

excelan : You bought what kind of phone?

At Excelan, we believe that everyone should maximise their IT investment. That is why we have developed a series of relevant and useful emails to help you achieve this.

So... Before you buy your next mobile phone, please read this!

If you are contemplating buying a PDA style of phone (Personal Digital Assistant – e.g. iPhone, BlackBerry, Nokia E71), here are a few things to look out for.

Firstly, did you know that if your company runs a Microsoft Exchange email server version 2003 or later you can access calendar, contacts and email with many PDA phones? But be warned, not all PDAs can connect to Exchange so you need to know which new phone to buy if you want to get the maximum functionality from your phone.

Many people rush out and buy a BlackBerry expecting that it will work with their email system. Naturally the staff in the phone shop tell them it will do everything they ever desired.

Ouch! It hurts to have to tell them 'sorry, but running a BlackBerry requires a bit more infrastructure than your company may have'. So please, talk to your IT people (Excelan of course) before you sign away the next two years of your mobile life.

Not that there is anything wrong with BlackBerry's as such. They lead the way in secure communications and manageability. It is just that many people don't need that much security and will find it difficult to justify the expense of the BlackBerry server that needs to be setup and maintained to make BlackBerry perform its magic. Microsoft's latest version of Windows Mobile (version 6.1) now also allows network administrators to remote lock and wipe the device if it is lost or stolen as well as over-the-air application and service provisioning.

Microsoft Exchange is a very popular email server. If you are using Microsoft Outlook as your email application then the chances that you have Exchange are quite high. Check with your IT people to see that it is version 2003 or later as earlier versions do not offer the native support for mobile phone access.

One often forgotten but incredibly useful feature of a PDA is the calendar. To have your calendar synchronised online with the same calendar that you use while at your desk is immensely useful. If you share your calendar with other members of your team they can see, with increased confidence, what time you have available and when you are booked. If the whole team are equipped with PDAs, managing a moving team becomes much more efficient.

When choosing a PDA there is a wide choice available but there are some features that you should place high on your list:

- Good phone functionality. A good PDA is not always a good phone.
- A QWERTY Keyboard, (or a touch screen keyboard) so you can type quickly without learning a new language.
- Make sure the phone has good volume for out on the street conversations.
- Loud ring tones. I've seen (and heard) some that just can't ring loud enough.
- Watch out for touch screens that put the call on hold when your talking on the phone. When your on the phone and you put the touch screen against your face could this interfere with the call?
- Battery life - PDA's in the past could really drain the battery, especially if you use them as an MP3 player as well. These days you can watch video's on some of them so check to see how this will effect the battery life.

Have a very good look at the phone plan you will be using. If you use the PDA to browse the internet or download lots of attachments the amount of data you are using can add up. Every time the phone checks for email it will use a little bit of data. Telco's charge you based on the data you use. Get on a plan that is designed for use with a PDA and has some caps in place. The newer phones that use faster internet connections (NextG or 3.5G) will see you downloading more simply because you can. Some PDAs are a bit hungrier on the data downloads too. It often depends on what they are capable of doing. You could conceivably spend the day watching YouTube videos, well at least till you run out of battery, so do some research of other peoples experience, especially those who work in a similar way to you, before you commit.

This free tip has been provided to you by Excelan. Feel free to pass it on.

If you need help and advice on getting your PDA working with your email server and getting more from your IT systems then call Excelan on 02 8011 0281 or email us at enquiries@excelan.com.au