

Targeting: How We Defined a Project that Makes a Difference

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1 Executive Summary

This chapter explains in theory, but much more so in practice, how we came up with the project idea for SI-Screen/Elisa, and why we were confident that we could develop a product that would make a difference for the user and become successful on the market.

2 Main Results

In all innovation work, there are different options for defining successful innovation projects. To give some examples:

- You can start by having an idea, then realize and optimize it, develop a business plan and hope that the product will be successful. Even though widely spread, this is certainly neither the most probable nor the most efficient way to success.
- According to the Holistic Innovation methodology, it would make much more sense to conceive a socially relevant system aspect of the future, e.g. the social interaction of the elderly, create a creative synergy of functions to be performed considering boundary conditions and utilizing innovation enablers, all filtered according to stakeholder interest. This means more work at the beginning, but usually saves a lot of resources and time later on, and moreover ensures a higher likelihood of success.
- Publically funded projects usually still demand a different approach: The general topic area is given, as are the expectations and boundary conditions in terms of predefined results, use of resources, and the integration of partners. Thus, in a

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Table 1 SI-Screen/Elisa consortium

| Project partner | Organisation type | Country |
|---|--------------------|---------|
| Innovationsmanufaktur GmbH (former SportKreativWerkstatt) | Company (SME) | Germany |
| Brainware GmbH | Company (SME) | Germany |
| Universität der Bundeswehr München | University | Germany |
| Federació d'Associacions de Gent Gran de Catalunya | End User | Spain |
| Helios | Organisation | |
| Instituto de Biomecánica de Valencia | Company (SME) | Italy |
| Porsche Design Studio | Research Institute | Spain |
| Servicios de Teleasistencia, S.A | Company | Austria |
| Tioman & Partners SL | Company | Spain |
| VIOS Medien GmbH | Company (SME) | Spain |
| | End User | Germany |
| | Organisation | |

more or less rigid frame, depending on the judging institutions and experts, you have to make most of all of this for innovation success.

The last example describes the point of origin of our SI-Screen/Elisa project. A call for proposals asked for “ICT based solutions for advancement of social interaction of elderly people”. We needed to produce a project proposal that would integrate partners from at least three European countries, cost a couple of million euros, sounds promising in terms of result and market viability, and shows technical challenge and likelihood and methodology of solution. Yes, take it or leave it.

We took it. What we came up with was a proposal that promised to create a new user-oriented social interaction tool that would enable elderly people to stay or get in touch with family, friends and the neighborhood, and which helps finding and participating in local activity, health and wellbeing offers. The partner constellation we could set up for this project was truly unique, combining competences, experiences and a good reputation from four European countries. In fact, we are sure that the selection of partners did not only help us get the project granted, but also to create the great project we can present in this book (Table 1).

3 Storyline

In spring 2008, we first heard of a new abbreviation: AAL. Nowadays, Ambient Assisted Living is in large parts of the population still something unheard-of whereas it has become a very well-known term in areas like microelectronics, smart living, and demographical change or in the EU research funding scene.

Shortly after the first AAL JP call was released in 2008, the Innovationsmanufaktur tried to find partners in the area of “prevention and management of chronic conditions of elderly people”. Unfortunately, after coordinating and

writing half of the proposal our Italian consortium leader turned out to be ineligible. In the following weeks we searched for ways to reintegrate him but we did not find a reasonable way and the whole project idea was abandoned.

But we were ready for the second call topic with the ambition not to fail again and to hand in a decent proposal and therefore we wanted to keep the reigns in Innovationsmanufaktur's hands this time. When the topic "ICT based solutions for advancement of social interaction of elderly people" was announced we knew that a Holistic Innovation approach combined with early user involvement could make a difference if we could succeed in finding a strong idea and the right partners. Experience had already shown us that the "not invented here" problem was not to be neglected. This means that approaching potential partners with a completed idea very often makes them skeptic because they had had no part in the origination of that idea. However, neither is it easy to convince potential partners to join a consortium without having a first idea of the work to be done.

Many AAL projects are technology-oriented but we took the possibility to start our project the way we think innovations should happen: With the needs of the users in mind, regardless of any technological constraints! After a first internal brainstorming and a few phone calls to (elderly) parents and their friends, two main objectives emerged. First, somehow having access to the internet and being part of this new world and second, easily keeping in touch with friends and family. Today, both these interests are contained in the term "social media" but only some years ago at the conception of Elisa, that phenomenon was still only emerging.

A midsize screen

The smartphone was still very young but already showed extraordinary growth and sales figures. Unfortunately, the devices were still very complex and the small displays were not likely to attract elderly people. Their understanding of a useful technology was dominated by the TV with its big screen and very easy usability. But there was also a new product that seemed to mesh very well with the needs of senior citizens: the digital picture frame. It was very easy to use; you just had to switch it on, insert a flash drive or photo card and seniors could enjoy something that they really appreciate—pictures of family and friends. This was still the time before the iPad was released and we envisioned something very similar: a device that had a big enough display for elderly people to easily consume information and content.

The first ideas

The simplest vision we thought of was a slideshow with friends and family on the screen, stimulating elderly people to get in contact with their friends just by touching the picture in the slideshow to start a video call. A more advanced feature to keep senior citizens up to date about their surroundings was the idea of providing them with information from different social networks (Fig. 1).

But we also wanted a very easy way for elderly people to become active and get in touch with friends and relatives beyond phone calls. As a first idea for an easy interaction we thought of rotating contacts on the one side of the screen and a list

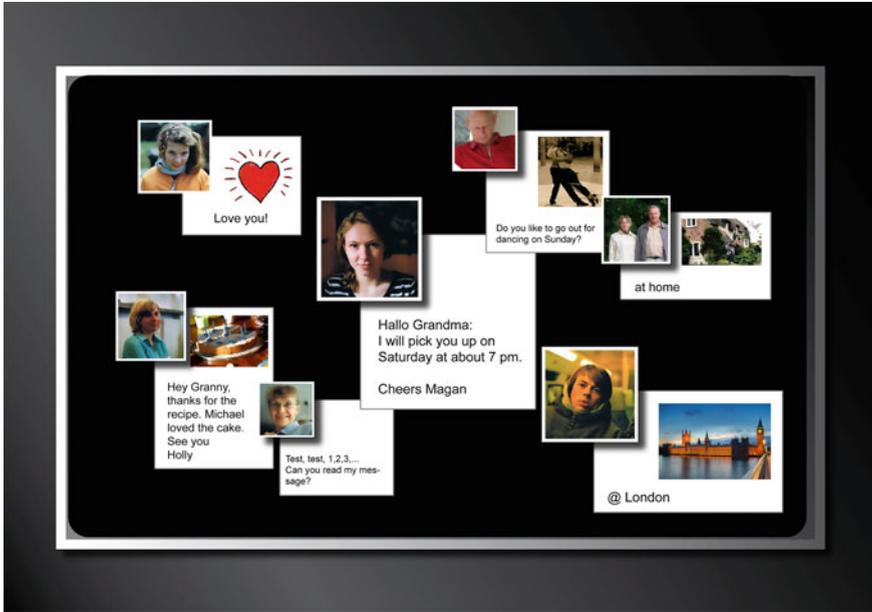


Fig. 1 First ideas of Elisa: a window to the social networks

of possible activities on the other side. Elements from both sides were supposed to be dragged into a personal calendar, thus automatically generating messages to other screens or social networks requesting to do joint activities (Fig. 2).

Visionary partners for a visionary idea

With our first vision of a new interaction screen we contacted our colleagues from the Universität der Bundeswehr München in order to discuss the idea and its feasibility. After bringing arguments from the user needs side together with the technical perspectives we agreed on integrating existing social media channels instead of trying to compete with them directly. We quickly found partners in Spain and Germany for the user-centered development approach and in both countries revived old contacts and established new ones. The most difficult task: finding a European producer who could develop tablet PCs—which actually were not yet invented. After a few weeks we had contacted quite a few hardware manufacturers, but there were two major problems: We could find only one European company in the Smartphone business and for all other companies (we spoke with e.g. Bang and Olufsen, Kodak, Archos) the promised success in tablet PCs was even less obvious. So in the end, we had to start the project without a technological developer in the consortium. At first, we thought this would be a major problem, but in retrospective, it turned out to be rather positive: In the meantime, enough tablet producers have entered the market that we can choose the best technology available and brand it



Fig. 2 First ideas of Elisa: an interaction tool

with the Elisa coating and software. Even if we had had a technology hardware producer they (and therefore our product) would have had to compete with giants like Apple or Samsung and we would have been restricted to a technology chosen three years ago.

Even better than a technology producer, we found in Porsche Design Studio a visionary partner who got involved in this very innovative development and who could upgrade the product by adapting the hardware chassis to the special needs of best agers and bringing in values like very high quality and puristic, timeless design associated with the brand Porsche and Porsche Design.

A strong proposal without too much predetermination

How could we write a convincing project proposal and still leave room for innovation and enhancement during the project process? That was one of our key concerns. Sure, in every research and development (R&D) proposal you have to have a sound idea and very good and complementary partners. But as a lot of money is requested by the team, many details have to be fixed in advance in order to convince the funding authorities of a well-calculated budget. With a very good idea, partners that believed in that idea and aided in the proposal writing and last but not least some quite good figures that indicated that there was a big market evolving, we could convince the international experts to grant the funding support for this project despite not being overly detailed about the concrete outcome.

That is how the SI-Screen/Elisa story started—with the focus on the needs, wishes and perspectives of elderly people and with us trying to set up not a technology-driven but a user need driven project, which has the potential to make a difference in the communication and social activity behavior of every elderly person. In the SI-Screen/Elisa project, the ICT should work for the user, not vice versa.



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