Next-gen software aims to lift personal computer into Aware state

April 30 2019, by Nancy Cohen

What do you think about if someone asks you to reel off examples of smart tech? You probably list smartphones, tablets, TVs, cars, speakers, watches, doorbells, light-bulbs, refrigerators, microwaves… and you are right. "Smart is artificial intuition. Smart is knowing what we are going to do before we get there, and adapting behavior, insights and interactions to meet the need." That is from a company blog.

The one word that is missing from the "name" game is PC. And eye-tracking company Tobii thinks it is time to address a PC shortcoming. "Traditional PCs are certainly powerful and versatile, but they are not yet 'Aware Devices'".

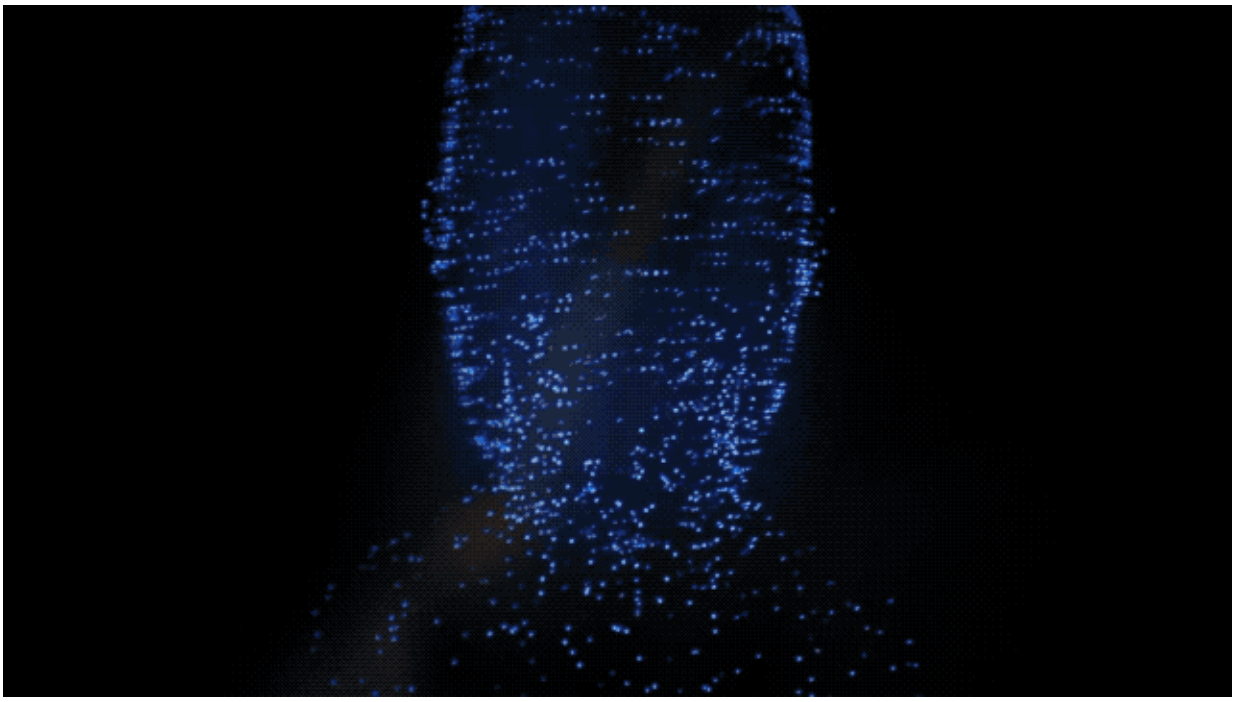
(The blog noted that making devices smart was about putting "computers" in "dumb" devices. PCs were already supposed to be the smart devices towards which everything else was growing.)

Tobii AB's David Henderek, product management director, elaborates how this merits more thought:

"Most PCs today can be likened to a blindfolded person sitting somewhere, waiting to be told what to do by coded taps on their forearm. The most modern ones might sometimes even understand if you poke them or whisper in their (always listening) ear. But even if they can sometimes parse your words correctly, they don't understand you. They don't anticipate you."

Obii is on a mission to change that, in a sense, to humanize technology.

Tobii wants to enable devices that actually do understand you—that understand you through smart sensors, user-sensing computer vision algorithms, machine learning, AI. Toward that goal, they have announced next-generation Tobii Aware software, so that PCs can leverage Tobii technology.



Presence detection and head tracking visualization in the Tobii Experience app in Tobii Aware

Headquartered in Sweden, Tobii is best known as the eye-tracking company but this time around the company is promoting the way its Tobii Aware software can enable a broader range of personal computers to gain benefits associated with visually sensing users—just the way Henderek described in his blog.

This is an opportunity to bring new capabilities to the PC market, said Henrik Eskilsson, CEO of Tobii. "Tobii Aware enables Tobii to extend the benefits of our human sensing expertise to a wider array of systems and use cases than ever before."

Combining hardware capabilities of a Windows Hello camera with the Tobii Aware software, system benefits include: user identification and

automatic presence detection to blur and lock screens; undimming or turning on the screen when users return. The screens that dim and react to the user's presence can save power.

Working with a screen with ID recognition, the contents on the screen are blurred when the user looks away and un-blurred only for the correct active user, said Tobii.

The auto-lock feature automatically locks Windows when the user is not present. The Windows Hello part means you get no-password security logins using face recognition.

Wellness-minded users may be interested in the software's ability to deliver "digital health via insights about screen time and computer usage." Tobii referred to its "Wellbeing" data where users can measure daily usage and track habits such as screen time, user position, distance to screen and break time.

Jon Fingas in *Engadget* did not ignore some extras: The software can send your mouse cursor or whole windows to different monitors.

Fingas relayed his verdict in *Engadget*. "Tobii is putting its camera technology to work in a very practical way: it's making your day-to-day computing just that much more private and, ideally, more personal."

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