

A valuable audio-visual tool tool in your pocket

PDA's can read, display PowerPoint presentations

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The days of lugging a portable projector and a laptop to your clinical or other presentations may soon fade to black.

Many psychiatrists use personal digital assistants (PDAs, or handheld computers) to organize their schedules, access medical texts, and check for drug-drug interactions. These pocket-size devices are also quite adept at editing and displaying PowerPoint presentations. For an investment anywhere between \$100 and \$250, you can turn your PDA into a valuable audio-visual tool.

To display and edit your presentation, you will need:

- software that converts PowerPoint slides into a PDA-compatible format
- hardware that connects the PDA to the LCD projector.

I have used the Margi Presenter-to-Go (www.margi.com) for the Handspring Visor Edge PDA (Palm operating system), which comes with both the software and hardware adapter (Table 1). For the Pocket PC operating system, I have used a Toshiba e740 device with the Toshiba expansion module (hardware), which works with IA Presenter software (included).

USING PALM

The conversion software for Margi Presenter-to-Go must be installed onto your desktop computer from the CD-ROM—just click on the “install” icon when the CD-ROM starts.

The software is also easy to use: simply choose the Presenter-to-Go “Virtual Printer” on your computer, then “print” your presentation to the Presenter-to-Go conversion program. This action initiates the conversion process and takes several minutes. To load the converted presentation onto the PDA requires only a “HotSync” (synchronization of information from desktop to handheld); this should take 5 to 10 minutes depending on the size of your presentation.

If you wish to include Web pages and Microsoft Word documents in your presentation, Margi Presenter-to-Go can convert them as well.

As you prepare to speak, you will need an extra power outlet near the LCD projector in order to power the Margi presentation module. Connect the LCD projector to the module’s VGA cable and point the PDA infrared port towards you. Using the infrared remote that is included with the presentation module, you can move through the slides from about 6 feet away.

You can reorganize your slides on the PDA and hide or show selected slides. The PDA can store more than one presentation, and multiple users can load a presentation onto their devices. The slides are also quite sharp at 1,024 by 768 pixels and 8-bit color depth.

The capacity of Presenter-to-Go slides, however, is limited by the PDA’s main memory, usually between 8 and 16 mb for Palm OS PDAs. Presentations on the desktop computer typically will be compressed when converted for the PDA, but presentations

with many embedded images will be about the same size when on the PDA. I suggest using QuickPoint software and Pitch presentation module to minimize the size limitation. Still, with any Palm OS product you will lose all available "movement," such as animation and slide transitions.

USING POCKET PC

While solutions for Palm OS are less expensive, hardware and software options for Pocket PC offer more power and variety (Table 2). Converting PowerPoint presentations for Pocket PC also are a minute or two faster than conversion for Palm OS because less processing is needed. For example, after installing IA Presenter from the Toshiba CD-ROM, simply "drag and drop" your presentation into the "Pocket PC My Documents" folder on your desktop. Connect the expansion module to the handheld and the LCD panel, and you're in business.

The resolution in Pocket PC is also good at 1,024 by 768 pixels and 16-bit color depth. Standard features include speaker notes, ability to hide slides, slide sorting, and presentation beaming. You also can maintain slide transitions and progressive display sequencing of individual bulleted items, graphics, photo shapes, and objects.

Because current Pocket PC devices offer more main memory than current Palm OS devices (32 or 64 mb for Pocket PC versus 8 to 16 mb for Palm), PowerPoint presentation size is less limited. The presentations also can be stored in external memory such as compact flash cards. The main drawback to the Pocket PC solution is its significantly shorter battery life (several hours with intense use). I strongly recommend using an AC adapter with your Pocket PC to avoid a potential blackout—even if your presentation is only an hour long.

THIS MONTH'S WEB PICKS

Medical hardware accessories for your PDA

- ActiveECG (www.activecenter.com)

Cardiac monitor for your Palm OS PDA

- Snap (www.viasyshealthcare.com/products/snap/snap.asp)

EEG monitor for Handspring Visor

- Pocketview ECG (www.micromed.com.au/08_products/20_pocketview/)

Cardiac monitor for Pocket PC OS PDA

- Magic Marker (www.eeg-persyst.com/web/MagicMarker-Look.html) EEG remote monitor for Pocket

PC OS PDA