

New Indiegogo project KUBI turns tablets into telepresence devices

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(Phys.org)—San Francisco based Revolve Robotics has launched a project on Indiegogo (similar to Kickstarter) looking for funding for its KUBI telepresence device. What's unique about their project is the projected cost of the device to consumers – \$250 instead of the thousands for others currently available for sale. That price differential

is due to the fact that KUBI isn't a robot that wanders around, it's a tablet computer stand with gears for allowing remote manipulate of the viewing angle.

[Telepresence](#) is the use of technology to simulate the experience of being somewhere else in the real world, in real time. To achieve such an effect, robots have been developed that can be driven by pilots situated at a distant location, via the Internet and WiFi. Such robots can be moved to change their orientation to allow for looking around and interacting with others across large or small distances. They typically come equipped with cameras, microphones and speakers.

Noting that including the ability to move around has driven the cost of telepresence devices into the thousands of dollars, Revolve Robotics founders and engineers Marcus Rosenthal and Ilya Polyakov chose to take another approach – they've cut out the wheels making their device stationary and use the hardware already built into tablet computers to provide the interaction abilities.

The KUBI ("neck" in Japanese) has two "fingers" in the back that support the tablet automatically. Once installed onto the device, the [iPad](#) or Bluetooth enabled Android device can be controlled remotely using a web based directional application or via arrows on a keyboard. Pilots can then cause the device to look left and right (up to 300 degrees) and up or down (up to 90 degrees) allowing them to follow the action occurring at a remote location, or to turn to address different people over a dinner or conference table.

One possible problem with the device not discussed on the Indiegogo project page or shown in the promotional video is how much noise the device makes as the turning motion involves two gearing systems. As it's being promoted as a telepresence conferencing tool, it would seem few would be interested if the gear noise is too distracting. Revolve Robotics

is looking for \$200,000 seed money to start up a manufacturing and sales process for the KUBI.

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