



Stanford eCorner

Future of PDAs as Convergent Devices

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According to Wirt, PDAs have evolved over the last decade from just an address book and calendar to devices that can play movies and MP3s and carry much more information. In the next decade, he sees an increased ability to carry around many types of information.



Transcript

Well, so the, just to repeat the question, the question is, PDA as a convergence device. PDA's have added functionality over time. The original kind of device were really just address book and calendar and now, they do have photos on here, you can play movie clips and mp3's, do a number of different things. I think what's really happening with PDA, the main application for PDA has been PIM which is Personal Information Management and what's happened in a relatively short period of time, let's say going from one of this, came out and and sure original incarnation with the original Palm Pilot in '96 to now is the I in PIM has been redefined. So, it's still personal. I don't carry around somebody else's information in it and I still manage information with it. I carry the stuff that I want to carry and I can transfer and look at it; edit it; manipulate it. What's happened is that the I has gone from the only things that were digitized in that time frame, which were really address book and calendar, to a like all the stuff that's personal information now that's digitized and that I have in my computer. So I have My Music in my computer now. I didn't have it seven years ago.

And so I am able to take that with me. And so I think the device has been evolving as the I in PIM has evolved. and I think we're going to see that continuing to evolve as more and more of our own personal information gets digitized. We'll be carrying it around in here and we'll be carrying more of it. So, I mean, you can look to you know, more capability to take the stuff you got around with you and the ability to carry more of it with you. Yeah? As to the form factors of PIM, do you see any return to the Franklin credit card size type of PIM which will be the only device? Yeah. So, other form factors, smaller form factors... I think you have seen an evolution and a divergence which is healthy for different market segments in form factors. But what's happened really is, the really super small form factor has gone to, I'm going to just point to what's in the back of this laptop here which is a little flash drive. And, if you want to carry something really small along with you that's got the information, you're basically going from place to place with it and you don't need to use information in between, a flash drive is you know, that's a really small form factor.

It works great for that. If you want to be able to access that information while you're on the go, you need a display, and typically, once you decide you need a display, then bigger displays are better, especially for information. You want to see more rows on a spreadsheet. In this product, the Tungsten T3 is we made it small enough to fit in your pocket but you could open it up to get the bigger screen so you can see more rows on a spreadsheet or columns on a spreadsheet. And the way that could evolve in the future this display technology evolves. When you like to have something to carry around with you but big when you want to look at it. So, this idea, flexible displays where you can maybe have it rolled up and you could expand it. I mean, that could be something that could be very powerful when that technology's available. And a follow-up on that, between cell

phones and the PDA as convergence, how does form factors fix them apart? Do you see one or the other become dominant? In my case, I still use a tiny pager for its size and convenience and Blackberry handy cell phone. And, lastly, prefer a tiny cell phone? Yeah, I think there's a definite segment in the marketplace...

Again, there's not like one solution that fix everybody. There's a group of people that definitely want a converged device like this because they only want to carry one device around and they're going to carry this device if they're going to be doing a lot of email. It's a business tool because it's got a keyboard. That's what makes it bigger in the display. Then, you know, this form just got a smaller display and got no keyboard and it's you know, this isn't even the smallest phone around any more. This is maybe two-thirds the size. The other segment that we see, kind of new in this segment, I think the two-piece solution. People want a small phone they could carry around so maybe when they're not needing to do business, either on the weekends, they take the little phone but they can, when they do need to do business stuff, they can use this and connect the two via Bluetooth. So this is a good use of bluetooth. and I can connect wirelessly from this to the phone and go out and get my email or go on the web or do whatever.

It's a little bit bigger than this but it costs about the same. But it appeals to some people, it doesn't appeal to the others. It depends kind of what you want to do. So I think there are different segments and remains to be seen sort of what the relative size of those segments is. As a segment, this is one that's growing very quickly because it didn't sort of exist you know, two years ago. So this one is growing in a very rapid rate now, percentage basis now.