

Pocket PC OS verges on being crippleware

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Before I start, I will state that I really like my iPaq hx4700. Fantastic screen, WiFi. Browsing the net anywhere in the house is a huge leap forwards from my old Palm m500 with AvantGo.

However...

I am really disappointed by the quality of the built in applications. They appear to be intentionally stripped down apps to appease the developer community. As a developer myself, I'm not opposed to other people making a living from writing good software, but as a user, it would nice if some decent functionality was built in, out of the box.

Notes in particular is appalling, it looks like a demo app you'd see in a programming book. Where are categories? Why can't I change font size of the listing? Could I have a preview pane?

The calendar is useful, but fairly basic, and has such poor support for the VGA screen that HP include Pocket Informant. Unfortunately, although some features look great in VGA (calendar), it is so advanced that it has a fairly sharp learning curve. Without looking into the manual, I've no idea how to use the Notes feature – it seems to have been written without regard for any of the standard UI elements present in the built in applications. It seems to be designed to provide the maximum number of bullet points in a feature list, instead of doing the basics correctly.

I understand that due to memory constraints, not all features can be build into all applications. Every user has different requirements. As such, I'd rather see the OS shipped with LESS software, and have the choice of downloading FEATURE RICH, WELL DESIGNED versions of the apps I use the most. Maybe use a point system like www.ipaqchoice.com

Personally, I'd go for the following:

Notes – with categories, and ability to use a tree (outline) structure if required. Link to tasks

CHM Viewer – very useful for those C# books

Newsgroup reader – so I can rant anywhere!

Contacts – very minimal, may even use Notes if search is good enough

Calendar – VGA support, and ability to set default settings for new appointments (I would set all to 'Private' as default, as my work calendar

has to be shared)

...And I wouldn't expect to have to pay \$9.99 -> \$49.99 for each application - for the privilege of such basic functionality. A points system, where you get free points (and buy more if required) which would allow me to 'purchase' these approved, consistent applications from Microsoft, without spending weeks sifting the wheat from the chaff.

Or alternately, provide us with decent apps to start with.

Comments, flames welcome. Suggestions for good commercial software which may fit my requirements also welcome. This is a general gut feeling about my first 2 weeks on Pocket PC. I expect more posts with specific questions for you all in the near future.

Happy mobile computing!

Greg Woods