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Going to the Dogs

Mobile-phone avatars don't have to look like the person who creates or sends a message. This cartoon-like dog, also designed by 3Dmsg, can deliver a song, a poem, or a practical bit of information like, "I'm running 15 minutes late for our meeting." 3Dmsg CEO Todd Mozer believes that animated mobile-phone avatars will appeal to members of the teen, tween, and twentysomething market, who seek new forms of individualized expression via applications -- like today's ultrapopular ring tones.

"Animated avatars will have that same 'cool, fun' appeal as ring tones," says Mozer. Other competitors in the emerging field of complex avatars for handsets include BenQ, the Taiwan-based mobile-phone company that acquired Siemens' handset division, and Japan's Oki Electric Industry.

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