By Gordon Eng

## New Devices That Combine the Cell Phone and PDA

## Attorneys may now

find phones that

also store contact,

billing, and

calendaring data

The marriage of the cell phone and personal digital assistant into a single device has long been a dream of many. A PDA—for example a Palm Pilot or Pocket PC—carries extensive contact and calendar information, copies of documents and e-mail, and myriad other information. On the other hand, the data-handling capabilities of cell phones are somewhat limited. Until recently, for example, cell phone users had to make do with only 25 to 100 telephone numbers in their phone's memory, without complete contact information. As a result, users carried a PDA and a cell phone because neither device provided

the complete solution. Now. however, there are better choices.

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I tested offerings from Audiovox, Blackberry, Handspring, Kyocera, Nokia, Samsung, and Sony Ericsson. They all

have color screens, software to synchronize with PC contact and calendaring programs such as Microsoft Outlook or Lotus Notes, a plug for a hands-free headset, e-mail and Web browsing capability, and SMS (short

text messaging) support. These devices also can carry and display spreadsheet and text documents. The major cell phone carriers are not equipped to interact with all these phones, so some shopping is required to match the phone and features you want with your carrier.

Matters are somewhat more settled, however, in the area of operating software. Most of the devices use either the Palm OS or the Microsoft Pocket PC system. Symbian, a Linux compatible OS, is also making some headway.

Beginning with the Palm OS devices, the Handspring Treo 600 is one of the phones that uses the Palm OS, and it is one of the easiest to use of the devices that I tested. A user can navigate through its PDA and phone features with a five-way rocker switch or by means of the touch screen and the familiar Palm stylus. Data may be entered via a small QWERTY keyboard or Palm's writing method. The keys are small but shaped so that they are suprisingly easy to use.

A user may dial the phone with the touch screen or the keypad that is part of the keyboard. The keypad is helpful when using the phone in bright sunlight. The Treo 600 has a speaker phone as well but

lacks built-in voice-activated dialing. The device's size and its fiveway rocker switch allow for onehanded phone and PDA operation. The user can use the phone and PDA concurrently, reviewing contacts or calendar

information while speaking on the phone. Hot keys conveniently open the calendar, telephone, or e-mail features. Airline travelers will be pleased that they can turn off the phone but still use the PDA. Moreover, a software development community exists online for the Palm OS. Additional features include an MP3 player, an expansion memory card slot, infrared connectivity, and a camera. Los Angeles lawyers should note, however, that cell phones with cameras are included in the ban on cameras in courthouses.

The Kyocera 7135 also uses the Palm OS and thus has PDA features like those of the Treo 600, but unlike the Treo, the Kyocera has a clamshell design. This has always appealed to me because the keypad and screen are protected when the phone is closed. The Kyocera uses Palm's data entry system and has touch screen navigation and an expansion memory slot. This unit has a more traditional cell phone keypad and a speaker phone. Users may find it hard to use the phone and PDA functions concurrently with one hand, because the device lacks the five-way rocker switch found on the Treo. You need one hand to hold the stylus and the other hand for dialing. With the speaker phone, however, a user can continue a telephone conversation while using the PDA. Added features include an MP3 player and infrared connectivity port. The Kyocera has no camera.

Another Palm-based device is the Samsung i500, which also sports a clamshell design and uses the Palm data entry system. Like the Kyocera, the Samsung is likely to require both hands to use the phone and PDA simultaneously. The Samsung lacks a speaker phone and memory expansion slot. Like the Kyocera, the Samsung has no camera, which may be an advantage for many attorneys, and the Samsung is a smaller and sleeker package than the Kyocera. The Samsung is packaged with an extra battery and stylus, has a voice dialing feature, and can be used as a PDA with the phone turned off.

## **Microsoft and Other Devices**

First in alphabetical order among the the Microsoft OS devices is the Audiovox Thera. Data entry is accomplished through the touch screen via either handwriting recognition or a soft keyboard. Users can only dial the Thera's telephone on the touch screen, which will be a problem in bright sunlight. The unit has a speaker phone, and additional features include expansion memory capability. Like the Palm OS devices, the Thera user can benefit from a community of software developers. The Hitachi G1000 is another Microsoft OS PDA and phone, but I was unable to obtain one for a review.

Microsoft may be putting more effort into putting its Pocket PC software into so-called smart phones such as the Samsung i600 or the Motorola MPX200. They can synchronize with a PC as a PDA does, but their screens are much smaller. If your PDA activity is passive (e.g., you only use your PDA to find a name or date), then a smart phone may suffice. Those who want to view documents and add and change information on their PDAs, however, will continue to value the larger screen of PDA phones.

The Symbian OS PDA phones include the Nokia 3650. It has been on the market for a time, so buyers may be able to find discounts. The Nokia does not have a touch screen, but navigation is eased with a five-way switch. Data entry and editing, frankly, is a challenge. A user must use the telephone keypad, which means cycling through the alphabet and symbol choices on each key for every character entry. This device supports expansion cards, but unfortunately a user cannot use the PDA when the phone is turned off.

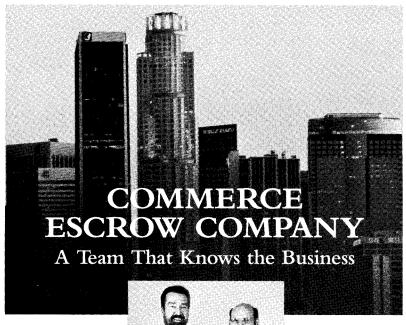
The dial pad consists of buttons placed in a circle. At first I felt I was about to drop the phone every time I tried to dial a number. For those who cannot adjust to this design, the Nokia feature list includes voice dialing capability and a speaker phone. In addition, the phone can include features such as a camera with video ability, Bluetooth or infrared connectivity, and an MP3 and video player. The Nokia has great features, but data entry and dialing challenges make it somewhat difficult to use.

Users who desire a Symbian-based phone, however, have another choice: the Sony Ericsson P900. This device is the most featurerich of the group. The PDA uses the Symbian OS and has one of the largest screens of the group I tested. A keyboard can be opened on the touch screen to input and edit information, and there is a built-in character recognition program. Users can view data on the screen lengthwise, which is great for spreadsheets and Web pages. The Sony has an expansion memory slot, and the PDA features can be used while the phone is turned off. Users can navigate through the numerous features using a jog dial or touch screen. The document viewer works not only with MS Word and Excel but also Adobe Acrobat files. The telephone has a traditional keypad, which covers a part of the touch screen when in use, and a speaker phone, voice dialing, and speed dial. Additional features include a camera, MP3 player, video player, and Bluetooth and infrared connectivity.

Rounding out the review is the Blackberry 7230. This new Blackberry represents an evolutionary advance for the successful portable e-mail client. The unit has cell phone and PDA capabilities (older models only handle e-mail). For firms that already use the Blackberry e-mail client, the new version may be an easy step forward. The Blackberry PDA runs under Java-based programming. Navigation is straightforward using the thumb dial and back buttons. The new Blackberry does not have a touch screen, so data input takes place only through the QWERTY keypad. Third-party software development may not be as abundant as it is for the Palm OS, but for lawyers and law firms, software from Timetag can export calendar entries and phone time to popular time-and-billing programs, which may be all that is needed.

The Blackberry 7230 is slightly wider than the other cell phone PDAs I examined, which may make one-handed dialing difficult for some. This Blackberry has no speaker phone, but other versions of the device-for example, those that are configured to operate with a Nextel account-may have this feature. The Blackberry lacks such additional features as a camera, MP3 or video player, infrared or Bluetooth connectivity, or memory expansion card slot, which may or may not be of much importance to an individual user.

This new generation of cell phone PDA combinations offer an opportunity to improve productivity and cut down on the bulk of what lawyers may need to carry when away from the office. These devices have enough usable features to merit use in a law firm. As always with technological developments, the choice of whether to buy one of these devices or to wait for the next generation depends on many factors, but this group of devices do represent the long-awaited marriage of the cell phone and PDA.



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