

Zenbo as your next household helper? Watchers say the price is right

May 31 2016, by Nancy Owano



Credit: Asus

(Tech Xplore)—A whole new world in robotics has opened up to research teams seeking to innovate smart machines as assistive robots.

These have been engineered to reach, fetch and talk with elderly people who are confined at home or in special homes as well as to communicate friendly vibes with children.

On Monday another little [robot](#) joined the assistive ranks, and its names is Zenbo, unveiled at the Computex 2016 event in Taiwan.

This is a robot that can stroll into a living room with an impressively large range of tricks and treats. Consider that range. Zenbo can move freely around the house. A camera enables it to see faces, take [pictures](#) and videos, make video calls and provide remote home monitoring. (It acts as a remote-controlled home camera covering the entire home.)

Zenbo can understand spoken commands. It has a built in stereo for music. The list of its accomplishments goes on. It tells stories to children; parked by the sofa, it shows slide shows. It reminds household members of important information—doctor's appointments, medication schedules, or anything else that needs to be remembered. The robot listens to questions and responds, helping seniors maintain a "connected" life.

ASUS Chairman Jonney Shih presented his pitch at the event:

"For decades, humans have dreamed of owning such a companion: one that is smart, dear to our hearts, and always at our disposal. Our ambition is to enable robotic computing for every household."

Such product success would partly depend on whether or not the item was too pricey for most households. The robot price is \$599.

This was considered as affordable by a number of event watching writers. And Shih extended the \$599 shown on the screen behind him on stage with an arm flourish, adding "Wow!" He said it was "a big step for

ASUS and one giant leap for computing."

San Francisco-based James Niccolai, Deputy News Editor, IDG News Service, commented: "It's not something other robots haven't done before, but it's impressive that Asus will offer those [capabilities](#) for the price of a PC."



Credit: Asus

Curiosity was high from the audience when little Zenbo was summoned on stage. Its responses to commands were spot-on and the audience

cheered. Shih's presentation and Zenbo's product features impressed numerous tech sites although tech watchers are still waiting for more under-the-hood details and just when it will be sold.

ASUS takes its name from Pegasus, the winged horse in Greek mythology that symbolizes wisdom and knowledge. ASUS describes itself, saying "the company started life as a humble motherboard manufacturer with just a handful of employees, it is now the leading technology company in Taiwan with over 17,000 employees worldwide."

So what's next for Zenbo? IDG News Service: "There was no word when Zenbo will go on sale and a spokesman said Asus doesn't yet have a ship date. It wants developers to sign up for a software kit that will let them build applications for it."

Asus is now taking registrations for its developer program.

"Welcome! By joining the Zenbo Developer Program, you will learn everything you need to know about creating applications for ASUS Zenbo. As a member, you'll receive the latest software updates and have access to a library of information to help you bring your creative ideas to life. The Zenbo Developer Program is free and open for all to join."

Minda Zetlin in *Inc.* wrote on Monday that "Home robots and home robot projects have been around a while and yet none of these devices have made huge inroads into the at-home market as yet." She also added "Yet the market is set to explode. Juniper Research predicts one in ten American [households](#) will have a robot within the next 10 years."

More information: zenbo.asus.com/

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