

Gee Whiz from JAPAN

LIVE FROM CEATEC Displays at this year's consumer electronics show, Ceatec, held in Japan in October, suggest hi-tech companies are focusing on two global issues: society and the environment. Pauline Herbst considers how this emphasis will impact both working technologies and our lifestyles.

“**D**oing business is like fighting a duel with real swords. Thus there is no room for thinking that allows for winning sometimes and losing at other times. Business is, by its very nature, structured so that you should never lose, but you have to be serious about what you are doing,” says Konosuke Matsushita, the founder of Matsushita Electric, a company better known in contemporary times as Panasonic Corporation.

“The more business you engage in, the more profit you should gain. There should never be losses in business, if you are careful, diligent and open-minded. This is what business is all about,” adds this visionary businessman who steered his company through World War II and global expansion. When, some years back, he appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine he produced not just a five-year plan, but a 250-year plan. So revered is he that his staff still subscribe to his management philosophy which, basically, centres on the idea that “industrialists” should contribute to society.

It's no surprise, therefore, that among the prototypes Panasonic showcased at Japan's largest electronics exhibition, were those that focused on sustainability and energy efficiency and a renewed emphasis on enhancing people's lives.

Japanese giants are taking green IT initiatives very seriously, believing that they hold the key to future market success. Panasonic wasn't alone in its focus. Toshiba, Hitachi, Sharp, Sony and others all displayed prototype high definition 3D television sets that

highlighted energy efficiency and better end-of-life recyclability. Hitachi's television offering, for example, automatically responds when the user looks away by switching off the visuals to save power.

While show organisers had to contend with a typhoon and reduced visitor numbers this year, they still managed to offer the business world an impressive array of new products. *NZ Management* picked three in particular.

LARGER THAN LIFE

Time-zone differences make international conference calling tricky. If Panasonic's prototype Life Wall goes to market, however, home-based business communications could become much easier.

The Life Wall can access all emails, documentation and files from a personalised user profile, simply by having the user point at the living room or office wall.

As the name suggests, the 1950m x 630m Life Wall is a sensor-enabled image, rear projected onto an entire wall and controlled by gestures. Users can communicate with a life-size video image without any delays or compromise in sound quality.

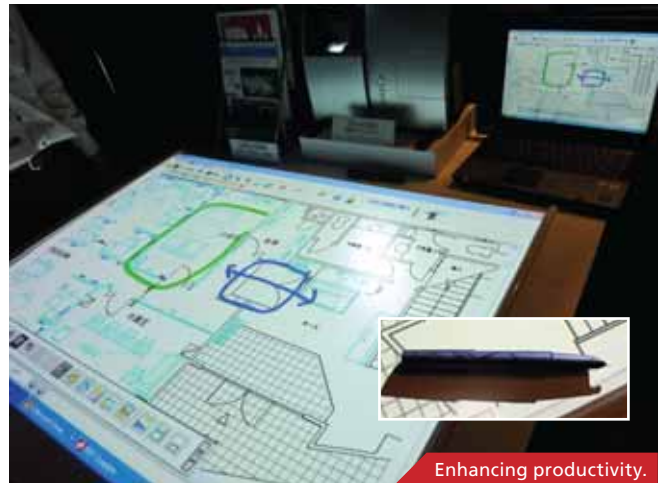
A simple hand wave provides access to



Drag and drop at home.



Headed for car-to-car communication.



Enhancing productivity.

files, drag and drop to a virtual bookshelf and a creative artwork facility. A 'coffee table' (imagine a giant iPhone) with sensors can also control the images on the wall. To flip pages, use the tabletop as you would a touchscreen phone.

Panasonic can't yet confirm when the Life Wall will be released or how much it's likely to cost.

NISSAN EPORO

Robots are always popular at Japanese electronics shows. So they were at Ceatec. Car manufacturer Nissan demonstrated Eporo, a prototype that helps Nissan test new technologies you might see in cars in 2030.

Each robot is unique – different colours and characteristics to simulate drivers: some are impatient and speed, others drive more slowly. Nissan wants Eporo to help solve the problem of bottlenecks. "Each

driver wants the freedom to drive, but when the road is narrow, the human being always creates a traffic jam, because everyone wants to go faster than others," said a company spokesman. The robots are designed to communicate with each other to form an orderly line.

But it will take a few years for Oporo to deliver. There are only seven of him/her about as yet. Nevertheless, Nissan this year will include a car sensor that detects and warns drivers about cars sitting in a driver's blind spot. This is today's autonomous technology, said the spokesman. "Tomorrow's technology will be car-to-infrastructure and, in the future, car-to-car like Eporo."

PRODUCTIVITY ENHANCEMENT

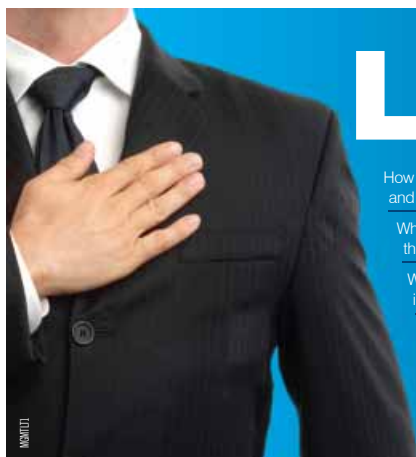
Hitachi is delivering some fascinating new digital technology takes on the traditional whiteboard. Its CP-A100J projector can, if

stood on its end, project images directly onto a tabletop, eliminating the need for a board at one end of a room. And, properly configured, it displays in both dark and light rooms.

It's a space-saving breakthrough (ideal for small meeting rooms) and, if combined with a wireless interactive UPIC panel, users can scribble notes and make changes to the projection with a Bluetooth pen, which then registers on a PC or laptop. The microdots on the panel register pressure – great for architects and anyone needing to draw on the panel with lighter strokes.

The UPIC panel looks like a giant mouse pad and can be rolled up for easy storage. The products are currently only available in Japan. **M**

Pauline Herbst attended Ceatec courtesy of Panasonic New Zealand.



LOYAL

- How do you identify your loyal and valuable customers?
- What do you currently offer to these customers to keep them loyal?
- What strategies have you implemented to increase your customers spend with you?
- What do your competitors currently offer potential customers of yours that you don't?
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