

I. Bierhoff, P. Panis. *Active involvement of older users in the design process of smart home technology*. *Gerontechnology* 2008; 7(2):74. The greatest advantage of the latest developments in smart home technology and related services is that it can be non-intrusive and completely personalised to the individual. The greatest challenge however is to involve users into the design process to fully employ the potential of smart home technology and services. Current smart home technology is mostly developed from a technological point of view¹. Changing this process requires an adapted and in some cases new approach to user research. As a basis the ISO standard 13407 can be used². This paper focuses on the use of several methods to involve users in the design process used in two European IP projects on AAL (Ambient Assisted Living), called NETCARITY and SOPRANO. **Methods** At the preparation of this abstract we completed the first step in the human-centred design process. We used four methods: (i) questionnaires and interviews, (ii) focus group meeting on the basis of scenarios and personas, (iii) focus group meeting on the basis of challenges and guardian angel concept and (iv) focus group meeting using cartoons. The questionnaire and interview were used to gain a better understanding of the starting situation of the users involved in the research. Scenarios were designed to elicit users' feedback about: usefulness and appreciation, and advantages and disadvantages of the suggested solutions³. Within the scenarios enough information was provided to start a discussion but the use of technology wasn't specified too much. Personas were used because they are archetypical users favouring empathy and personification⁴. Challenges were first written down individually to take advantage of individual creativity and were followed by a group discussion. A 'Guardian Angel' is to be understood as a personification of the system to avoid a technology-centred way of thinking. During the cartoon focus group meeting instead of already filling in all the possible solutions we gave only a short introduction to the service and the triggering questions were presented to the participants. They all received a set of possible answers to the questions asked and were asked to create their own service. **Results and discussion** All methods resulted in lively discussions and a lot of useful feedback from end-users. Besides the more obvious functionalities like protection and health users indicated that they would like support in organising daily activities, preventing to lose their dignity and maintaining social contacts. It is important that they didn't only look at individual functionalities but were also aware of the chain of activities certain functionalities are part of. Current strategies that they use to make daily activities easier contain valuable information for possible solutions. For the next design cycle the keyword is cooperation between users and experts. This makes it possible to combine knowledge at every moment in the process and not sequential. This calls for innovative methods to shape the desired cooperation.

References

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Figure 1 Create you own service