

Whitepaper N° 1.



CAN SPEAKING AVATARS HELP YOUR WEBSITE?



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Can Speaking Avatars Help Your Website?

Using an avatar* (an animated speaking character) to greet and guide visitors on your site has unique advantages and challenges. This article will introduce you to some proven benefits and pitfalls of using speaking characters to increase personalization, conversion, site traffic and time spent on a site. The information provided in this article became available through feedback from thousands of actual small businesses that have been using SitePal, a popular avatar web tool.

**An avatar is simply a virtual representation of a user on the Internet and can be as simple as an animated picture. Oddcast avatars, including SitePal, are the latest evolution of avatars, with virtual human-like movements, speech, and the ability to interact directly with web visitors.*

1. Potential Benefits of Avatars

Placing an avatar on a landing page can greatly reduce the bounce rate by immediately grabbing visitors' attention. Beyond the instant emotional engagement, avatars can provide a marketing push by delivering a short sales pitch to the site visitor which highlights the key aspects of the site's offering – whether it's competitive pricing, robust customer service, or premium product quality. Speaking characters are a proven tool in **motivating visitors to stay longer on a site and guiding them towards a purchase decision or other action.**

Another beneficial use of avatars on a landing page is to **help customers navigate a website.** When there are numerous menus and links to click, site visitors can often feel frustrated, overwhelmed or lost. An avatar can direct people to the right section of a website, retrieving 10% or more of site visitors who might have otherwise been lost – this benefit impacts bottom line sales.

Avatars are also used to collect contact information from potential customers before they leave a site, even if they don't make a purchase. With a built-in Lead Generation functionality, you can easily attach an interactive contact form to your avatar. The character can encourage site visitors to leave their contact information and receive an e-newsletter or a personal follow-up from a sales representative. This is often more effective than relying upon visitors to find and click on a separate contact page.

A simple yet powerful way to use speaking characters is to reinforce the call to action button by giving specific instructions on what to click. (e.g. "Click the red Register Now button to get started").



Client Results:

Since using SitePal, Goldfish Software, LLC experienced:

- 33% increase in conversions from browsers into buyers
- 22% increase in repeat visitors
- 53% increase in sales value per customer

Mini Case Study - Goldfish Software, LLC

Goldfish Software, LLC, an online retail website selling business software, implemented a SitePal virtual salesperson on its website in 2004 to provide customers with more consultative product information and also highlight its "Hot Deal" to customers. After using SitePal, the company saw a **33% increase in the conversion rate** and a **53% increase in average sales dollars** as a result of successful up-sell and volume sales. Goldfish Software has been using SitePal avatars for 3 years now.

Please visit www.SitePal.com/casestudies for a full case study.





A/B TEST - Impact of Speaking Characters

Dr. Ralph Wilson, CEO of www.webmarketingtoday.com, conducted an A/B test to analyze the influence of an avatar upon the average time visitors spent on his website. The results proved a speaking character had a remarkable impact, with a 33% increase in the average time spent and a 17% increase in page views per visitor.

Please visit <http://www.wilsonweb.com/conversion/site-pal1.htm> for a full report.

2. Potential Pitfalls of Deploying Avatars

Avatars may not improve traffic and conversions if they are poorly used. Here are pitfalls to avoid:

- **Overuse.** Setting the speaking character to speak every time a visitor refreshes a page can irritate visitors who do not wish to hear the message over and over. The way to avoid this is to set the avatar to speak only once per visit unless clicked by the visitor. Be considerate of your visitors – adding an audio control tab to the character is highly suggested.
- **Poor Audio.** Marketers must be careful about distracting recordings. Ideally, a professional voice recording service should be used. Such services are very affordable and easily integrated into the speaking character platform. Alternatively, use the simple record-by-phone feature in a room without background noise.
- **Staleness.** Just like all web content, it's important to refresh the look and message of the character because its effect will diminish over time. It's best to update characters on at least a quarterly basis. Using an avatar to broadcast seasonal greetings, advertise special promotions or announce company updates are all easy ways to keep the character fresh and current while improving the customers' experience.

3. Creating An Avatar that Represents Your Business

If your website caters to specific socio-demographic groups or market segments, it's imperative that your avatar accurately reflects and engages that audience. Remember that your character is a virtual spokesperson representing your company.

• Step 1: Design an avatar

First think about the effect you are trying to create. If your target audience is male, a male character might work for a personal product such as an electric razor, but a female may be much more effective for jewelry. It's important to adjust various physical features and clothing for any base model to match your marketing goals. Many customers build a custom model that matches an existing brand element, such as a mascot or personality. Oddcast provides custom model design services and the ability to upload a digital picture and instantly transform it into a unique 3D avatar.





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- **Step 2: Add compelling audio**

An avatar is both a visual AND audio tool – your character's recording should sound pleasant, audible, and professional to make its full impact. The key to producing high-quality, compelling audio is to include a call to action and keep the overall message short, clear, and representative of your business.

- **Step 3: Be creative with your avatar**

Enhance your customers' experience by using the avatar to chat with and answer visitors' questions in real time, or present a Flash tutorial movie. You can even include your avatar in an HTML email to increase click-through rates. These creative implementations of an avatar can eventually lead to increased traffic, well informed prospects and better sales conversion.

To learn more about SitePal

Please visit www.SitePal.com, contact us at sales@SitePal.com or call 1-877-300-6030.

