



Closing The Gap Between Notebooks And Smart Phones

Technologies like InTact are making smart phones viable alternatives to notebooks.

for many people, there is simply no competition between a notebook computer and a smart phone. And there is some foundation for this belief. After all, notwithstanding the considerable improvements in smart phone technology, the notebook still offers an experience that is much closer to the desktop—with its larger screen and more convenient keyboard.

And there is also the little matter of handling MS Office files with rich formatting—an integral part of any

executive's life, these days. While smart phones do allow users to view and edit these files, they have to be synchronised with a computer to ensure that all original formatting is retained. You cannot just edit a presentation or report on your phone and mail it across to someone from the smart phone itself, without losing a significant amount of formatting such as graphics, headers and footers, and watermarks. You have to synchronise the version edited on the smart phone with the one on the desktop/notebook. Which

in turn makes the smart phone appear superfluous—after all, if you have to end up synchronising a smart phone with a notebook, would it not be simpler to edit on the latter itself!

InTact technology might just change all this.

Retaining formatting on smart phones

Developed by DataViz, a company known for its smart phone applications (particularly its Documents To Go office suite), InTact ensures that a document transferred from a computer to a smart phone retains all its original formatting. In the past, a significant amount of formatting was lost when a document was transferred from a computer to a smart phone or PDA, as the smart phone office suite attempted to convert the document into a format that would be suitable for a smaller screen. So elements like graphics, certain tables and sometimes even special bullet points were left out on the version that was transferred to the smart phone. While you could edit this 'vanilla' version of a document on the smart phone itself, you could not send it to another person or print it off the phone because it did not contain all the design elements of the original document.

InTact technology 'remembers' the original formatting of a document and retains it even when it is transferred to and from the handheld device (smart phone or PDA). The technology works by breaking a file down into its basic structure and modifying it to be displayed on a smaller screen, even while 'remembering' all of its original formatting. So, even though the document, spreadsheet or presentation you see on your handheld might still not appear to contain headers, footers and other such formatting elements, it actually has them all. So you can actually make changes to a file on the phone and mail it across without

having to worry about its appearance. In a manner of speaking, you are actually working on the original document (even though you cannot see all of its elements) and not a stripped-down version of it. And the best part is that you don't even realise that InTact is at work—it operates in the background as part of the latest version of the Documents To Go suite.

Making smart phones more independent

Perhaps the biggest impact of this technology would be on reducing the need to synchronise files between a handheld device and a computer, simply to retain formatting. It also frees any professional on the move from having to carry both a notebook and a smart phone. For instance, a sales executive can now go for a meeting with a proposal on his smart phone, make the changes the clients require on the spot and mail it to them instantly, without having to go back to the office and check the document's formatting.

Of course, the technology is hardly perfect. You still cannot do any complex editing on a mobile device—for instance, what if you want to edit one of the formatting elements that is not being displayed on the smart phone? What if there are certain elements of the formatting in the original document that you do not want preserved? And what if you want to create a document or presentation with complex formatting, instead of merely wanting to edit one?

That said, it would be foolish to ignore the positive impact this technology is likely to have on the business conducted by professionals on the move. It does not eliminate laptop usage totally, but it does make the smart phone more independent of it. **IT**

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