

# Speech TECHNOLOGY

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## H-CARE: *the face of video IVR*

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IN THE UNITED STATES, interactive voice and video response (IVVR) technology has yet to make waves. IVVR systems require a robust infrastructure, a standardized 3G wireless network, and the proliferation of 3G mobile devices and applications—all of which are, for now, lacking in the U.S.

But overseas, things are very different, and IVVR systems are a viable option—thanks in large part to the work of Italy's H-Care.

A developer of platforms for multimodal, multichannel, self-service, and customer care, H-Care is best known for its Human Digital Assistant (HDA) platform, which combines high-quality, real-time animation, 3D rendering, and state-of-the-art voice synthesis to deploy human-like assistance on Web portals, mobile phones, and kiosks.

Among H-Care's many customers are Telecom Italia, the Italian betting agency Lottomatica, and Fiat Group Automobiles—for which the company recently deployed its advanced IVVR solution.

"What we are doing at H-Care is working on a platform which enables multichannel, self-service capability through the Web, mobile video calls, and multimedia messages," says Umberto Basso, the company's president and CEO.

Fiat customers using H-Care's IVVR product—featuring an avatar named "Chiara"—can access an online car configuration program to design a personalized car and book a test drive. The system will place an outbound call to remind them of the scheduled date, and call again after the test drive to deliver an automated customer satisfaction survey. The system also has an inbound telephone component that lets users call into the IVVR, navigate through menus with voice commands, and watch streaming videos.

"The component used in [HDA] is called a 'Face Engine,' which allows for real-time, high-quality video creation, and it delivers a streaming version of the video usable for Web applications, or a streaming version of the video usable for IVVR," Basso says.

Behind the Face Engine is the "Brain Server," which Basso says is used both on the Web and in the IVVR or standard IVR channels to build the logic behind the face so that all of the dialogues, paths, and prompts are generated dynamically.

"[Fiat is] embracing the technology on both the Web and on the video call," Basso says. "Most of their customers are mobile customers—they're in the car—so they have to reach customers while they are on the go." —Adam Boretz