In developing the AWE concept, thinking about design and functionality of work issues—issues faced by the population at large and related to a wide range of tasks—so that AWE is not too closely tailored to a limited purpose.

CREATING AWE

AWE design requirements will be specified by assessing and describing how people perform information-processing tasks for work or leisure using interfaces and resources. In particular, we will observe and describe users' current work or leisure tasks using task analysis techniques. Task analysis is based on empirical, ethnographic methods in which observational or interview data is collected from a number of representative users or task experts by having them perform (or talk about) a series of specific work tasks.

Below are two examples from the pilot phase. In the example on the left a team of architecture students proposed a room with flexible walls and furniture and the engineering students explored the use of robotics to automate tasks. On the right, the architectural emphasis was on flat surfaces that could easily expand and adapt to changing uses.

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In the example below from our pilot study, a group of human factors psychology students designed a situation to observe participants' reactions to an unanticipated interruption to a cognitive task. Participants were told that they had 45 minutes to set up a simple MS Powerpoint slide presentation. At the 30 minute mark the participants were told that they had 15 minutes to set up a simple 45 PowerPoint slide presentation. At the 30 minute mark the participants were told that they had to temporarily halt the task. The students then sought to categorize variations in how participants 'just aud' the task.

The AWE research plan

The AWE research plan is to move from concept to prototype. What is AWE?

Working life is increasingly defined by fluid, de-centered relations across a wide spectrum of people, machines and environments, prompting new organizational strategies and new tools. Moreover work technologies are changing rapidly, and increasing in number, capability and complexity, placing new demands on workers and their organizations in both work and home environments. This dynamic shift in the nature, place and organization of working life motivates the AWE project, which involves the designing, prototyping, demonstrating and evaluating of a prototypical "robot-room" with embedded Information Technologies. The figures below illustrate an initial view of the AWE concept as described in the grant proposal. On the left we see AWE in "sleep mode" and on the right the AWE user has transformed AWE into "composition mode."

Main findings

- Our findings supported those of Brown (2007):
  - Given the limited amount of resources and time, the emphasis on finding files and places was not as important.
  - However, in some cases, participants did not categorize tasks ("I don't care")

Results:

Office "wish-list" Question:

- 33 of 42 (79%) identified home office needs:
  - 11 had a computer
  - 8 used a more comfortable chair
  - 6 needed a larger workspace
  - 6 had internet access
  - 4 had high internet technology.

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