

Intel brings out the avatar in you with new app

June 20 2014, by Nancy Owano



Intel on Thursday [announced](#) Pocket Avatars, a messaging app that will allow you to send messages through video avatars. The app is available for free download in Google Play and App store in the United States and Canada. Intel refers its new app as the over-the-top (OTT) mobile

messaging app with a fun twist. The Pocket Avatars app uses a mobile device's standard camera and microphone to work. The app has been designed to capture a user's facial expressions, head movements and voice and use that information so that the user can create, send and receive personalized 3-D video animated messages using avatar characters. Intel created the app using proprietary facial gesture software based on research by Intel Labs.

The app reflects a coming together of varied focus areas such as servers, message delivery, Web programming, 3-D tracking, modeling, animation and video rendering. Intel said the technologies at play include facial and head gesture tracking technology on mobile devices; messages that recognize different facial expressions; and an interactive platform for user-generated content for companies and organizations to engage their audiences in a natural way.

How it works: After choosing an avatar from the library, point the camera at your own face and start talking into the camera. As you perform facial gestures such as raising eyebrows, blinking, or nodding, the avatar reflects them realtime, collecting both the audio and facial data.

Michael Bell, corporate vice president and general manager of the New Devices Group for Intel, blogged that the [avatars](#)' gestures are enabled by robust algorithms that capture diverse image conditions such as changing light and moving subjects. At the end of a 15-second session, the message can be reviewed before sending. Bell said, "If your friend has the Pocket Avatar app, they can open the message in the app. But if they don't have the app, you can send the message to them via text message, e-mail or via your favorite social media. They just have to click a URL that will link them to the video."

More than 40 avatars are offered through the in-app library and Intel

said new characters will be introduced regularly. Although many avatars are free; some have been priced at 99 cents at time of launch. Brands and companies include American Greetings Care Bear franchise, Annoying Orange, Gumby and Pokey, The Jim Henson Company, the LEGO Group, Mr. Bill and the San Diego Chicken.

Bell said, "Over the years, our very own Intel Labs have become known as a place for innovation and technologies that often shape the future of computing and the consumer experience. Not all Intel Labs projects make it to the big time, but occasionally there are projects interesting enough to stand on their own. Pocket Avatars is the latest example."

Looking ahead, Intel said it will continue to refine the app with new features and capabilities. "These include a constant stream of new avatars and improved tracking technology with new [facial expressions](#) that operate in a broader range of lighting environments." Intel said it also plans to expand the [app](#) to more countries and languages in the near future.

More information: — [scoop.intel.com/now-something- ... rent-pocket-avatars/](http://scoop.intel.com/now-something-...rent-pocket-avatars/)

— www.pocketavatars.com/

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