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Edition**



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Latest gadgets come alive in quirky Demo show

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At the fall Demo conference here, an Irish games maker wants to lower your stress, one start-up is aiming to improve \hat{A} — even just a little \hat{A} — the lousy videos you shoot on your cellphone, and yet another harnesses new Web technology to help you learn a foreign language.

They are among about 70 hand-picked companies making pitches at Demo, a showcase for new technologies that has launched products such as the Palm Pilot and TiVo.

I can't say which, if any, of these young hopefuls will have the lasting impact of those famous alumni. Many Demo grads are never heard from again. But as usual there were intriguing technologies on display. Among the companies to watch:

► Fun stress relief.

Can you out-relax an opponent? The Irish company Vyro Games' PIP (Personal Input Pod) is a teardrop-shaped, keychain-size gadget that uses biofeedback and Bluetooth technology to wirelessly control game play on a cellphone, PC or game console. In one mood-based game, the player who is the most relaxed can see his or her dragon outrace an opponent. In another you can calm the weather. The PIP biosensor, which measures your sweat, is expected out in 2008. No price yet.

► Simple 3D.

SceneCaster is built around the vision that the masses can create \hat{A} — and share \hat{A} — 3D Web environments. You can build a 3D scene to tell a story, test out designs or for marketing purposes. The Canadian company's "social media" application and online community site works in Facebook and is integrated with Google's 3D Warehouse \hat{A} — downloadable 3D furniture, people, etc. My initial instinct is that the market for such a service is limited. But who would have pre-

dicted how many people hang out in such virtual worlds as Second Life?

► What the doctor ordered?

Think about the forms you fill out at the doctor's office. What drugs do you take? Family medical history? Have insurance?

New York City start-up Phreesia wants to automate check-in. Phreesia is giving docs free lightweight, wireless laptop-size orange touchpads; the doctors hand them to patients in lieu of traditional clipboards when they arrive at the office. Pads are paid for by sponsored advertisements. Phreesia tested the devices with 300 doctors.

Doctors can print out a concise summary page with patient information. Data is stored, securely and privately, Phreesia says, on the company's Web portal.

Success is by no means assured. Will elderly patients embrace it? Will doctors \hat{A} — and patients \hat{A} — be put off by ad-supported medical records?

► Speaking your "mind."

It is quite literally mind-boggling. Twenty-four-year-old entrepreneur Michael Callahan was not visibly speaking. But you could listen to his "speech" through remarkable emerging technology called the Audeo. Using specialized sensors, Audeo translates neurological signals from the brain into speech. Callahan describes the process as a "step above thinking, and a step below speaking." The first commercial products, about a year away and likely priced around \$8,000, will be developed for people with severe speech disabilities. But the technology can eventually be used for such mainstream purposes as video games. Callahan's Champaign, Ill.-based start-up is called Ambient.

► Swapping ideas.

A disposable pre-packed lunchbox. Style-changing glasses. They are among

early ideas posted at IdeaBlob from Advanta, a site for would-be entrepreneurs. You can submit proposals for free, and vote and comment on other people's ideas. To build up the ideablob.com site, Advanta is giving away \$10,000 a month to the idea that generates the most positive votes. IdeaBlob is mainly about helping very small companies and individuals. It doesn't control intellectual property theft. So it's up to you to secure proper patents.

► Language learning.

Call it the Web 2.0 approach to learning a foreign language. To master English, French, German, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese and Hindi, the LiveMocha site combines games, reading and writing exercises, chat and live video. And it lets you tap into an online global community of native language speakers. The site helps keep you on track with reminders when you are behind in lessons. LiveMocha is free during its beta-testing phase; the company plans to eventually charge for advanced courses.

► Better video.

Lots of people shoot poor-quality videos on cellphones and digital cameras and webcams. MotionDSP of San Mateo, Calif., hopes its newly available consumer FixMyMovie.com video-sharing site will live up to its name.

After uploading video to the site, FixMyMovie processes 10 seconds of the file to improve dark, grainy and low-resolution scenes. If you're satisfied, FixMyMovie will finish the job. You can also grab an enhanced still image from your video. The service is free for now.

Keep your expectations in check. Some poorly shot videos cannot be improved at all, much less approach HD-quality. At Demo, the company took really lousy videos and made them, frankly, just a little less-lousy.

► Managing online traffic.

Ever have a truly rotten experience streaming video, playing an online game or making a Skype call? It may well be because of Internet congestion. Propel Software unveiled Propel PBM, billed as "personal bandwidth management" subscription software for consumers. It automatically prioritizes Internet traffic—streaming media, video conferencing, file transfers, etc.—on your PC so that everything comes through without disruptions. The free, invitation-only beta will eventually cost about what you pay for virus protection. Propel worked as promised during a brief test Skype call.

► Fast mobile search.

Entering data or trying to search on cellphones and other mobile devices is

challenging. Dallas-based Kannuu uses what it calls "partial word completion technology" to let you search databases with just a few clicks. It is better seen than explained. Basically Kannuu shows up on the phone's screen as a four-point diamond shape. You can click on one of four letters (or series of letters) shown to try and complete the word you are searching on. Press a letter and four other possible outcomes are shown. If none is appropriate you press a center button to bring up four more options. You keep repeating this exercise until Kannuu finds a match. The technology can be employed in remote controls, portable music players, GPS devices, video game consoles and as a way to search sites such as Wikipedia. Though

not yet built into actual devices, you can check out how it works by searching Wikipedia and other services at www.kannuu.com.

► Expert how-to.

Want to install a dimmer light switch, cook Tandoori chicken or house-train a puppy? You can access neatly organized instructional videos at Graspr.com, posted by ordinary folks. You can bookmark and add text notes to a video as you watch it to return to that point at any time. For now, Graspr requires the Apple Safari or Mozilla Firefox browsers; the site is not yet compatible with Internet Explorer.

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