Meet Nadine, a robot developed by scientists at Singapore’s Nanyang Technological University (NTU Singapore).

Nadine is powered by intelligent software similar to Apple’s Siri or Microsoft’s Cortana.

Nadine can be a personal assistant in offices and homes in future. And, she can be used as a social companion for both the young and the elderly.

A humanoid like Nadine, who looks almost like a human being, with soft skin and flowing brunette hair, is just one of the interfaces where technology can be applied. It can also be made virtual and appear on television or computer screen, and become a low-cost virtual social companion.

Professor Thalmann, the director of the Institute for Media Innovation who supervised the development of Nadine, said these social robots are among NTU’s many exciting new media innovations that companies can leverage for commercialisation.

He added that robotics has advanced significantly over the past few decades and are being used in the manufacturing and logistics sectors.

As countries worldwide face challenges of an aging population, social robots can be one solution to address a shrinking workforce, become personal companions for children and the elderly at home, and even serve as a platform for healthcare services in the future.

Thalmann also pointed out that this robot will somewhat be like a real
companion that is always with you and conscious of what is happening. So in the future, these socially intelligent robots could be like C-3PO, the iconic golden droid from Star Wars, with knowledge of both language and etiquette.

With technological improvements in silicon chips, sensors and computation, physical social robots such as Nadine are poised to become more visible in both offices and homes in the future.