting to a new way of seeing information, portrayed through using the internet. For instance, by using the Google search engine people are already being trained to become familiar with keywords. Moreover, the sustainability movement will address today’s prevalent issue of becoming a more eco-friendly society. As of August 1, 2007, British Columbia imposed the Environmental Handling Fee, taxing techno-junk like desktop computers, laptops, monitors, and televisions (Encorp Pacific Canada, 2009). These techno-junks will increasingly aggregate in the landfills and cause pollution and health issues in the surrounding environment. The M²W will set a new standard for industries alike to minimize techno-junk by miniaturizing and combining different electronic appliances. The miniaturization of electronic components and materials will

be another complication in the development of the multi-media watch. However, cell phone wrist watches are already in production like the LG GD910 touch screen 3G wristwatch phone and the multi-media watch can build upon these existing technologies through improvements and innovations. The M²W will become plausible by 2059, but before manufacturing commences, the technology needs to develop further to solve problems concerning battery life, memory storage and optimizing performance levels.

Conclusion

By the time the M²W becomes widely owned, this device will take timekeeping to another level. Not only will it be used to keep track of time, it will be used to manage information and data flow anytime of the day. Society will gain the control to prevent or allow the once invisible data flow to appear on the screen of their personal device.

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