



The MicroPDA, from Vancouver's Intrinsic Software Inc. is aimed at software and hardware engineers.

TECHNOLOGY | It's the ultimate PDA. It was designed by a Vancouver firm. Too bad you probably won't be able to afford anything this good — yet — The Sun's **Peter Wilson** writes

It's the personal digital assistant of your dreams. Too bad you likely can't afford it.

But then — at \$2,995 US — it's not intended for the average road warrior.

Instead, the μ PDA (MicroPDA) from Vancouver's Intrinsic Software Inc. is aimed at software and hardware engineers.

They'll buy it for their companies who will go on, in cooperation with Intrinsic, to create the consumer PDA products that could hit the shelves in time for Christmas 2003.

Already there's a buzz on the Web about the MicroPDA, developed in partnership with Intel. And no wonder, because it's designed to do just about everything except slice cucumbers.

It will handle voice and data transmissions, surf an always-on Internet and let users read everything from e-mail to Word files on a clean, clear, full-colour four-inch touchscreen VGA display.

It will record voice files and take



photos, both of which can be sent out as e-mail attachments. It has a built-in Webcam that — when bandwidth catches up — could be used for videoconferencing.

As well, it will permit users to shift seamlessly from a Bluetooth connection on a personal area network to a WiFi connection on a local area network to a cellular telephone network.

In fact, it's this specific wireless capability that has attracted Interest from Microsoft which has already bought some of the MicroPDAs to aid in software development.

The MicroPDA also has a speaker and an output for stereo sound. Plus

Product is development platform designed for OEMs

Device is built to showcase technology, then sell intellectual property

From D1

it performs all the usual PDA functions like taking notes, adding addresses and acts in sync with your computer.

It also operates on different operating systems from Microsoft's Windows CE to Linux to Net. It uses Intel's newest chip, the PXA250 or other high-end multi-processors.

That always-on Internet connection comes courtesy of a GPRS/GPS modem.

As reflected in the price, however, the MicroPDA — which measures 25.7mm x 148.7 mm by 82.8mm — isn't meant for the retail market.

It's a development (or reference) platform aimed at original equipment manufacturers, which will adapt it to their needs.

OEMs will be able to buy the prototype

devices from Intrinsyc's Web site, beginning in January.

The first PDAs based on the Intrinsyc MicroPDA could appear on the market as soon as the last quarter of 20003, said David Manuel, the company's vice president of engineering.

"We don't build consumer devices. We built this to showcase our technology and to sell the intellectual property embodied in this device to people who do build them."

What will likely happen, said Manuel, is that manufacturers will [develop] models that suit customer needs by featuring just some of the elements of the original.

"The OEM might say 'my customer base wants Bluetooth and GPRS, so let's drop the 802.11 capability and drop the USB and reduce the cost, change the display' and then make it for their market."

Manuel said that it is analogous to going to a salad bar.

"You want to be able to choose everything at the salad bar but you're probably not going to be able to eat it."

Manuel added that using the MicroPDA

technology a manufacturer could produce an equivalent to today's Tungsten model from Palm at an equivalent price "but it would be a lot more leading edge."

Unique to the MicroPDA is the technology that allows the operating system to be selected after the device is manufactured.

"We can run any number of different operating systems. As well, the display [from Toshiba] is very high end crisp, full, VGA colour. There are no other handhelds with such a great display with four times as many pixels as a pocket PC device."

People are frustrated with the size of displays on current PDAs, said Manuel and "in the next 12 to 15 months, people will migrate to a higher end display and will be willing to pay more for it."

Manuel said that, since Intrinsyc doesn't make its own PDAs, it doesn't have any competitors.

"We don't compete with anybody who is doing a consumer electronic device because those people are our customers."

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