

## Articles and whitepapers



**Guest Interview: Riccardo Comper, LivingTECH (5/9/2011)**



**Riccardo Comper, LivingTECH**

Riccardo Comper lives and works in Bergamo, Italy, and has around 25 years' experience in Industrial Automation. He formed LivingTECH in 2007, as a professional engineering company specialising in Home and Building Automation, and developing systems for the simple and smart application of different technologies in built spaces. Riccardo holds two industrial patents, one of which has won a technological innovation award. In this exclusive interview with HiddenWires, he talks about his passion for using home control technology for Assisted Living.

**Q: What is your perspective on the smart home industry in Italy at the moment?**

A: In Italy, Home Automation has yet to take off. It is increasingly being talked about, but there are not many noteworthy installations being publicised. Unfortunately, Home Automation is still being seen only as a status symbol for affluent property owners, rather than being a mainstream technology.

**Q: What trends do you see in terms of Assisted Living?**

A: Ideally, technology should simplify and improve the quality of our lives, but this won't happen automatically, and the risk of us becoming slaves to technology is ever present. However, we have a great opportunity to use smart home technology for Assisted Living, to benefit people who need extra help. While the U.S. leads the way in terms of HiFi, home theatre and electronic entertainment, it seems to me that they are behind in terms of using technology for Assisted Living. These are early days yet, but as far as I can see, Northern Europe is doing the most pioneering work in this field.

**Q: What is the scope for Assisted Living technology?**

A: Electronic technology today is very advanced and accessible, and the web has opened up many new horizons. I think that there are huge advantages and benefits to be had from this technology, especially in customising it according to an individual's particular needs. Furthermore, this does not have to be limited to the disabled or elderly person in question, but can also extend to their families and those involved in their care. To date, LivingTECH has been involved mainly with projects that focus on users with motion disabilities (paraplegics and tetraplegics) and also with Down Syndrome (intellectual disability). The results have been very encouraging, and have given me immense personal satisfaction. Indeed we intend to extend our area of expertise to cover sensory disabilities too. Certain aspects of Assisted Living are doing well, but there is still much to learn in terms realising the potential of technology and how it can be applied to specific requirements.

**Q: What excites you at the moment?**

A: In collaboration with some disabled friends, we developed HiDOM ([www.hidom.it](http://www.hidom.it)), the first Home Automation App for iDevices that has been designed specifically for people with special needs. The aim was to keep the product low-cost, simple, practical, easy to use and fun. This is just the beginning, and we hope to join with other interested parties who share our aims, to develop this even further.

**Q: How do you keep in touch with your market?**

A: Considering that most disabled young people spend much of their lives in front of the computer, connected to Internet, it's no surprise that I tend to rely most heavily on the web. I use all aspects of it, including social and professional networks. I am also regularly involved with seminars, congresses, workshops and exhibitions in this field, and am developing a course for teaching about technology and Assisted Living in schools.

**Q: Where do you see the industry going?**

A: My strategy for developing my company is nothing particularly ingenious: I want us to do the best we can, be organised, produce excellent products, keep things simple and usable, and to generate sufficient profit to grow into the future. My fear is that as we get larger and larger televisions in our homes, with increasingly complicated remote controls, disabled people will be left behind, sitting in their wheelchairs and still having to be helped just to turn the lights on and off in their bedrooms. I therefore invite the top managers of technology companies to think differently, to look consider looking for profit in new and alternative markets, and also to consider their ethical responsibilities. I am sure that those involved in a socially responsible market will reap great rewards, not only in terms of profit, but in terms of personal and collective satisfaction.

Riccardo Comper is the General Manager of LivingTECH, specialist in Home & Building Automation.

<http://www.livingtech.it>