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The Robot Swarm Is Upon Us

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Posted by [Neal Leavitt](#) on June 28th, 2015 at 9:30 am

“Exterminate, exterminate.”

-Briefing warning from the [Daleks](#) before firing their extermination rays on various [“Doctor Who”](#) episodes

What is one of the most well-known catch phrases on the long-running BBC series, “Doctor Who,” might

eventually be uttered by a robot greeting you at your front door to take care of your termites.

Farfetched? Maybe right now, but a robot may soon be coming to your home to spray pesticides, clean your windows, and perhaps even tutor your kids.

[ABI Research](#) expects the global market for consumer robots to top \$6.5 billion by 2017. [BI Intelligence](#) says the market for consumer and office robots will grow at a CAGR of 17% between 2015-2019, seven times faster than the market for manufacturing robots.

And some other key takeaways from BI Intelligence in their ‘The Robotics Market Report’:

- Three distinct categories will dominate the consumer/office side: home cleaning and maintenance; telepresence (i.e., telecommuting to events or remote offices) and advanced robots for home entertainment.
- The ubiquity of smartphones and tablets is making it easier to develop robots for consumer and office applications. The report says mobile devices offer designers the opportunity to ‘outsource’ computing and user interface tasks to companion devices, allowing developers to produce app-controlled robots at more accessible price points.
- Robot vendors still face significant challenges – a lot of people are still turned off by robots too humanoid in appearance. “There is also a brewing potential for the kinds of intellectual property battles seen in the smartphone space,” added BI Intelligence.

The robot invasion is well underway. Lowe’s announced last year that the company’s [Innovation Labs](#) unit was testing OSHbot, a retail-ready, mobile multilingual robot, designed to help shoppers navigate stores quickly and easily.

Still in development, OSHbot not only knows where every piece of inventory is at all times, but has a telepresence enabling shoppers to connect with off-site experts who can provide useful home projects information.

According to Kyle Nel, executive director of Lowe’s Innovation Labs, “home improvement is a very high involvement thing so having that ability to ask questions in your native language every time to a robot, makes the expectation that every time you’ll have the same high quality experience.”

A few other quick examples:

[Tractica](#), a market intelligence firm focusing on human interaction with technology, reported that SoftBank Robotics and Aldebaran Robotics have tag teamed to produce [Pepper](#), which their creators say is the first robot able to not only read and respond to human emotion, but also analyze how people are feeling and guide them in the right direction. Tractica says Nestle Japan plans to use Pepper to sell Nescafe machines in home appliance stores throughout Japan by the end of this year.

Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group will introduce [Nao](#) at a few of its bank branches this summer on a trial basis. The robot, noted Tractica, can speak 19 languages and uses a camera to detect emotions from customers’ facial expressions.

And last year at International CES, [Industry Week](#) reported that the French-based firm [Keecker](#) rolled out a robot that can project video or other content from a tablet or smartphone to a wall or ceiling.

“You can enjoy life without being tied to the television set,” said Pierre Lebeau, the company’s founder/CEO.

Lastly, while the sky’s the limit on how robots will be utilized by marketers to sell products and services, how humans control and interact with them is a critical component for success.



Hiring expert [Dana Borowka](#)



best summed it up:

“A tough challenge for small business managers with robots will be consistently hiring quality people to take care of the robots,” he said. “These devices will need to be set up, programmed, monitored and repaired. No benefit comes without a price.”

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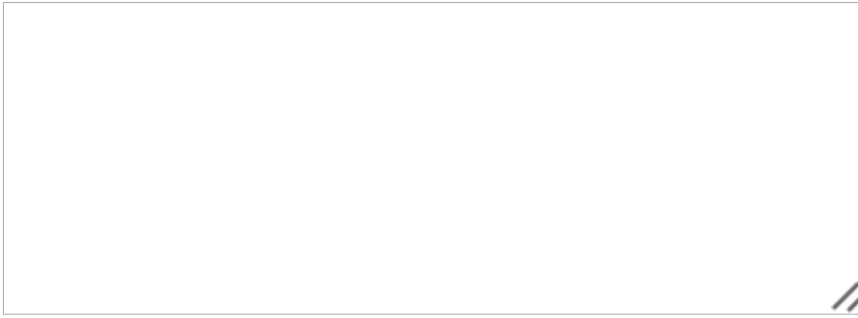
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