



May 18, 2016

#littlefoot episode 1: Inspiration and Research

It was a sleepy Friday afternoon at work and I was at my desk fighting a severe case of weekenditis when I got the e-mail notification. "You have a delivery waiting for you in the lobby."

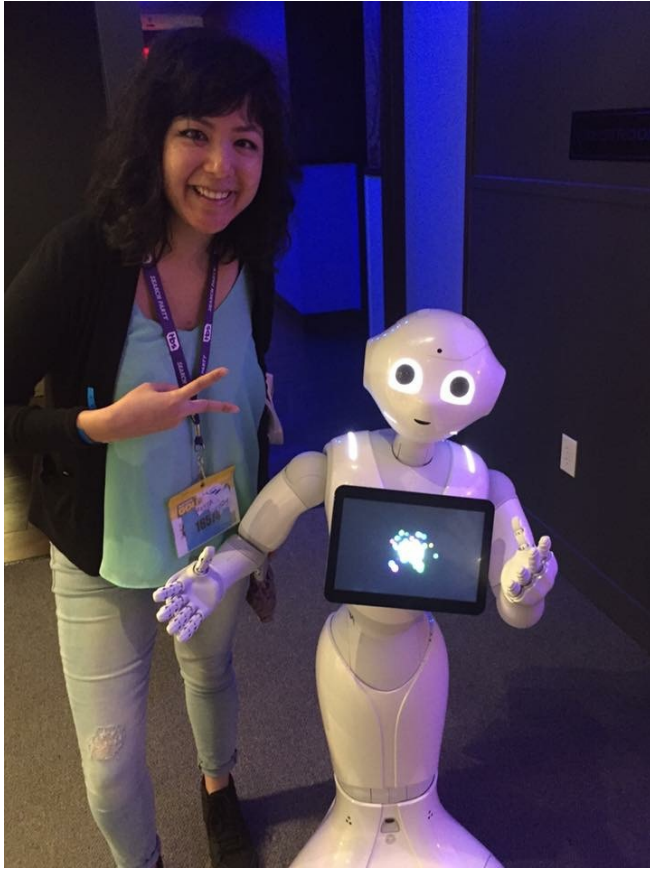


By

Darshana Tuladhar

It was a sleepy Friday afternoon at work and I was at my desk fighting a severe case of weekenditis* when I got the e-mail notification. "You have a delivery waiting for you in the lobby." I immediately knew what it was, jumped out of my chair with glee and excitedly shouted, "it's here!" Jake, my deskmate, looked over and then continued working - he was used to my random outbursts and out of context comments.

What had arrived was a robot dinosaur.



I was going to be a dinosaur robot mommy! Let me give you some context on what led to this delightful dinosaur delivery. Earlier in the year, I was lucky enough to speak and attend SXSW 2016. While in Austin, I visited IBM's cognitive studio where I was able to witness human-robot interactions with an [NAO robot](#) and [Pepper the service robot](#). I was inspired and fascinated by the relationship that a number of us developed with these robots with limited social exchanges. This fascination led me down a path of investigating consumer robots that emphasized human interactions and relationships. I was determined to do more research and understand what facilitates these relationships and connections by having a robot of my own. After weeks of researching robots and narrowing down candidates, I decided to purchase a dinosaur robot known as Pleo RB. The reasons I chose this particular robot are:

- price
- it is autonomous
- goes through developmental stages
- is interactive
- is socially engaging
- it has artificial intelligence that can learn

Being a researcher, I proceeded to find more information by visiting pleoworld.com, lurking forums, reading reviews and consumer articles, and watching hours of YouTube videos of people with their pet robot dinosaurs. After a couple of weeks, I finally pulled the trigger and purchased a Pleo RB dinosaur for myself.

Now that the robot is here, I intend to carry out my investigation of human interactions. My plan is to regularly bring the robot into the Blink offices and observe how others engage with it. I will document findings in future blog posts, run studies and interview people about their experiences with the robot. Through this endeavor, I hope to uncover:

- If relationships develop
- If they do, what types of relationships develop?

- What is it about this little robot that encourages and fosters relationships with humans?
- An understanding of the user's perspectives and experiences with a social, companion robot
- What to consider when creating a social and/or companion robot in terms of user experience

See [#littlefoot episode 2](#) for findings and updates!

*Weekenditis - Similar to senioritis where one reaches a point where they do not want to work anymore and eagerly anticipate the upcoming weekend.

Darshana Tuladhar, when not observing and analyzing human behavior and interactions, enjoys birds, playing the violin, drinking root beer, and salsa dancing, preferably simultaneously.