



Using The Palm Pilot® Successfully For Productivity In The Workforce

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Introduction – Or why did I do it?

I was loosing it. My schedule was loading up and I was missing appointments and other key assignments because my paper planner could not talk... So I decided that I needed to buy a personal digital assistant (PDA) that would at least beep at me so that I could not miss another appointment. I needed to be able to recall people and contacts easily. I also wanted a system that I could “piggy-back” with my paper tiger® file system for the office so that I would not have to dig through my old “piles of piles” to find papers.

I was so used to working with a paper planner, and skeptical of the new PDA's that it was finally a Palm Pilot model IIIxe I settled on only after quite a bit of research of my options. I was looking at the new windows-ce based handhelds, and decided that I would spend more that 10% of the cost of a new laptop for a handheld. For what we use them for, the extra features you pay for in some models does not in my mind as of yet warrant the extra expense.

As it stands, I use every function on my Palm with the exception of one (by choice). I have found it to be the most productive piece of equipment that I carry with me. I do carry this everywhere I go. I am now in the habit of asking “paper or plastic” when folks want my business card.

Jumping in – My Costs

For those buying computer equipment, you should always price memory, as that is the comparable unit between models. I decided to buy my 8MB palm used on Ebay (see links in the back of this paper), at \$50-100 less than at market. If you know what you are buying, this is an option. If not, I suggest your local dealer so that you can see and examine what you are going to purchase. I purchased mine in June 2000. Here is a list of what I've spent so far:

Palm Pilot -	\$225.00
Rhino Skin case -	\$ 30.00
Serial Cable -	\$ 12.50
PDA cleaner -	<u>\$ 10.00</u>
Total	\$277.50

All this equipment is well below the cost of a Windows CE based unit alone, allowing more budget towards software or hardware that may be of interest. Oh, by the way, if I had to replace the unit with another similar, my cost would now be one third less than my first palm palm purchase.

Primary Uses – The Fantastic Four

Palm didn't pick the four function buttons on the unit without some thought. The frequency I use my pda's functions is in order with the buttons from left to right (date, address book, to-do, and memo). A few tips that I use with these...

Datebook – I have set recurring meetings that require my action to beep to me in a timeframe that allows me to adequately prepare. Other appointments are set without beep reminders. Do all your planning on the computer desktop interface and then synchronize to your handheld (saves a lot of time). Don't try to write full notes into the datebook, use a reference to a paper folder containing the brochures, etc. I use the desktop printing function to give the administrative staff my itinerary for the week, which works well in meetings.

Phonebook – I hold over 2,000 different names and addresses in my eight different phonebook categories. You can search for a name quickly by writing in the first few characters on the Look up line at the bottom of the screen. In the Quicklist listing I hold my name entry alone. Using (tapping) the menu button I selected this name as my business card. When someone asks me for my business card and has a palm pilot, all I need to do is press and hold down the phonebook button and my e-business card will beam over to the other palm user. To save memory, I rarely use the notes section in this function.

To-Do – Just as it implies, I use both the number levels, categories (business, personal, misc) and due dates to organize these. Don't be limited to just to-do's, as any list can be adapted to this function. I use the to-do function to keep my shopping list. The items drop off the screen as I pick them up in the store, and then I can re-generate the list for another day's shopping. Try it!

Memo – This is probably one of the most under used utilities that folks have at their disposal. I have kept meeting notes, parts lists, and other reference data

that I need out in the field with this function. With the advent of keyboards, you could use the memo function for more than what I have used.

Extended Applications – Expanding the Universe

I use a variety of applications on my palm pilot for various needs that occur. The following is a listing of the major applications that I have downloaded. For the most part this is freeware that you can use, other than programs noted.

Expense - This comes standard with Palm pilots, and I have adapted mine to synchronize into an excel spreadsheet. It takes less than five minutes to create an expense report. And the math is right!

Clock – The first program I downloaded. This allows you to keep time in five world zones and includes timers and alarms. Great for scientific work as it's a cheap timepiece.

AvantGo – This is a web clipping program that interfaces with the internet. I use it to download road directions from mapquest.com, keep track of currency exchange rates, and keep up on news from CNN and USA Today. Oh, for fun I get the Joke of the day there as well... 😊

AportisDoc – When I need to do some light reading, I use this program to read books. I have three books on my palm at this time. Using the converter you can convert WORD documents to be read using this reader. Other text readers have been developed, including one for Adobe Acrobat. Find your ebooks first then find the reader you need to read these books.

Airline Timetables – I have the American Airlines timetable in my palm pilot. With this and my cell phone I can get through the O'hare airport when my flight is canceled and there is 40 people in line at the desk. Flights selected can flow to the datebook or memo book. Other airlines are offering these, check the website of your favorite carrier.

PawCalc – A number of calculators are available online. This one I spent money for. It allows for formulas to be entered in algebraic form. There are six different calculators in this one program. So, if you need the answer in BinHex or the equivalent measure in liters instead of gallons it can handle it.

PawCurrency – This is a currency calculator that will convert between two currencies. I have four currencies in there that I use the most.

HotPaw Basic – A basic interpreter that allows me to write programs in basic in the memo pad and then run them on my palm. I have a Haugh Unit calculator I have developed for the palm using this program.

Periodic Table – Yup, got that too. Shows molecular weight, shell orbits, and densities.

Spanish/English Dictionary - There are several dictionaries written for the palm. This one is good when I can't think of the proper word I want to use.

Electronics Reference Database – Need to wire a cross-over cable? I have the pin settings for that right here. OK, this is definitely in the nerd zone, but at times when I was wiring together networks I really needed this.

The Bible - I keep the American Standard Version on my Palm. Complete with keyword search, it is faster than a concordance at finding things. Even with this on my palm, I still do not fill up memory.

Future Uses – Or Keeping the Plates Spinning

As I stated earlier, the primary reason I went with this platform was cost/benefit, so if you find a system that will give you good benefits for the cost, buy it. As I have watched the market of handhelds mature, I have seen Palm lose some of its foothold in the market to windows based units. If and when the price of handhelds reaches that magic number of 10% of the cost of a fully loaded laptop, I will switch to the windows units. A bright spot is the convergence of palm pilots and cell phones. I am waiting to see how that will shake out before diving in.

The next software purchase I am thinking of is DataViz Documents to Go™ that allows a user to view and edit Word, Excel and Powerpoint documents on the palm. This application would be good for data collection in the field as the documents would flow to the desk based computer for further work or analysis.

Conclusion – Parting shots

Technology is what you make of it. I figured that if I was going to shell out for it I would use it to its maximal use. So buy what you feel meets your needs and by all means use it. If you would only possibly use one function, you may as well stay in paper for the time being.

The only program I do not use is email, simply because I would peg out my memory with the volume of mail I would get over it. As memory grows, this may also be used.

This is just one tool I use to help keep structure out of chaos. I hope your handheld will do the same for you.

Websites – For more information and browsing.

AvantGo – Web Clipping software
<http://www.avantgo.com/>

English/Spanish Dictionary – KD Software
<http://cnr-oxy.cnr.pmf.hr/~kdekanic>

The Bible – BibleReader Olive Tree Software
<http://www.OliveTree.com>

Documents to Go – DataViz Software
<http://www.dataviz.com/>

HotPaw Basic – write basic programs
<http://www.hotpaw.com/rhn/hotpaw/>

Electronics – Kim Mølgaard
<http://www2.viaweb.com/pilotgearsw/kimmoelgaard.html>

Electronic Airline Time Tables – Goldenware Software
<http://www.goldenware.com/pTimetable.html>

Clock – Big Clock
<http://www.rupp.paessler.com/bigclock.htm>

Paw Currency and PawCalc - Paw Engineering
<http://www.paweng.com/>

Periodic Table – Intrepid Software
<http://www.intrepidsoft.com/>

Palm & PDA protective cases – Rhino Skin
<http://www.rhinoskin.com/>

Aportis – Books for your Palm
<http://www.afortis.com/> And its associated Library
<http://www.memoware.com/>

Palm software and freeware – Tu cows (pronounced two-cows) ☺
<http://www.tucows.com/>

Palm software and accessories – Handago
<http://www.handago.com>

Ebay – online marketplace
<http://www.ebay.com/>

Palm – Education Website
<http://www.palm.com/education/>

Palm – Education case study with teaching the teachers...
<http://www.palm.com/education/studies/study11.html>

Palm – Their Homepage
<http://www.palm.com/>

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