

## Hot topic of the month May 2007

### Behind the scenes of the new orange.fr portal



On Monday 14 May 2007, the [orange.fr](http://orange.fr) portal became convergent. The single portal is more ergonomic in that it combines Internet and mobile, eliminating the two separate thumbnails. Internet and mobile users can even choose to fuse their two identities. This gives them simplified access – with single sign-on – to a whole range of convergent services, as well as all sections of the new convergent portal. France Telecom engineers contributed directly to the successful launch of the new orange.fr portal by rationalising the technical infrastructures and developing innovative convergent tools.

### A convergent portal

Launched in 14 May 2007, the new [orange.fr](http://orange.fr) portal, a.k.a. NExT Portal V2, accomplishes a feat in combining the worlds of mobile phone and Internet on a single homepage. The two browser thumbnails (mobile and Internet) is replaced by the best of the two former portals. After signing on, the user is offered services adapted to his or her status (mobile, Internet, convergent or user of the site but not Orange customer), on a personalised homepage tailored to his or her needs.

### Combined services

If the user is both a mobile and an Internet customer, they can choose to become “convergent” by subscribing to the free option “mes services unifiés” (“my combined services”). This gives them access to convergent services on their mobile phone or PC, indiscriminately. Their Orange mobile and Internet mail boxes are fused into a single one. To access all the services available on orange.fr, users sign on only once, using their Orange mobile number or email address. But “mes services unifiés” gives access to many other advantages besides amalgamating email and mobile mail boxes:

- single sign-on to access all of the Internet and mobile services (mail, photo album, contacts, etc.);
- looking at and managing your photo album on your PC and mobile phone;
- looking up your virtual portfolio (finance option) on your PC and mobile;
- increasing your message mail box’s storage capacity to 1 Go (in stead of 100 Mo);
- increasing your photo album’s capacity to 1 Go (in stead of 400 Mo on Internet and 100 Mo on mobile), and organising and sharing photos by means of a distribution list;
- 50 free SMS alerts on your mobile to tell you when you get important incoming mail;

- sending SMS or MMS from orange.fr, to be deducted from the mobile rate package (up to 50 SMS/month; above that, they are charged 17 euro cents to the Internet bill).

# Photo

Découvrez le service Photo Orange

**1** Inviter Paul à consulter les photos de vacances >>

**Simplifiez-vous la vie, partagez vos photos en ligne!**

Avec le service photo Orange, je peux :

- ✓ Créer des albums en ligne,
- ✓ Les stocker gratuitement,
- ✓ Les partager en toute sécurité,
- ✓ Permettre à mes invités de commander des tirages.

**Convergent photo service**

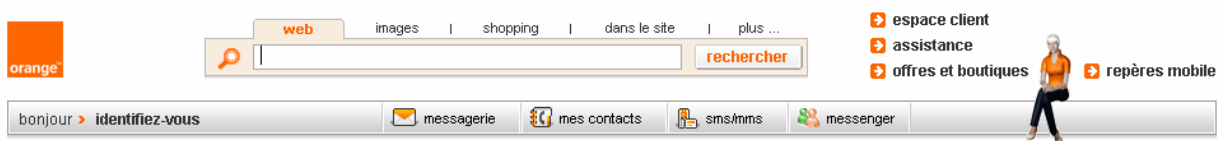
Technically speaking, in order to put up the convergent photo offer, France Telecom's R&D had to upgrade the software application to handle mobile and Internet customer accounts. The migration of all 500 000 Orange customers' data to the Internet platform, which now hosts all the users, was another prerequisite.

Besides rebranding the pages (adapting them to the portal's new graphic charter) and single identity management, a specific platform also had to be integrated that would give optimal display regardless of the channel used. Each mobile device has its own specific screen, keypad, buttons and browsers. It is therefore difficult to validate one display for all existing phones, unlike Internet where only a handful of browsers exist (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Konqueror for Linux, Safari for Mac, etc.). The specific platform will thus adapt the page to fit the device, by means of a page description in a generic language, OML (Orange Market Language). An alternative therefore had to be found for the LAN-type platform that filled this function for France but that did not correspond to the target architecture defined for NEXt Portal. The Group platform that has now been deployed has the advantage of allowing service rollout in other countries.

## Simplifying the customer relationship

Three combined spaces, accessible at the top right-hand corner of the convergent homepage, allows users to manage their relations with Orange:

- **Offres et Boutiques** (“offers and shops”) gives fast, single access to Internet and mobile products, facilitating cross selling;
- **Espace Client** (“customer space”) lets you manage all your accounts and check the state of your fidelity programmes: “mon compte utilisateur” (“my user account”) for your identifiers to access the portal and see your user data, “mon compte Internet” (“my Internet account”) and “mon compte mobile” (“my mobile account”) to check your consumption and bills, subscribe to new options, and “mon mobile” (“my mobile”) to manage your fidelity programmes;
- **Assistance** gives access to a support space (advice, help for users, problem shooting, etc.) for mobile, Internet as well as landline.



## A dedicated toolbar for the portal's services

A toolbar, launched on 21 May 2007, can be installed on your browser that directs you to the most used services on the portal: email box (number of unopened messages), SMS / MMS communication, address book, etc.



The instant messaging service Orange Messenger by Windows Live, based on a partnership with Microsoft, lets you access portal services directly from the chat window. Windows Live is also available from your mobile phone, with the same contact list.

## Single identity management

The new portal's single sign-on is one of the main innovations of orange.fr, and presented a real technical challenge to R&D and the portal teams at France Telecom. Up till now, there was a family of mobile services and a family of Internet services. The successful implementation of single sign-on was a sine qua non for France

Telecom to reach their goal of providing convergent Orange services accessible through various channels.

### **The strategic choice of an identity-management platform**

Since 2004, R&D has been conducting comparative studies of the various identity-management solutions existing within the Group. In February 2005, strategic and technical recommendations on the choice of platforms for the various types of customers – mass market or corporate – were drawn up by a cross-cutting, Group-wide technical committee. At the time, three identity-management solutions existed in the Group: one for landline, one for Orange mobile and another for Wanadoo. The solution chosen for NExT Portal V2 took the essence from the one formerly used for Wanadoo, called IDMP (Identity Management Platform), which had been developed in collaboration with France Telecom's R&D and Wanadoo teams and had won the Innovation Award in 2006. To fulfil the technical criteria for the new portal, the solution was completed on a provisioning level with technical bricks then used by Orange mobile. The best aspects of the Internet and mobile solutions were therefore reused, thus rationalising the identity-management platforms and focussing on the most innovative elements in this field.

### **A number of challenges met**

The first obstacle encountered was the following: one Orange customer may be using several user accounts, for Internet or mobile services. The aim was therefore to let all "Orange users" access their services in a simpler way. This meant that the service platforms had to operate in an identical way, regardless of the access channel (mobile or Internet), so that the user would not get lost and so that the service platforms could be optimised. This gave an opportunity to apply the results of research on identity management that France Telecom's R&D and portal teams have been doing for years, and put them to the benefit of Group services in view of convergence.

Another challenge was to give users a certain measure of freedom, so that they could reverse their choice of fusing their two identities (mobile and Internet). For one month, they could still access their two separate accounts as they had left them. After that, if users chose to separate their mobile and Internet identities, they could go back to two services without the initial personalised settings. Technical solutions therefore had to be developed to overcome this obstacle. Besides, a previously created pay option to unify services (mobile and Internet), called "Mes services perso", already existed in the Orange offer. Users of this offer therefore had to be taken into account so that they would not lose out on the generalising of unified services, by offering them bonuses (more SMS, MMS, etc.).

Finally, on the volumetric side, all the users had to be switched over to the same identity-management solution. If all the mobile users were to create an identity on the new portal, with an associated mailbox, the platform might not have been big enough to support the new load. Mechanisms therefore had to be defined and adapted to avoid any clogging.



By merging identity management, the technical needs brought by the merging of service platforms could be met.

This solution also enables the operator to know the usage of its users, per category. This facilitates a more detailed personalisation of services, online shops, self-services and self-care offered on the portal, thereby answering better to users' expectations.

## Diane, an avatar to accompany you



Diane, an avatar that is present in about fifteen sequences, accompanies Internauts in their browsing and explains some of the finer aspects of the new portal's functioning. This 3D character was created in one of France Telecom's R&D labs specialised in image technologies

(encoding, indexation, 3D, rich media) with real know-how in animation and the creation of virtual assistants. This entity has been doing research in the field for many years, and for instance created a "scenario-writing" tool for avatar videos that was used to generate the Diane videos.

The idea of using avatars to improve the customer relationship and help develop the use of group services, was born in the teams responsible for the marketing and development of usages in France Telecom. The idea took shape in 2006 with the first productions using avatars from R&D: a base station presenting France Telecom offers, and two publications on the intranet through a multimedia challenge and an advent calendar. The success of these tests confirmed the choice of Diane to present the new portal, and of R&D's scenario-writing tool to produce the videos.



The scenario-writing tool needed some adaptation to meet the requirements of the new orange.fr portal: the look of the avatar, new library of gestures, managing the seamlessness to mix the character with the videos or images, creating various levels of presentation, etc. Thanks to the excellent understanding and collaboration between the R&D, marketing and usage-development teams, the production of all the presentation videos for the orange.fr portal could start in April 2007.

## Producing Diane



No actor was used to generate the avatar images. The scenario-writing tool was used to produce a scenario featuring the avatar by selecting gestures of the avatar and the shot (close-up, medium, full, etc.) to match the rhythm of the text and the delivery. Then, from the scenario, the animation engines and 3D delivery engines (that calculate the Diane images) integrated in the tool, produce the videos. A face-animation engine developed by R&D takes care of synchronising Diane's lip movements with the sound track. The final video is generated from the 3DSMax 3D engine or a R&D proprietary engine. The videos can be generated in different formats: flash and Windows Media for Internet, 3GP for mobile phones and even specific formats adapted to television (for future developments of the Orange TV portal for instance).

For the sound, on the other hand, an actress recorded all of Diane's words for this first production.

## Future evolutions

In a near future, the files with the actress's voice that were recorded for the first version of Diane will be used to generate a synthesised voice (so-called "synthesis by operator" method). This voice will be added to the synthesised voices already available in the scene-writing tool to generate the sound track. In this way, the sound for new Diane sequences can be generated dynamically from a simple text file.

Besides the additional speech synthesis, another aspect of the work is to make the avatar increasingly realistic and believable (in appearance, animation, behaviour). R&D is also working on combining natural dialogue, speech synthesis and avatar animation in order to answer directly to users' questions, guide them, develop assistance, direct users in their navigation, etc. A first trial in this direction will be carried out for Orange Messenger by Windows Live, with a small 2D avatar that will be used for customer assistance with a restricted user panel.

In the longer run, R&D will also pursue research to let the avatar integrate sign language and become a simple interface, generated dynamically for the hearing-impaired.

### **Test use**

Besides assisting new users of the portal, the use of Diane on orange.fr will help us learn more about the role of avatars in terms of user experience: are they really useful to the customer relationship? Will they make life easier for the users? Won't they on the contrary irritate them? By analysing users' behaviour, we can assess whether they fulfil a need or on the contrary have limited usefulness. This first rollout on NExT Portal will therefore be highly instructive, and will help us define future actions for the Group's use of virtual characters such as Diane.

### **An evolving portal**

With orange.fr, Orange fulfils its promise to become an integrated operator as announced when Wanadoo was renamed Orange on 1 June 2006. The new portal in fact favours the use of call services by facilitating access from any device, and with single sign-on. Several upgrades will follow suit to improve existing services and add new ones.

Regarding photos, mobile users will soon be able to upload their shots onto online albums, no longer through MMS, but through an application installed on their devices, which will avoid any loss in quality and drastic compression during transfer. Synchronising photos between PC, mobile phone and online album could soon even become automatic. Users who are not Orange customers will soon be able to use the photo service. Mini videos of less than 5 Mo, taken with a photo camera or mobile phone, could be managed with the photo service.

The convergent service panel will soon include blogs and new community services, as well as a data-storage service. The portal will also become more customisable and offer the possibility to test new Beta services, Web 2.0 style, which could subsequently, with usage feedback, be integrated into orange.fr.

### **Links**

[The orange.fr portal](#)

[Press release of 7 May 2007 entitled “L'élection présidentielle bat des records sur orange.fr” \(“Presidential election breaks records on orange.fr”, in French only\)](#)

[Press release of 30 April 2007 entitled “Suivez le 2 mai prochain, en direct et en intégralité, le débat entre Ségolène Royal et Nicolas Sarkozy sur le portail orange.fr” \(“On 2 May, watch the full debate in live between Ségolène Royal and Nicolas Sarkozy on the orange.fr portal”, in French only\)](#)

[Press release of 26 April 2007 entitled “Le groupe Le Monde et Orange annoncent la signature d'un partenariat” \(“Le Monde group and Orange announce signing of partnership”, in French only\)](#)

[Press release of 1 December 2006 entitled “Orange lance « net et mobile », première offre convergente d'accès mobile et Internet sans abonnement à la ligne téléphonique classique” \(in French only\)](#)

[Press release of 16 October 2006 entitled “Europe 1 et Orange : parler au plus grand nombre”](#)

[Press release of 31 May 2006 entitled “orange.fr : le portail unique pour accéder aux univers Internet et mobile de la marque Orange” \(in French only\)](#)

[Hot topic of the month of March 2007 on “Fixed-mobile convergence”](#)

[Hot topic of the month of October 2004 entitled “Focus on Liberty Alliance”](#)