

# AM+A: Motorola Envoy

**Employer:** Aaron Marcus + Associates

**Client:** Motorola

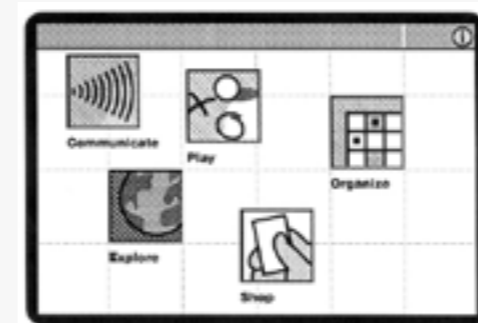
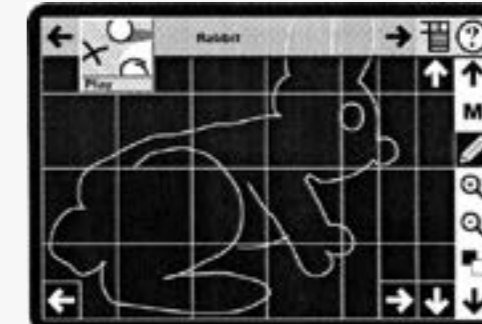
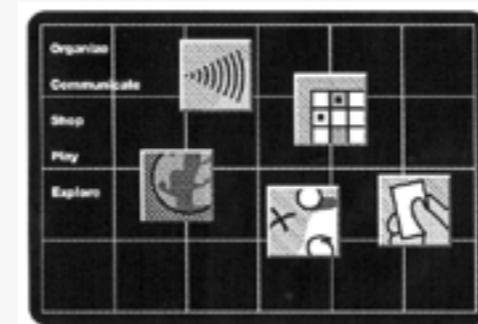
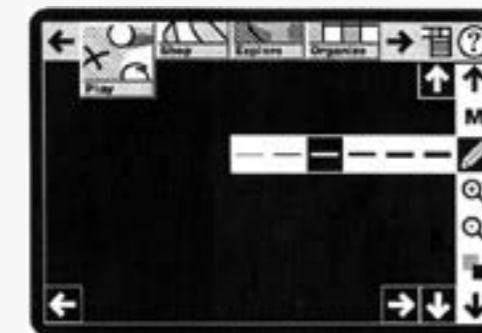
**Project:** Envoy Personal Intelligent Communicator

**Role:** Designer

1992 I was the lead designer for Aaron Marcus and Associates (AM+A) on a project for Motorola's Envoy Personal Intelligent Communicator, a wireless communications enabled, touch-screen, handheld assistant that was essentially a precursor of the smart phones and PDAs that are ubiquitous today.

AM+A was asked to do some exploratory sketches. Motorola eventually developed the product using General Magic's Magic Cap operating system.

According to Wikipedia, the product was finally released in the summer of 1994, and although you can still find websites for devotees and enthusiasts, it never attained widespread popularity. In retrospect, this product was ill-fated from its conception. User interfaces based on a rooms metaphor, such as Magic Cap and Microsoft Bob, never gained popularity, and the whole generation of early PDAs from the 1990s proved





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to be somewhat premature. However, some would say that these products and the category they tried to create laid the groundwork for today's smartphones and netbooks. Personally, looking at the exploratory conceptual designs for the first time in years, I'm struck by their similarities to the iPhone. I think that's remarkable, considering that this project preceded the iPhone by 15 years.

Surprisingly, someone recently made an [award winning film](#) about General Magic.