

iSeePet:

A System for Communicating with Your Pet from Anywhere, at Anytime

Perhaps you will be getting home late due to an emergency appointment. Not having prepared food for your pet, it must be starving. Staying at home alone, how on earth will your pet pass the time? All pet owners have envisioned this situation at least once. iSeePet has solved this dilemma.



It is a food dispenser that utilizes IT to allow you to feed a determined amount of food for your pet, call your pet with a melody and watch your pet through a built-in network camera – from anywhere, whenever you like.



A heavy duty cable is used to connect the iSeePet to the server, making it safe even in the unlikely event of your pet biting it. The food tray is detachable so that it can be washed. The camera, built



Communication by Electric Pot Mimamori Hotline

It is something we use every day, but it can also serve as an opportunity to communicate with a family member who lives far away. What is it? It's the i-POT by Zojirushi corporation. Someone might think, "A communication tool called an i-POT? Is that something like the Apple i-Pod?" The i-POT has nothing to do with playing music. It is a very ordinary and simple electric hot water pot that is used for boiling hot water for tea. It is also extremely easy to use. Well then, how can it be used as a tool for communication? The secret is in the wireless communications device in the base of the pot. (You



Mobile Ark, a wireless communication tool, is inside the i-POT

can think of it as an onboard mobile phone dedicated to data communications.) Using this communications device, information about the use of the pot is reported to a system center, and emails are sent to a family member twice a day about how the pot is being used, with information such as the number of times it was used. If you access the dedicated website for subscribers through a PC or a mobile phone, you can view a graphical display of the latest use of the pot at any time, with data updated every 30 minutes. The i-POT uses wireless communications, so there is no need for any special wiring.

Many elderly people live by themselves in Japan. We unfortunately hear several sad reports each year of elderly people who have died alone and were not discovered for a long time. The i-POT was developed in response to such lonely deaths. It began when a doctor, wondering how people could be watched over in their daily lives using common items, talked with Zojirushi, a maker of electrical appliances such as rice cookers and hot water pots. As is hinted at by the name of the service, Mimamori Hotline (keeping watch hotline), this is not an emergency communication system. Rather,

it is a service that allows us to keep track of how elderly people are living their daily lives. Two separate entities, the hot water pot and information technology, which would seem to have nothing at all in common, come together in a perfect marriage from the point of view of "watching over." The hot water pot is an item that has really taken root in our lives, so it is possible to gauge from its use the rhythm of daily life. Generally, people turn it on when they get up in the morning, use it for making tea whenever they eat, and turn it off when they go to bed at night.

As an example of the use of this system, we hear actual accounts of people who sensed that something was wrong because the pot was not turned on at the usual time in the morning. They visited their aged relative and found she had come down with an illness at home. If the pot is being used more than usual, one could assume that someone has come to visit, and if it is not being used, the assumption might be that



into the center of the unit, employs a fish-eye lens with a viewing angle of 130 degrees, wide enough to view nearly the whole of an average sized Japanese room (about 10 to 12 *jo* or 18m² – 21m²). Just as you would expect from AOS Technologies, an IT company that has provided major manufacturers with technology to capture images, compress them, and send them to a network using a single system-on-a-chip, the images (real time video on a PC, and still images on a mobile phone) come through so clearly that you cannot help but be riveted by them. With a built-in feature that allows you to capture pictures of your adorable pet, this service delivers full satisfaction, even among users who are accustomed to and actively use broadband Internet. A wealth of pet-related information for customers is included through an original



portal on the login screen. Just this August, a blog management service was launched to enable customers to easily upload pictures to their blogs. The service, which began near the end of 2002, has received a variety of responses from around the world. *The Wall Street Journal* hailed iSeePet as a pioneering product in

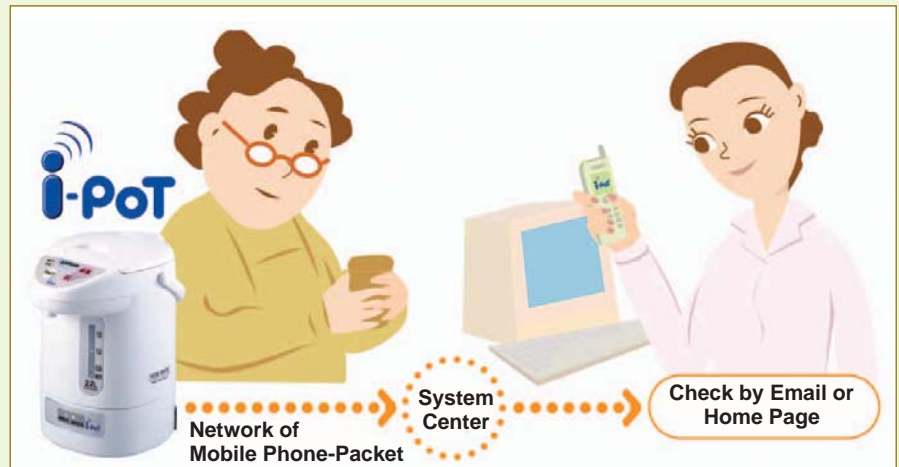


the area of lifestyle solutions. Currently, there are about 2,000 subscribers, mainly young people in their 20s and 30s. In line with the corporate philosophy of the maker, which is to provide a rich lifestyle to home users, the service facilitates a more comfortable lifestyle through the enjoyment of advanced IT. **J.S**

Notes: iSeePet was developed and is being marketed by AOS Technologies, Inc. Service is provided by AOS Services, Inc. The iSeePet unit costs ¥59,800. The rental cost is ¥1,730 per month plus a ¥30,000 initial fee. The above prices do not include the consumption tax.

the elderly occupant has gone out. In either case, this would be a natural opportunity to get in touch with other members of the family. In fact, users report that the i-POT has made communication with their families easier than it was previously. One good feature of the i-POT is its ability to keep communications at the appropriate psychological distance – neither too close nor too far away. As technology progresses, it would be easy to add functionality, such as making it possible to communicate by voice. By doing this, however, one would be moving away from the aim of the “keeping watch hotline,” the idea of which is to unobtrusively keep a protective eye on one’s aged relative. A spokesman for Zojirushi says: “We are not just trying to make something new using the advanced tools offered by IT. Rather, I should stress that we are only using technology as a means to an end, so that we can meet the needs of our users.”

This service, which commenced in June 2001, has benefited from the effect of a unique TV commercial, and brand recognition is extremely high. Because it is not sold by general merchandising stores and must be ordered directly from the manufacturer under a payment system of ¥3,150 per month,* there were 2,400 users as of June 20, 2005, but the number of new contracts is on the increase. The service is particularly well regarded by users, and the level of



Subscribers can view a graphical display of the latest use of the pot at any time

customer satisfaction is extremely high. The manufacturer places great importance on customer contact, regularly sending out questionnaires to users.

In Tokyo, where there are a lot of elderly people living alone, Arakawa-ward and the Chiyoda Council of Social Welfare provide subsidies in the use of the system as local government services. When family members are unable to keep watch, the government employees keep an eye on the users.

Although various kinds of information home appliances are hitting the market one after another, it is still difficult to actually integrate information technology into our daily

lives. Our image of IT tends to be one of leading edge, or future new technologies. However, the Mimamori Hotline, in an extremely natural manner, manages to connect people’s daily lives with information technology. It is a service that offers its users peace of mind and a sense of security, and an opportunity for family members to get in touch. It also helps to strengthen bonds within the family. **J.S**



Notes: Includes rental of a new i-POT and communications charges from the i-POT to the system center. There is also an initial contract fee of ¥5,250.