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THINGS TO
CONSIDER
BEFORE
INVESTING
IN MOBILE
& WIRELESS



Introduction

Without a doubt, developing a new mobile and wireless system or upgrading an existing application is a huge undertaking. There are countless things to consider when lining up the vendors that will help you through this task: What's the right portable data terminal (PDT)? Which standards should we adhere to? What's going to happen to my system in a year?

The goal of this guide is to alleviate some of the concerns you may have and provide you with some questions to help you select the best PDT and development partners.

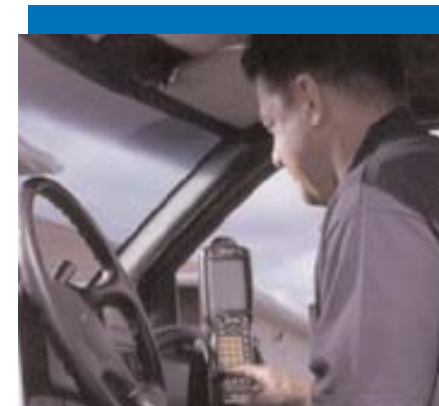
What should I look for in a mobile data collection vendor?

First, look for a manufacturer committed to understanding your application before talking hardware. All too often, end-users become enamored with the hardware and lose sight of how it fits into the total solution.

Second, select a PDT vendor willing to spend time with your mobile employees. Understanding how they work and the product features important to them will help you select the hardware that will improve efficiencies.

Third, beware of vendors that focus only on price. Factors such as durability, training and support, battery life and implementation costs are just a few important issues a provider should be prepared to discuss at any time in the relationship.

Finally, the right partnerships can make all the difference. A PDT manufacturer who works with industry leaders in mobile software and networking hardware will ensure that you'll be receiving the best solution for your application.



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Why should I embrace an imaging-based PDT rather than a traditional laser-based?

There are two technologies PDTs use to capture data: lasers and imagers. While lasers are adequate for reading standard bar codes and have long-distance capabilities, the technology itself has reached its functional boundaries. Imaging technology takes advantage of a popular consumer electronics product – a digital camera – to deliver the next generation of data input devices. The power, flexibility and versatility of imaging will give your workforce a sophisticated productivity tool that can deliver real-time inventory updates, delivery confirmation and many other time- and money-saving actions. Today's imaging-based PDTs deliver a host of additional data input functions, including:

- Instant scanning of PDF 417, Data Matrix and all major 2D codes
- Omni-directional scanning for enhanced user efficiency on linear codes as well as 2D, OCR and signature capture
- Signature capture
- Optical character recognition
- Image capture (such as taking a picture of the code or object)

With their advanced features and functionality, image-based PDTs are the logical choice now and for the future to protect your investment.



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What makes an open architecture approach the intelligent solution?

Quite simply, open architecture gives you a level of flexibility a proprietary system can't offer. With open architecture, your PDT can freely communicate with most host systems. In addition, a product that embraces industry-standard development tools such as Microsoft® eMbedded™, Visual Basic®, eMbedded Visual C++®, and Sun® Java™, allows for even greater programming flexibility. Your PDT should also have the ability to interface with wireless network hardware from top-name suppliers such as Cisco®, which will greatly extend your current hardware investments.

Since it also broadens your choice of vendors, open architecture makes it easier to change or build on to your application without compatibility concerns. And it can also lower the cost of support once the system is in place.

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How can I be sure that my PDTs are compatible with future applications?

New technologies or developments in your business might dictate a change to a mobile or wireless application. By choosing an imaging-based solution that utilizes a common architecture, you enhance your ability to integrate new functions and technologies down the road. On the other hand, an application using proprietary tools and software could leave you with few options as vendors and software go out of favor (or business).

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Are PDTs rugged enough to be dropped or used in harsh environments?

Since PDTs are often destined for rough handling and rugged environments, it makes sense to look for a product with a long-standing reputation for durability. While laser-based PDTs include several moving parts (including mirrors), an imaging-based PDT features a more sturdy design. In fact, imaging based PDT engines are 100% solid-state devices with no moving parts.

For added durability, look for products that are sealed to prevent water and dust intrusion and feature extra-durable outer housings such as magnesium.



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How easy will it be to interface the PDT with my current system?

Obviously, no one wants to invest in a wireless system that cannot communicate with existing databases, mainframes and other computers. The PDT manufacturer and integration partners you select must be willing to work with you to ensure the PDT is compatible with everything from terminal emulation to Wi-Fi™ (IEEE 802.11b). This is where the standards-based architecture and open operating systems will prove beneficial.

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How secure is the data that is being transmitted?

A major concern about wireless data transmission is that information previously captured manually is now captured and transmitted wirelessly and therefore subject to security issues. Whatever type of technology you go with, you should never have to compromise efficiency and productivity for the sake of security. An open architecture solution uses the latest security standards while providing the flexibility to integrate new industry standards as they are developed.

With that in mind, the PDT manufacturer and its integration partners, such as Cisco®, should be at the forefront in establishing the next generation of security standards, including LEAP technology and the development of IEEE 802.11i.



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How will all this impact my employees and customers?

A mobile and wireless solution has the unique effect of making your employees (and your company) more efficient by providing you with real-time access to critical data. To ensure that the workforce is comfortable with the PDT and receives the maximum benefit of the technology, be sure that the PDT is easy to learn and use. The PDT should have options that can be configured to suit the needs of your operators.

Real-time data is important to your customers, so the ability to provide this information from the shop floor or on the road adds value to your company.

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What should I expect the ROI to be?

With the added benefits of real-time data, a more efficient workforce and enhanced value for your customers, a mobile or wireless system could pay for itself within a year. When you factor in the residual benefits that often accompany increased workforce and customer satisfaction, a mobile/wireless solution makes good financial sense.

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What should I expect in the way of after-sale support and service?

Being abandoned by your vendor after the sale can have a crippling effect on your operation. Increased productivity, customer satisfaction, employee morale and profit margins all hinge on thorough, helpful after-sale support. That's why it's critical to ensure your PDT supplier, integrators and partners are all proven players with an excellent customer service track record and a vested interest in your success.

The HHP Advantage

With decades of innovation to their credit, HHP is a true pioneer in the design and manufacture of image-based applications for the PDT market. This experience makes HHP the intelligent choice when it comes to selecting a PDT partner.

From the world's first commercially viable hand-held bar code scanner to leading-edge image-based mobile computers, our reputation for delivering breakthrough technology, and world-class customer service, spans more than eight decades.

Today, HHP leads the way in developing and deploying new technologies for the automatic data capture and mobile industries, including pioneering the adoption of imagers in a variety of transportation/distribution, retail, manufacturing, logistics and warehousing applications.

HHP's line of Dolphin® PDTs are proven industry performers that are built to last, come complete with leading-edge processing technology, and run on an open architecture environment. Along with our strategic partners, such as Cisco®, we have proven that we can deliver the right solution for your application now and provide you with the support you deserve in the future.

For more information or to schedule an appointment to discuss your mobile or wireless application, please contact HHP at 1-800-582-4263.

