Z/Yen Group, London Film Museum
**Personal artificially intelligent avatars to help complex online decision making**

About the Project

Avatars are known to add value to the user experience. Remember Microsoft's Paperclip or Ikea's Anna? Or perhaps like many, you use an in-game avatar? Fun? However, not intelligent enough to help users assess complex screen-based data in order to make decisions. Until Z/Yen that is! A specialist technology consultancy, Z/Yen provides analytical insight tools to financial and business clients.

Their partnership with creative animator Huw-J, from London Film Museum, was an existing relationship, but the idea to make collaboration the method for progressing the technology came when attending the 'Partnering For Innovation' event in 2010. Both parties saw an opportunity to advance their idea of screen characters that help with complex decisions, and bring a product to market.

Fascinatingly, Z/Yen's avatars have artificial personality qualities that allow them to deliver a
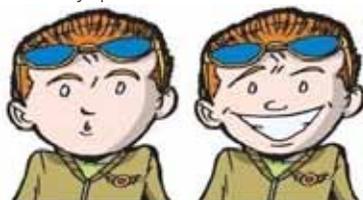
specific financial strategy. In their development setting, the share trading market game ExtZy (www.extzy.com), the avatars use body language and gestures to communicate in a human-like way. In possible future applications, whether checking interest rates or phone tariffs, buying life insurance or managing stocks, gambling or even shopping, your onscreen Z/Yen avatar could be your most effective personal assistant and online tipster.

Being semi-autonomous, these intelligent avatars mirror 'user behaviour' as well as exhibiting 'own behaviour' as they interact with a data environment. Their main asset is software algorithms that discern patterns of play in complex multivariate dynamic data sets, thus helping users make complicated choices more easily.

Ideas for intelligent assistants are appearing already in the industries such as automotive, where the car understands your driving style and gives appropriate advice. Z/Yen believes its underlying technology can be applied to any situation involving complex transactions and a large data set, even to the point where users could delegate their avatars to keep up their relationships and interactions when they are not

online or don't have network access.

Benefits of Funding

The funding has allowed the team to dedicate time to research. Using data processing, mathematical modelling and PropheZy, their own anomaly & pattern response engine,

Fast Facts

Sector: Software

Funding Source: TSB 'Collaboration Across Digital Industries' Fast-track

Total Project Value: £100K

Duration: February 2011 – October 2011

Market Impact: Potentially diverse, from a micro-payment model to launching as a 'white label' product.

Creative Industries KTN input: Lead partner was inspired at a 'Partnering for Innovation' event to take a collaborative approach.

Z/Yen broke the market into clusters, creating four key personality types. Following this, they constructed a demo environment using intelligent avatars within ExtZy. The funding has sped up delivery and already enabled Z/Yen to take the demo technology to prospective clients.

"We could not have done this, at this speed, without the TSB investment. Now we are marketing this technology to customers, which is very exciting."
Stephen Haggard, Senior Consultant Z/Yen

Whilst the initial market is specific to each client's needs and requirements, Z/Yen are having conversations with several larger clients including a major retail financial provider, to launch the intelligent avatar technology as a white label product. Another area of potential interest lies in the licensing of favourite animated movie characters as avatars, and collaborating partner ECM, which also operates the London Film Museum franchise, is pursuing several discussions with major film distributors. So as the City meets Tinsel Town, whom will you choose to be your trusted avatar adviser?