

Forget the telecommute - now you can 'robocommute' (w/ Video)

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Anybots QB robot. Laser shoots from the right eye.

(PhysOrg.com) -- Anybots, a Silicon Valley start-up company, has developed a telepresence robot called QB, which is a mobile device that can represent you in your next meeting at the office if you are unable to make it, or which can give a company a virtual presence in a remote location. It is in essence a teleconferencing system on wheels.

The mobile [robot](#)'s height is variable up to around 1.75 meters and it weighs 16 kilograms. It includes a main computer with Intel Core 2 Duo

CPI and Internet connections, several mini-computers, and some self-awareness and autonomy is built-in. The robot is self-balancing and moves around on two aluminum and rubber wheels, reaching human walking speed. The main computer runs a free BSD operating system to drive QB's motors. The system is controlled remotely by a Firefox browser and simple keyboard commands.

QB "sees" via a five-megapixel video camera in one eye, and a lower resolution camera on the head pointing downwards, and transmits the video feeds to its remote controller via the Internet. Another camera monitors what is at QB's feet. The robot "hears" via three microphones that feed audio to the telecommuter, and has high-quality speakers for audio in the other direction. The robot feeds an image of the telecommuter to the people in the remote location via a 320 x 240 LCD screen mounted on its head, and the screen doubles as a control panel to enable the Wi-Fi connection. The second eye functions as a [laser pointer](#)

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QB is controlled remotely, but an in-built laser guidance system ensures it does not bump into the furniture or door frames. Chief executive officer of Anybots, Trevor Blackwell, explained the point was to make it as simple to control as a character in Second Life or video game.

QB runs for up to eight hours on a full charge and will automatically return to its charging base if the lithium battery pack runs low.

The QB robot is expected to be useful for businesses with employees who telecommute, and for companies manufacturing products overseas and wanting a remote presence that can, for example, travel along production lines talking to the staff.



Anybots QB.

QB is expected to be commercially available later this year, and will retail for about \$15,000 per unit. This may seem expensive, but according chief operating officer Bob Christopher, some companies will probably buy multiple units because they will save on air travel costs or even costlier enterprise-class conferencing systems. The robot also has the advantage of allowing a telepresence in conversations outside the conference room. As long as a Wi-Fi connection is available, no extra hardware is required.

Public demonstration robots will soon be available via [Anybot's website](#).

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