

= Mya (program) =

Mya was an intelligent personal assistant under development by Motorola . Proposed features for the program included the ability to read emails and answer questions 24 hours a day . Mya was intended to work with an internet service Motorola was developing called Myosphere , and was planned to be a paid service that would eventually be used by other mobile carriers . A female computer @-@ generated character was created to represent Mya in advertising . While the quality of the character 's animation was praised , it received criticism for being over sexualised .

Both the character and the program were announced to the public via an advertisement in March 2000 , though the program was not ready for use at that time . Despite the announcement generating a considerable amount of attention , little was heard regarding the project in subsequent months . The program was never officially released nor cancelled , though the trademarks for both Myosphere and Mya were abandoned by Motorola in 2002 . The name Mya was believed to be a play on the words ' My assistant ' .

= = Proposed features and development = =

The Internet service that Mya was developed for was called Myosphere . Motorola began development of Myosphere in 1998 , and it had been described as a speech enabled service " which enables consumers to manage and control wireless and wireline communications from a single point of access using natural voice commands . " Several other companies had already announced plans for similar software at the time ; Alan Reiter from Wireless Internet and Mobile Computing was puzzled at Motorola 's announcement of Myosphere , saying " They 're kind of late to the [voice activation] party . But the party is likely to be very big Motorola 's entry will help further legitimize the value of voice response systems . But it 's a tough market , and it will take time . " The term myosphere was " a play on the theme of connecting the elements of an individual 's world , or sphere . "

Intended to provide a human @-@ like interface to the Internet , Mya was to be accessed via a toll @-@ free telephone number and a pin code . The program was designed to work with any phone , including landlines , but primarily for mobiles , and was to be accessible 24 hours a day . Mya was said to be able to answer questions on topics such as stock prices , news , sports , weather conditions , traffic , airline reservations , addresses , and appointments , as well as being able to call contacts in a mobile phone 's address book .

Intended to be a paid service that would be ready by December 2000 , Motorola hoped that Mya would also eventually be used on Palm Pilot and by other mobile carriers . In July 2000 Motorola was reported to be planning to work with Nuance Communications to internationalize Mya , and that same month BellSouth was declared to be the first carrier to buy the service . According to an article in Popular Science in August 2000 , Motorola was spending " millions of dollars " on both the Mya character and the program . Mya was originally programmed only for English , though by April 2001 the program was being developed in six languages , and additionally Nippon Telegraph and Telephone were said to be working with Motorola to develop a Japanese version . Mya was voiced by actress Gabrielle Carteris , and mechanically altered to sound more digital .

= = Character = =

To create a commercial for Mya , Motorola hired the McCann Erickson company , who in turn hired Digital Domain to create the character . The design was described as a " big @-@ budget " production , though Digital Domain were only given three months to complete the project . Mya 's physical representation : a tall , thin , blonde , blue @-@ eyed white female , was created in the likeness of a human model , Michelle Holgate . The initial inspiration for Mya came from vintage pin @-@ up girls . The first representation of Mya had a very small waist and large breasts , and was said to resemble Jessica Rabbit , which did not impress either Motorola or McCann Erickson . Motorola asked Digital Domain to make Mya look as human as possible yet still be obviously

artificial . The first completed iteration of Mya was so realistic that Motorola asked for her to be made more obviously digital . Viewers were reportedly not impressed with Mya because they thought she was a real person . Digital Domain visual effects supervisor and animation director , Fred Raimondi , decided to remodel Mya 's appearance to be " just to the left of real " .

You know how when you first looked at Max Headroom and were like ' What is that ? ' That 's [the effect] we were after .

Mya 's hair was changed from brunette to bleach blonde . Her short spiky hair style was said to resemble that of Serena Altschul . According to Digital Domain , giving Mya hair that was longer than ear @-@ length was not possible in the time they had been given , due to the difficulties of creating digital photorealistic hair . Mya 's final body shape was an almost exact copy of the original model 's measurements . Mya was typically seen wearing a silver pantsuit but also appeared in halter tops in some shots and dressed in an evening gown for her debut . While Digital Domain staff wanted Mya to appear in a knee @-@ length skirt with high boots , Motorola and McCann chose the pantsuit , due to its contemporary look .

Digital Domain chose not to use motion capture for Mya 's movements as they believed it would constrain the character too much . Instead they used rotoscoping to place their digital character over the real model . The evening gown Motorola selected for Mya to debut in was described by Digital Domain as the most difficult item of clothing they could have chosen , due to its transparency and layering . To render 150 frames (equating to 5 ? 6 seconds of actual footage) of Mya moving in the gown in low @-@ resolution required approximately 6 hours of processing time ; the final high @-@ resolution shots took longer . Mya 's rendering was so complex she crashed the computers at Digital Domain several times . Mya 's creators said they had difficulty making Mya appear as if she were " alive " , and focused intensely on movements , specular highlights and eye blinks in order to " bring her to life " . The specular highlights also had the intended effect of making Mya shine in an inhuman manner ; when the light hit Mya at certain angles , a rainbow would appear . Mya 's skin was described as " part china doll , part disco ball . " Her distinct shine was based on that of a china plate that the commercial 's director , Alex Proyas , had bought in Australia . In some shots of Mya , images were deliberately downgraded and had scan lines added to make the character appear more artificial .

Mya 's visual representation , however , appeared solely during advertising and on her website . Only her voice was to be heard when using the actual program . Demonstrations of Mya 's abilities and images of the character could be viewed at the now defunct website , mya.com. Raimondi said he believed the name Mya was a play on the words ' My assistant ' , as did Sidney Matrix in the book Cyberpop : Digital Lifestyles and Commodity Culture .

= = Debut and appearances = =

Mya made her debut on March 26 , 2000 in an 60 @-@ second advertisement shown during the 72nd Academy Awards . The ad featured Mya dressed in her evening gown and wearing a headset . In the ad Mya steps out of a stretch limousine and walks down the red carpet for the show . The ad declared Mya to be " the darling of the e @-@ world , the 24 @-@ hour talking Internet " and stated that Mya 's abilities would change users ' lives . Despite making her first advertising appearance in March , the Mya program was not scheduled to be ready until December 2000 .

Mya subsequently received considerable media attention , and was featured on the front covers of USA Today , InStyle , Wired and Adbusters . One promotion for Mya showed Hugh Hefner sitting in a limousine with two Playboy Bunnies , asking Mya to read him his emails .

The Mya program was on display at the Motorola wireless booth at COMDEX in April 2000 , which was visited by then president Bill Clinton . Mya " chok [ed] up halfway " through a demonstration for the president and had to be restarted .

In 2006 Sidney Matrix stated Mya " disappeared " after her debut commercial ; in August 2000 , a Yankee Group vice @-@ president stated the debut advertisement for Mya was a " great ad , but where have [Motorola] gone with it ? ... The spot drove viewers to its website to demo the product ... but failed to market Mya further . " Mya was never documented to have been released , nor was

there an announcement of the program 's cancellation ; Motorola abandoned their trademark for ' Mya ' on September 19 , 2002 and their trademark for ' Myosphere ' on December 1 , 2002 .

= = Reception = =

= = = Character = = =

The reception of the character was mixed . Libby Callaway from New York Post stated Mya was one of their favourite " virtual babes " , and said she threatened to take Lara Croft 's title as the internet 's most popular pin @-@ up girl , also describing Mya as " the world 's first ' cyber assistant ' " . Whilst admitting that the character of Mya was visually appealing , John Sullivan of Wireless Insider also stated that Motorola " went overboard " by trying to give the Mya program a character in the hopes she would become a celebrity in her own right , and accused Motorola of trying to mimic the success of Lara Croft . Mya was described in the 2003 book Data Made Flesh : Embodying Information as " by far " the best @-@ rendered and most self @-@ assured digital woman . Noah Robischon from Entertainment Weekly called her debut the second creepiest moment at that year 's Academy Awards (the first being Angelina Jolie kissing her brother) .

Writing in Popular Mechanics , Tobey Grumet described Mya as a male @-@ chauvinistic creation , and she was cited in the 2006 book Physical Culture , Power , and the Body as an example of simulated sexualised females . Sidney Matrix stated that Mya 's seductive appearance and sultry voice " depended on , borrowed from and retrench [ed] sexist stereotypes " , and accused Motorola of normalising the assumption that technology users are both male and heterosexual . Motorola 's marketing director Julie Roth defended the design of Mya 's appearance and voice , attributing it to market research of what would appeal to users .

Mya 's character was often compared to the female computer @-@ simulated character for Ananova , a web @-@ based news service that was being developed around the same time .

= = = Announced program = = =

Though Mya 's character was generally regarded as impressive , the underlying technology was described by Peggy Albright in Wireless Week as not surprising ; Albright said Motorola was " latest company in recent weeks to introduce a voice @-@ activated virtual assistant " , as Mya was announced shortly after Microsoft had announced their MiPad , and Lucent had launched their Mobile Voice Activated Dialing software . However , Tobey Grummet spoke highly of the program in anticipation of its release , and Mya was described by Elliot Drucker of Wireless Week as a solution to the limitations of accessing the Internet on a mobile phone , without a keyboard or large colour display . While regarding the program with interest , John Sullivan doubted that Mya would persuade people who were not already on the Internet to start using it , and stated that if Mya could only read emails and not actually converse with him , he would rather just read his emails himself . Dawn Chmielewski from the Orange County Register called Mya a " crude interpretation of things to come " , noting that speech technology at the time was not without its limitations .

You need to speak like a BBC broadcaster to be understood and use the vocabulary of a toddler to get what you want .

The program won the " Most Innovative Telephony Application " award at the 20th Annual AVIOS Conference in April 2001 .