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WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER *By Chuck Johnson*

Choose PDA that stays up-to-date

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Technology can help you work smarter, not harder. But sometimes technology makes you sweat.

Many tools are available that can help you function better in business and life, but you know you don't need them all. You know there's a learning curve with every level of technology, so how can you make the best use of it without getting bogged down? Work Smarter, Not Harder is here to help.

So you need a calendar and a to-do list that's handy throughout the day. You'd like for it to be easy to update and synchronize with your home computer.

Lots of options are out there, from PDAs (Personal Data Assistants), smart phones and regular cell phones. But with so many options and technology advancing so



The Palm Treo 700p

rapidly, you may be hesitant to bite. Who wants to purchase a device only to find it's out of date in a few short months?

PDAs that also function as cell phones (such as Blackberry or Treo) are an excellent option for people who are looking for more options and flexibility for

growth. Most PDAs have calendars, to-do lists, contacts, calculator, Web browsing and e-mail. Many PDAs also have cameras and MP3 players as well.

For e-mail, I find the Treo better because it is set up to retrieve POP e-mail from just about any provider. Blackberry only works with e-mail that's on a mail server — not always an option if you work for a small business.

If you are only looking for calendars, to-do lists and contacts, know that many cell

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phones offer these features. But if you want that, plus calculator, camera and MP3 player, a smart phone may be for you.

Generally cell phones are not synchronized with your computer unless you purchase special software, and this can be expensive and cumbersome.

Most smart phones will have synchronizing capabilities built in — with limitations. PDAs always come with some sort of synchronizing capabilities, usually using your computer's USB port.

PDAs usually can synchronize with Microsoft Outlook (a software program that includes e-mail, calendar, contacts and tasks) or software specific to the PDA that is also accessible on your desktop computer. The application is usually very simple to use and update, then synchronize with your PDA.

PDAs generally use one of two major operating systems, or OS — Palm and Microsoft Windows Mobile. Both operating systems offer many applications available for making your PDA customizable and upgradeable for future applications.

The Palm OS has been around for a long time and has built-in support for native Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint documents, along with a

portable document format, or PDF, viewer. PDF, by the way, is a format that allows you to see a document the way the sender sees it, no matter the originating application or fonts, along with comments from the sender.

Palm OS usually has software for contacts, memos, messaging, tasks, MP3 player, Web browser and VersaMail for e-mail.

The MS Windows Mobile OS comes with MS Office Mobile (with mobile versions of the Office applications, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Office and Outlook). It also has a mobile version of Windows MediaPlayer.

Depending on the PDA you purchase, Palm and Microsoft OS are capable of using Wi-Fi for connecting you to a wireless network instead of using your phone service to access the Internet.

Today's PDA phones have a multitude of applications — and the longevity to get you through at least three years of use.

Chuck Johnson, chief executive officer of Piñon Deer Industries, has more than 25 years of experience with computer systems, networks and business software. He specializes in computer consultation and training for individuals who are interested in incorporating technology into their small business or personal life. Contact him by e-mail at cj@pinondeer.com or go to his Web site at pinondeer.com.

