

# YAHOO! MESSENGER

## Challenge

Yahoo! wanted to create a next-generation version of its instant messaging client that would capitalize on the visual depth of Microsoft Vista. With the advent of Windows Presentation Foundation (WPF), Yahoo! saw the potential to create a more dynamic interface for its messaging program than ever before, one that would offer its users an extensive array of beautiful, engaging features.

## The Demand for Simplicity

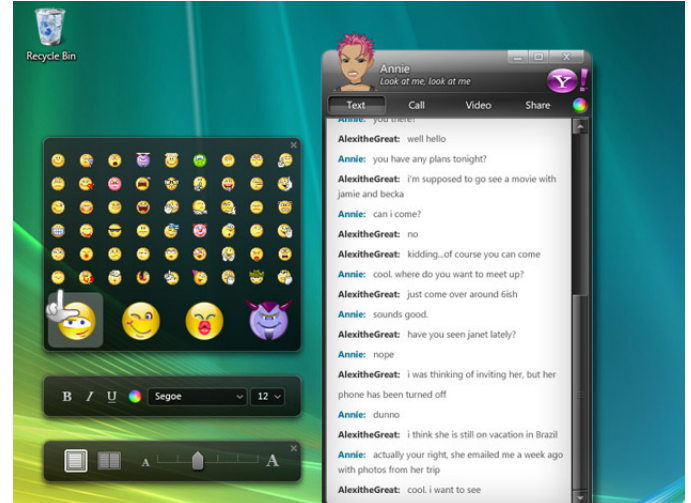
frog conducted close analysis of consumer use and competitors' products to identify best-in-class feature sets, potential areas for improvement, and key differentiators for the Yahoo! brand experience. All major entities offered the same core messaging features: a list of contacts and icons, pure chat and video contact options, and profile information.

frog and Yahoo! began brainstorming ways to improve upon these fundamental requirements. Our research showed that online messaging was rarely the exclusive activity of PC users – yet their screens were often cluttered by multiple chat windows, distracting them from other pursuits. Yahoo! needed to balance on-screen presence with greater simplicity and clarity for its users.

## Stylish, Streamlined Communications

Through a rapid-fire creative phase, we created an interface design that places visual emphasis on the aspects of communication users care most about: their friends and their conversations, rather than the toolbars menus and interface elements that are standard in most instant messaging applications. A tabbed interface allows users to toggle between multiple conversations within a single window, saving precious screen space for other activities. The window was also restructured to make conversation more natural by presenting text within a continuous column, like a newspaper instead of a spreadsheet. Text size, generally locked-in by messaging services, can be enlarged for visibility and accessibility, fostering more comfortable communications. Every feature was refined for ease and user satisfaction.

The interface itself is highly dynamic and visually enticing. frog took advantage of WPF technologies to allow users to zoom in on their contact list with a simple movement of the mouse. The list also identifies friends automatically from a user's other activities at Yahoo!, then creates a rich experience of



## ABOVE

The worlds of technology and art come together in the new, progressive Yahoo! Messenger

online communication, with avatars who expand beyond the frame of the text window and playfully interact with screen elements during chat. Favorite contacts can be saved in the Vista Sidebar, so that even when the contact list is closed, users can keep track of their closest friends. All animations occur smoothly throughout the experience. Furthermore, the window itself can be customized by color and theme using a dynamic new tool that spins swatches of possible hues for the user to select. This customization tool offers a potential platform for advertising, as well, whereby sponsors could brand their own application skins for user selection.

## Technical Collaboration

Developers from frog and Yahoo! worked in tight collaboration throughout the project. frog's technology team built and refined the entire user-interface layer of the application, while Yahoo! developers moved ahead with the functional service layer. This process of overlapping work streams enabled the application to be built in a dramatically shorter timeframe than possible in the traditional software process.

## Result

The pre-release application debuted at CES 2007 and is scheduled for public release later this year. A demo of the site is available online.