

The potential of avatars for online advertising

 By [Simone Puterman](#)

20 Jul 2006

Popular Mechanics, which bills itself as the voice of science and technology in South Africa, has introduced more features on its new website, including avatars - animated characters. According to publisher Alan Duggan, avatars "have potential for online advertising because they offer a triple whammy: animated figure, voice message and branded background".



The avatars - first an attractive young woman, followed by a stern Uncle Sam (a light-hearted reference to his original call to arms) - welcome visitors to www.popularmechanics.co.za and remind them to buy the July issue.

Duggan told Bizcommunity.com that he intends to change avatars often, to prevent visitors become bored with the message: "In future, I may use them to draw attention to online competitions or especially important articles in the magazine.

"New technology allows us to play with a variety of characters, tweaking their background, faces, hairstyles, voices, clothes - even their age. We've used text-to-voice coding to create the first sample, so the speech is not quite perfect, but we're quite capable of linking the characters to real voices. The possibilities are endless, and we have every intention of exploiting them."

Also added to the site is a compressed version of the magazine's television commercial, which features a patient in intensive care - presumably a *Popular Mechanics* reader - who allows his curiosity to get the better of him. The result is mortifying...

ABOUT SIMONE PUTERMAN

Simone Puterman (@SimoneAtLarge) is currently editor-at-large at Marklives.com and deputy chair of the Saneef online editors subcommittee. After majoring in psychology and linguistics at Rhodes University, and then completing her honours in psychology, she has been in the world of B2B publishing since 1997, with 7.5 year stints at both WriteStuff Publishing and Bizcommunity.com (March 2006-August 2013). Email her at simone@marklives.com.
■ [Design Indaba 2012] Q&A with MBOISA, expo winners - 8 Mar 2012
■ Biz feels the love - 31 May 2011

- New logo for News24.com - 14 Oct 2010
- Ross returns as Tribal DDB SA ECD - 15 Jul 2010
- Juanita Williams to leave IOL for Zoopy - 5 Jul 2010

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>