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Lift 2014: Playful Tech

At Lift, playful tech concepts introduced new forms of digital storytelling via robot reporters, API fortune tellers and spatial experiences.

SUMMARY

SWITZERLAND'S SOCIAL STARTUPS Lift's venture night highlighted several promising tech concepts from Switzerland's burgeoning startup scene, including a "social network of things" and a lottery-like checkout system.

POST-PURCHASE SERVICE Qipp presented a web app that digitally connects users to their belongings, allowing them to share information on their products with online communities and manufacturers long after the point of sale.

ROBOT REPORTERS Concept devices used anthropomorphised interfaces to engage passers-by. Note the BlabDroid, a remote-controlled cardboard robot that asks interview subjects probing questions with a smile and the voice of a seven-year-old.

SPATIAL STORYTELLING One of the most promising technologies at the event was Apelab's IDNA, a spatial storytelling prototype that enables viewers to control their spatial experience of a film, video or animation on a mobile device.



LIFT 2014

Digital Storytelling

Lift's most exciting prototypes put a playful spin on digital storytelling, whether by enhancing spatial experiences or replacing reporters with cardboard robots.

- **Spatial Storytelling:** [IDNA](#), a spatial storytelling prototype from Swiss startup [Apelab](#), enables viewers to control their spatial experience of a film, video or animation on a mobile device. Each scene is a 360-degree experience, so users can simply shift the device to focus on different visual and audio points as and when they want. That means no two experiences of the story are the same. "Our main goal is to give people technology with simple interfaces, to make it simple and accessible," María Beltrán, the company's lead physical computing designer, told Stylus. Importantly, the prototype offers entertainment companies and advertisers an innovative way to engage always-on mobile users.

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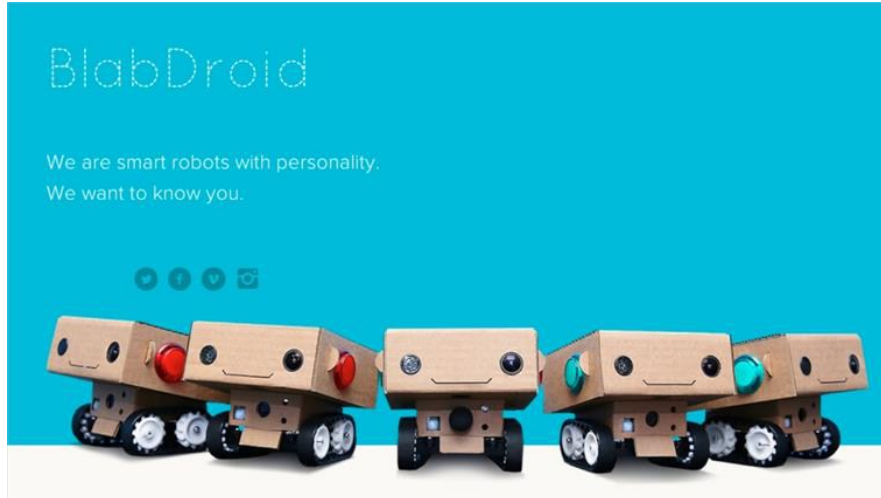
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EVENT

ARTICLE REFERENCES

IDNA
Apelab
BlabDroid
Boxie
Bread&Butter
Qipp
Goodwall
Cherry Checkout

- **BlabDroid:** Many of the interviews at Lift were conducted not by panel moderators, but by a remote-controlled cardboard robot called [BlabDroid](#). The tiny robot, based on the [Boxie](#) story-gathering robot from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the US, was programmed with a set of questions, voice and distinct personality in order to film interviews. At Lift, the seemingly cute avatar often asked probing questions that its human counterparts might be chastised for asking. However, the fact that the robot's interview subjects chose to answer these questions shows just how a friendly, anthropomorphised interface can help cut through barriers. Developers are currently preparing to launch the robot on a crowdfunding platform.



Blabdroid



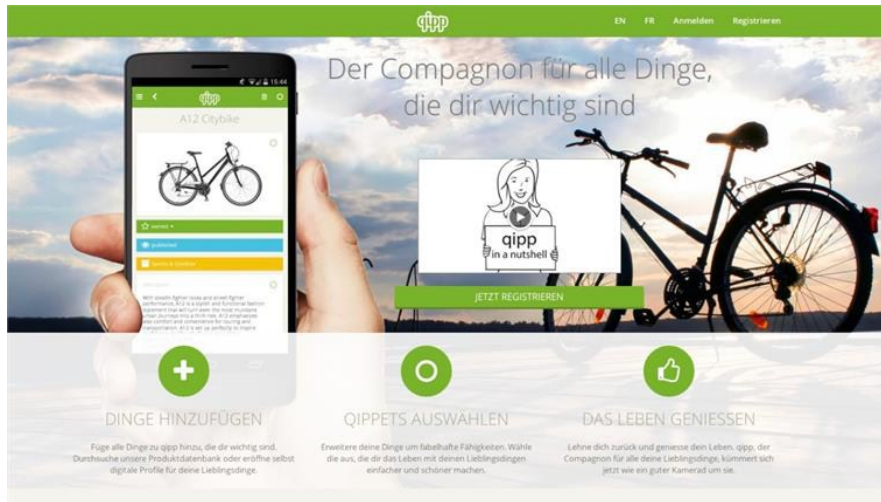
Bread&Butter fortune teller

- **Twitter Fortune Teller:** Lausanne-based innovation consultancy [Bread&Butter](#) showed a digital fortune teller that uses an application programming interface (API) for Twitter to reveal insights into the user's online behaviour on the social network. The glitter-dusted device noted [Stylus](#) liked to spread ideas, particularly on the Cannes Lions advertising festival. The concept could gain traction as a coin-operated arcade game for digital natives influenced by the [science fiction](#) of the past. Bread&Butter also put up a poster that uses conductive ink to read out its words when touched – a truly fresh take on the idea of an e-reader.

Social Startups

The conference's venture night highlighted several promising tech concepts from Switzerland's burgeoning startup scene, including a "social network of things" and a lottery-like checkout system.

- **Social Network of Things:** [Qipp](#) presented a web app that digitally connects users to their belongings. Described as a "companion for all the things you care about", the app lets users store pictures, receipts and warranty information linked to their products in an online database. It is designed to work as a "social network of things". That claim may be exaggerated, but the service does let manufacturers communicate with customers after the point of sale. It could also allow users to share information on their products with communities, breathing new life into the concept of the sharing economy.



Qipp

- Jury head Pascal Marmier was impressed by the ease with which Qipp creates a digital identity for almost any product. "This will put manufacturers worldwide into the position to enrich their products with useful post-purchase services," he explained.
- **Digital Good:** Goodwall is a social network that encourages users, particularly students, to become involved with social issues. Its emphasis on digital good is likely to appeal to the 'Upworthy Generation' – mindful millennials seeking to reshape society in radical new ways. More than 60% of Gen Y are worried about the state of the world and feel a personal responsibility to make a difference, according to global news site Huffington Post.



Goodwall

- **Checkout Lottery:** [Cherry Checkout](#), a plugin for e-commerce sites, aims to enliven the checkout experience by giving online shoppers the chance to support a charity *and* win the value of their purchase with one click. Shoppers have a one-in-250 chance of being reimbursed. The lottery-like checkout system fuses elements of gaming and charity to attract a wider audience. From the perspective of an e-retailer, the service is also appealing because it integrates so well into existing sites.



Cherry Checkout

A Hacker to Watch

One of the most engaging speakers at Lift was also the youngest. Switzerland's Sean Goff, a 16-year-old hacker and maker, took to the stage to present a smartphone-controlled firework launcher, designed to help people set off fireworks safely. He also described SilicoIn, a new project that claims to reduce the amount of electricity required to use the digital currency [Bitcoin](#) by drawing power from USB sticks, instead of computers. Keep an eye on Goff's work: his inventive ideas could shape the development of several tech directions, from peer-to-peer payment networks to robotics.



Sean Goff

For more on the agile and adaptive teens poised to deliver the next breakthrough product, see [Smart Teens](#), part of our [Redefine](#) Macro Trend.

FUTURE INSIGHTS

OFFER 360-DEGREE EXPERIENCES Spatial storytelling offers entertainment companies and advertisers an innovative way to engage always-on mobile users.

DON'T OVERLOOK TEEN MAKERS Switzerland's Sean Goff is a hacker to watch. His inventive ideas, including a smartphone-controlled firework launcher, could shape the development of several tech directions, from peer-to-peer payment networks to robotics.

THE CUTE INTERFACE WINS When designing machine interactions, remember that a friendly, anthropomorphised interface often helps cut through barriers. The BlabDroid showed how a baby-faced cardboard robot might record better interviews than even a seasoned journalist.

GIVE PRODUCTS DIGITAL IDENTITIES Consider ways to enrich your products with useful post-purchase services by capitalising on the digital identities Qipp creates for its tagged products.