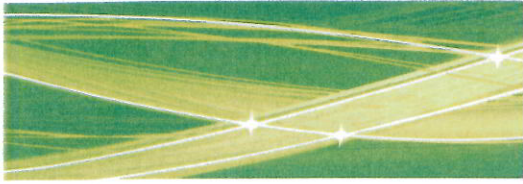


Faces of Technology



Getting Animated

Mobile avatars become expert communicators

YOU'RE AN AMERICAN soldier in Iraq, and there's a truck full of what appear to be local civilians approaching your checkpoint. You want to ask them to stop and identify themselves, but you don't speak much Arabic and there's no interpreter available. What do you say? What do you do?

If you're one of the 700 military service members using Vcommunicator Mobile, you simply swipe a finger over your iPod to select the appropriate greeting and request in Iraqi Arabic. (You'll also find standard phrases for military missions in Kurdish, Dari, Pashto and Modern Standard Arabic.)

The device gives the option of referring to a list of phrases that help you speak and gesture appropriately; broadcasting the voice of an animated character via speaker or bullhorn; or even projecting a video of that character or Arabic script with voiceover onto a screen.

This remarkable tool sprang from Vcom3D, an Orlando-based company that is revolutionizing education, training and communication. Co-founder Carol Wideman blends expertise in simulation from her days at GE Simulation and Training Systems and Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) with her background as a K-12 and university educator.

In 1997, Wideman began winning Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grants



Charles Hodges

Carol Wideman

– Co-Founder & CEO

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to develop virtual reality applications for people with disabilities. That resulted in Vcom3D's Signing Avatar® software for learning American Sign Language (ASL) and for helping deaf and hard-of-hearing students to learn to read written English. In September 2008, Apple began offering iPod and iPhone downloads of Sign Smith ASL, a sign language dictionary animated by Vcom3D's Signing Avatar®.

Wideman got the idea for applying her expertise to the military via the Apple iPod from soldiers returning from deployment in Iraq. "We developed all the technology here at Vcom3D," says Wideman, "using funds from SBIR grants, angel investors, founder investments and company profits. Then, we applied it to solve problems and create commercialized products to meet these compelling needs."

Vcommunicator Mobile went from concept to Iraq with the United States Army in less than 10 months. Wideman's team integrated its 3-D graphics innovations with linguistics, human behavior research and cultural insights in order to build the intuitive graphical user interface.

She expects her industry's future will bring far more sophisticated simulated interactions to small, mobile screens. "More than fifty percent of human communication is nonverbal, so the next generation will include characters with more expressive body language," she says. ●

