Simplicity: Technology is great when it is invisible

How IDIAP contributes to make technology simpler and more meaningful.

By Pierre Ihmle   August, 2015

Ten years ago, the IDIAP research institute took steps, deliberately, to make technology accessible and simpler. Results speak for themselves.

At the end of last century complexity, chaos, self-organized criticality have been some of the key words in the scientific community and in the greater public, deeply altering our understanding of our environment.

At the same time, information technology grew complex as the number of interactions increased exponentially. New avenues were opened by the Internet, mobile telephony, man-machine interactions, and networked sensors. The developed world experienced ubiquitous access to information at any time anywhere.

At the beginning of the 21st century, a powerful new trend emerged in science and business to handle complexity through simplicity. IDIAP has contributed, and continues to do so, significantly to improve information and communication technologies based on this idea. The market response is unanimous. IDIAP hatched 9 new spin-offs, 2 of them highly successful, based on the idea of simplicity.

To render man-machine interactions "simple", IDIAP developed powerful speech, text, video, mood, gesture analysis software, and security algorithms. IDIAP's researchers worked with cognition specialist, psychologist, biologist, designers, engineers, all sharing the same spirit of making our daily interaction with machines and technology simpler.

Some highlights. Hold your phone, it recognizes you. Your computer responds and learns from your behavior. Eye sensors track what you are looking at on your screen, while small devices behind your ears records your moods. Your GPS handheld detects geographical tags as you walk the streets. Your electronic devices are interconnected and share description of users and environments. Computers interface are simple and intuitive, and customized.

Technology is great when it is invisible. Just as with great artists in any field, dance, music, sports, a performance is beautiful when it makes you feel that it is easy. The same holds true with technology, and IDIAP made it real.