

get organised

From a simple replacement for your address book to a networkable store of data, PIMs can help you bring more order to your life. We put 10 of them to the test

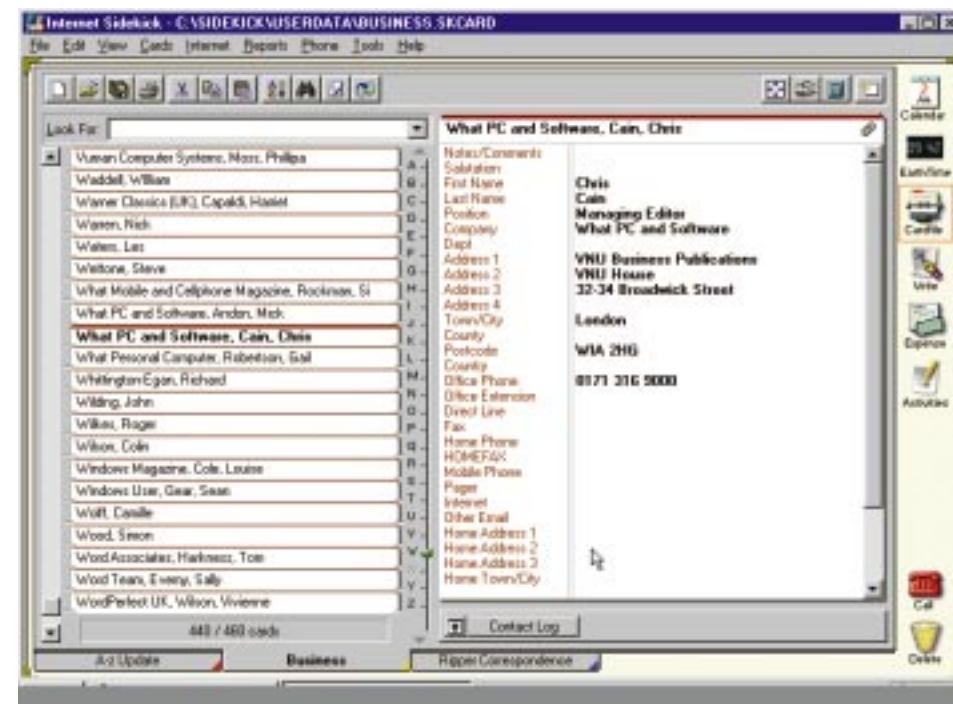
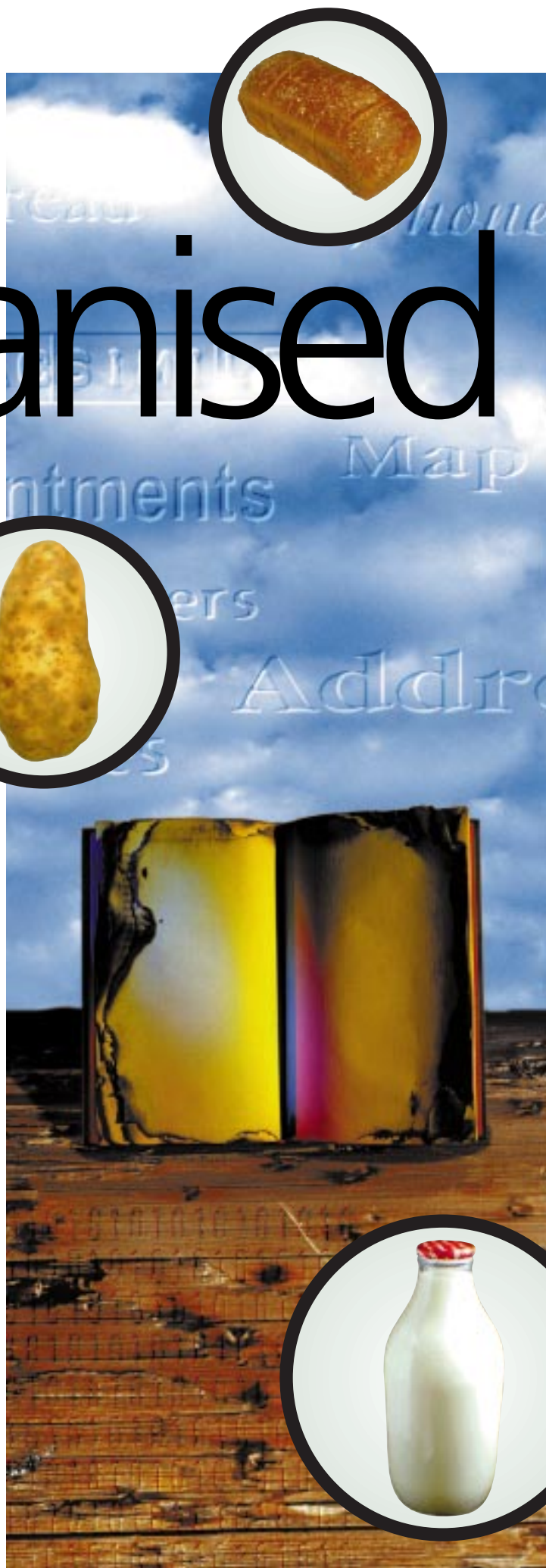
If one of the reasons you bought a PC was to get more organised, then the best way to start is to buy a Personal Information Manager (PIM). At its simplest, a PIM can replace your address book, providing easy access to those oh-so-forgettable names and telephone numbers. A good package, though, is a replacement for your address book, appointments diary and whatever you use to remind yourself to pick up some milk, bread and potatoes on the way home. Ideally it should also provide somewhere for you to store any other sort of information you may need to hand, from a price list to data on your video tape collection. And a PIM can even be networkable.

The range of PIMs is extraordinary and the one you choose really depends on whether it is for business or home use, whether you want utter simplicity or something a little more complex, and how much you want to pay. Over the following pages we review packages to suit just about every need and every pocket.

Internet Sidekick

Sidekick goes back in time to the dark days of DOS programs, when it was extremely popular and had a loyal following. Now, several years later, there's a family of Sidekick products for Windows, and the latest and greatest version is Internet Sidekick. By the time you read this we may even have Sidekick 97, although the current demos don't seem to offer much more.

The idea behind Internet Sidekick is unique and interesting. Some PIMs and most contact management programs are group aware, meaning that a group of people using the same software and linked on a network can collectively update their contact database and schedule group appointments in their diary. However, this benefit is denied to a lot of businesses which don't always have a constant group of staff, such as a company which employs freelancers, and outside specialists. Even large businesses



with a networked staff can have projects which involve a team of such 'outworkers'.

The problems these people face is that although united on a project, they may otherwise be unconnected. They could use different computer platforms and different applications, they may be separated by geography and time (being in another time zone, perhaps) and, of course, they won't be connected by a network. Yet they would still want to schedule appointments, book facilities, and so on. How could they do it? The simple answer is via the Internet – hence Internet Sidekick, a PIM with networking ability across the Internet and Intranets. Just log onto the appropriate Internet site and download (or upload) all the appropriate data into Sidekick.

The address book in Internet Sidekick is simple and easy to use. Down the left-hand side is an alphabetical list of contacts, on the right-hand side the contact details. Everything is completely customisable, so you can delete or add fields, which is an extremely valuable feature – for example, few address books have a field for a separate home fax phone line, yet many people have one, particularly the self-employed and freelancers. The beauty of this customisability is that you can use Sidekick to store any sort of information that takes your fancy, from a price list to a record of your video collection. And it is possible to switch between databases with a single mouse click.

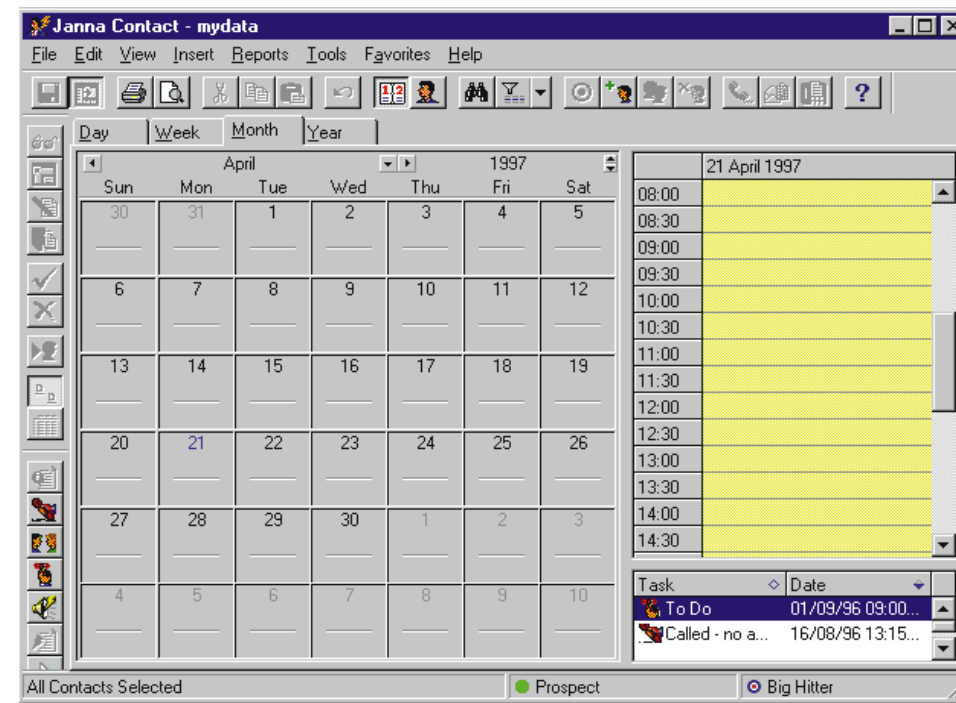
Internet Sidekick has its own word processor, which is fully functioning and even has its own spell-checker, which means it may be all

you need if you use a word processor for little more than writing letters. It is certainly all you need for notetaking when on the road. Address details can be automatically copied to a letter template and the finished letter can be stored in Sidekick. Alternatively, address details can easily be copied across to your word processor.

The appointments calendar can be viewed by the day, week, month, and year, and you can organise and prioritise your appointments and To-Dos, as well as set alarm reminders. A separate module called Activities View lets you view your appointments, To-Dos, calls or Internet events individually or all together – in other words, you can look at all you To-Dos on their

Sidekick is very easy to use, fully customisable, and you can see the contact information at a glance.

Janna Contact lets you schedule appointments and list To-Dos.



own or together with your appointments.

A neat feature for recording and organising your travel expenses and printing an expense report is called Expense View. It is very good but would be even better if it adopted the basic feature of Quicken or Money and became a built-in personal finance manager. There's also a full graphical world map with real-time clocks for any eight of 540 cities around the world.

The best. It's that simple. Internet Sidekick handles all your contact data and almost any other sort of material you can name, plus your appointments, To-Dos and document tracking.

- £49.99 (inc VAT)
- Starfish Software: 0181 875 4455
- 30-day trial version of Sidekick 97:
- www.starfishsoftware.com/products/sk97/trial/index.html

Internet Sidekick

Ease of use	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★

Janna Contact Personal

Janna Contact comes in versions to appeal to all users, so you can increase to more power and added functionality as your needs expand. Janna Contact Personal is for the home/small business user; Janna Contact Professional, which has the added benefit that it can be used across a network, is for the larger business, and there's Janna Contact Enterprise, which is for big business installations, as the £587.49 (inc VAT) price tag illustrates.

Janna Contact Personal is very

Personal information managers

impressive and looks good. It has the usual contact database, lets you schedule appointments and list To-Dos, and it has document management features.

On the extreme left of the screen is a series of icons which take you to the various modules and perform assorted other functions. Next to the icons is an alphabetical list of your contacts and next to this is the tabbed detail card.

There are three cards altogether. One card contains all the basic contact information such as the contact's name, address and phone numbers. A tab called Profile takes you to the custom fields which you can use to store whatever information you personally find most relevant. The third tab, which is labelled Notes, is where you can store all the documents, memos, reminders and so on that are related to the selected contact – the document management.

You can add or change fields as you wish and Janna has a useful and possibly unique feature which dates when you add a new contact. Janna will also dial your telephone and keep a log of all your calls.

The appointments calendar doesn't differ in any significant respects from those in other packages. You schedule appointments and other events and view your calendar by day, week, month or year.

A novel feature, though perhaps of little practical value to most people, is that Janna Contact lets you incorporate a photograph of your contact and even movies (in .AVI format). You can also add voice notes. It is generally the case, however, that features such as these don't get used after the novelty has worn off.

Overall, Janna Contact Personal is a very usable PIM. It looks good, packs a lot of power and for the price has several features that are normally found in far more expensive products. A weakness is that you can't tile the modules to view your contacts, To-Dos and appointments together, but this is a relatively minor criticism. Janna is easy to learn and use and boasts affordability.

- £58.74 (inc VAT) plus £10 p&p
- Janna Systems: 01628 789878
- Download a 30-day trial version of Janna Contact from
- www.janna.com

Janna Contact Personal

Ease of use	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Features	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Value for money	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Overall	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Maximizer Lite

Maximizer is one of the heaviest of the heavyweight contact managers and Maximizer Lite is a cut-down version to show just a little of the things the big brother can do. And the amazing thing about it is that it is free. Yes, FREE! You can download it from the Maximizer World Wide Web site (the URL is given below) and try it out for yourself.

It does all the things you would expect from a high-powered PIM – you can record the names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of companies or contacts, keep notes, record and track letters, faxes, and phone calls, schedule and track appointments, and list To-Dos.

Maximizer Lite also lets you set a password. It will dial the phone and launch your Internet browser, and it has a timer so you can have a record of the duration of phone calls and other tasks. You can also use it to print labels, envelopes and reports.

Contact information is entered on one of three tabbed cards. The first card contains name and address details – it is American, unfortunately, with a field for State and Zip instead of County and Post Code, but the fields will accept UK information so it isn't really a problem. The card also has four phone fields, which is sufficient for most uses. The second card has eight user-definable fields, one of which is already set up for an e-mail address. The third one is for the mailing address.

By default, today's date is attached to To-Dos but you can alter it. You can choose to give the task a time and set an alarm to remind you minutes, hours, days or even weeks prior to the task. This is useful when you want to be reminded about your wedding anniversary while there is still time to get

a present and a card. You can also attach a priority and give each task a representative icon, such as a telephone for a telephone message, a letter for a letter and so on.

The calendar can be set to show daily, weekly, monthly and bi-monthly (although you can't easily switch between them; you have to set one in a preferences dialog). You can also set a time for appointments and mark them when completed.

There are one or two deficiencies which mark Maximizer Lite as the offspring of a contact manager – for example, you can't store non-contact information such as price lists or your video collection – but these are minor, especially considering that the software is free.

- Full version: £159.99 (inc VAT)
- JI Software: 01234 214004
- Download a free fully functional version of Maximizer Lite from
- www.maximizer.com; for the full version of Maximizer, probably the best salesforce contact database, contact JI Software

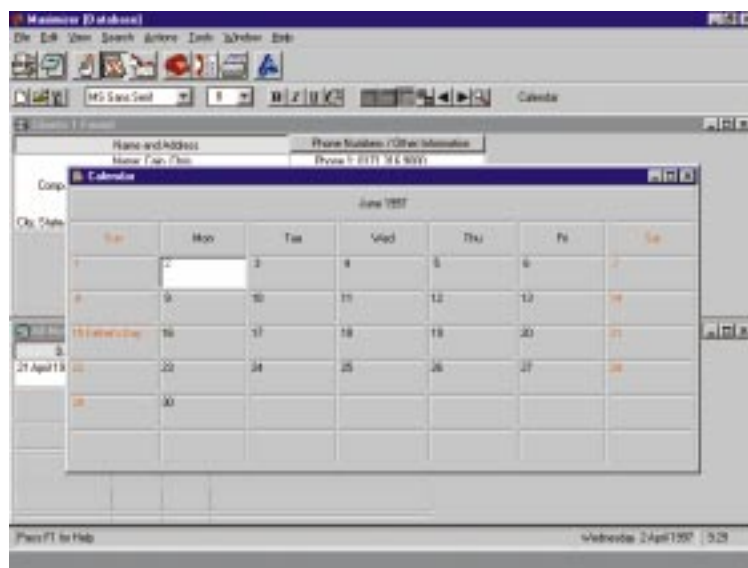
Maximizer Lite

Ease of use	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Features	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Value for money	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Overall	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

On-Schedule Personal 97

On-Schedule Personal is one of a growing family of PIMs from San Diego-based Odyssey Computing, designed for every user and every need. Business users can adopt On-Schedule 97, personal and home users can go for On-Schedule Personal 97, and those who have embraced the new Windows CE operating system for hand-helds

Maximizer Lite's Calendar – just click on the date to enter an appointment.



(see the box later on in this feature) can use Pocket On-Schedule for Windows CE.

On-Schedule 97 and On-Schedule Personal are essentially identical products except that the latter is targeted for personal/home use and lacks the business features incorporated in the former. These include logging of calls made and received, document tracking, network capabilities, an integrated word processor – which in On-Schedule 97 is a modified version of the WordPad that comes with Windows 95, and the ability to send faxes from within the application. On-Schedule Personal is also limited to five Phone Books, Calendars, To-Do lists, and so on.

On-Schedule has the usual address book, appointments diary, and task manager (To-Do list maker). The contact database is called the Phone Book. It has loads of preconfigured fields and there are also several user-definable fields. Contact details are presented as a list by default, but clicking on a contact name brings up several tabbed cards which give expanded or additional information. The appointments diary or calendar can be viewed by day, week, month or year. You can view past as well as future events and schedule reminders. The To-Do list, like everything else, appears as a list, but clicking on a To-Do brings up tabbed cards.

You can link to your word processor and if you use a recent version of Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, Lotus Word Pro (or Ami Pro) you can elect to have On-Schedule on the Menu Bar and access the program's features directly.

Turning briefly to Pocket On-Schedule for Windows CE, this offers unlimited databases, dialling support, Internet access, direct e-mail, call/e-mail logging, contact information templates, and cus-

tomisable layouts. It is fully compatible with On-Schedule 97 and On-Schedule Personal 97, as well as with other major PIMs, such as Lotus Organizer.

This is easy to use, and has a lot of flexibility hidden behind a dull interface. It can tile contacts, To-Dos and calendar, which you can't do with Sidekick.

- Personal 97: £61;
97: £116.32 (both prices inc VAT)
 - Prisma Office: 01753 810899
- Demos of On-Schedule 97, On-Schedule Personal 97, and Pocket On-Schedule for Windows CE downloadable from:
- www.odysseyinc.com/

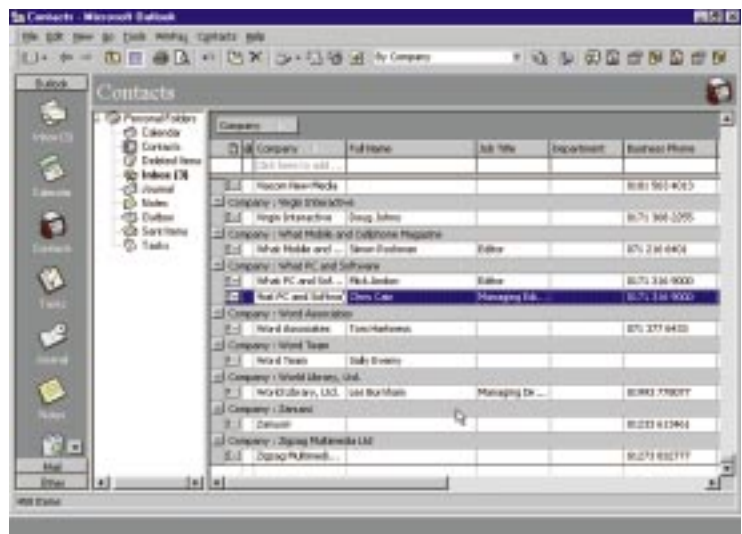
On-Schedule Personal 97

Ease of use	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Features	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Value for money	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Overall	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Outlook

Outlook is a new PIM from Microsoft, available as a standalone package or as part of Microsoft's Office 97 suite. It is powerful, providing particularly strong e-mail control, excellent help in the shape of the Office Assistant (which by default is an animated paperclip, but you can change it to Einstein or a puppy dog as your taste dictates), and there is superb integration across Office 97 applications.

The interface is neat and attractive to look at. Down the right-hand



Outlook looks nice and you can display your contact details in different ways – but it is a bit grey.

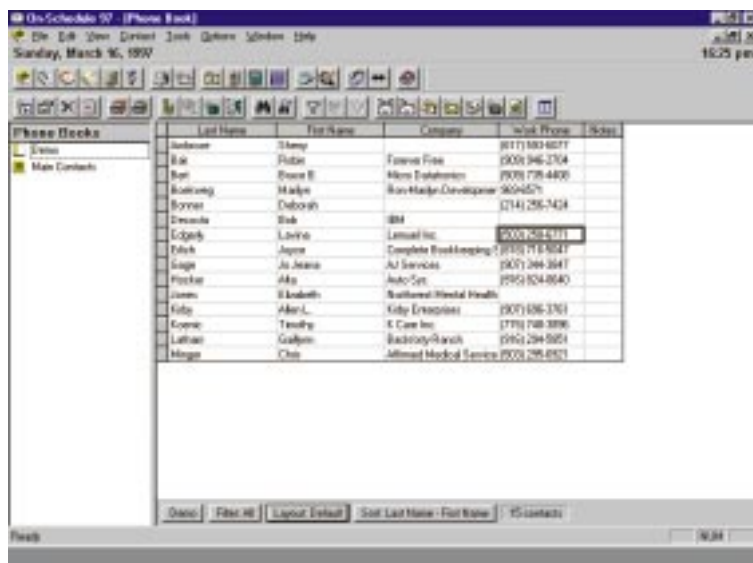
side of the screen is a row of buttons called the Outlook Bar and clicking on one of these buttons takes you to your e-mail inbox, appointments calendar, address book, To-Do listmakers, mail folders, and documents.

The contact database allows you to store extensive information about each contact, including up to three postal addresses, four phone numbers, three e-mail addresses, and one Internet URL – which is converted into a hyperlink that lets you access a Web site directly from Outlook – plus extensive information about each personal contact, including birthday, anniversary, nickname and spouse's name. There are some added tricks to speed up data entry too. The Auto-Address/AutoName feature automatically assigns the street, city, county, and postal codes to their appropriate fields or, in the case of AutoName, assigns first, middle, and last names.

The weakness of the address book is that you don't seem able to combine business and non-business contacts. Outlook will list business names alphabetically and the names of people automatically, but will not list them together, so you can't have your old chum Walter Dew followed by Dexynight Robotics. Mr Dew will be listed separately.

The appointments calendar displays your appointments and To-Dos along with a calendar. You can view it by day, week or month, and view appointments in one of several ways, such as by category.

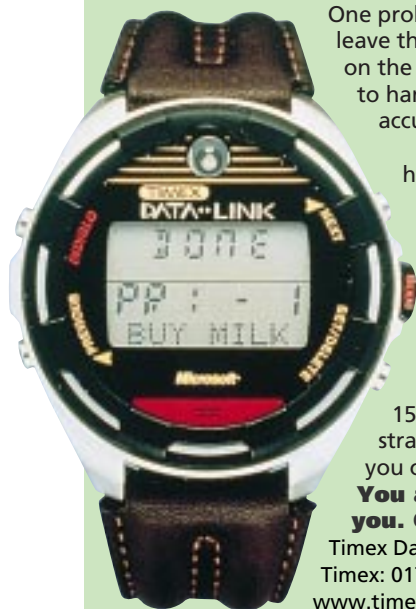
To-Dos or Tasks are listed in their own module and again you can store quite detailed information. You can give the task a title such as 'Outlook Review', set a date when it is due, the date started, the project's status (this review's status is currently 'In Progress'), attach a priority to the task, set a reminder, and add quite a lot of detail about the task. All this information is



On-Schedule 97 is easy to use and looks good.



Timex DataLink



One problem with all the wonderful PDAs is that you can so easily leave them at home, in your briefcase in the boot of your car, or on the bar in the pub. Great as they are, they never seem to be to hand when you want them. Always to hand – or to be more accurate, always to wrist, is the Timex DataLink wristwatch.

The DataLink is superb, especially now the new version has an improved casing and better strap. You can store phone numbers, To-Dos, and appointments, and set alarms with up to 31 characters of text – to wake you up every morning with an appropriate message. And the great thing about it is that you are unlikely to leave your watch at home or on the bar. Those important numbers are always with you. Moreover, the watch is unobtrusive.

The new, much improved DataLink watch, the DataLink 150, is stylish, has a smart stainless steel casing and chunky strap, and lets you store up to 150 records. On the downside, you can't search for a number but have to scroll through.

You always have your most important contacts with you. Once you've used it, you'll love it.

Timex DataLink 150: £120 (inc VAT)

Timex: 0171 630 8180

www.timex.com

entered on a tabbed index card. A second tab on the card lets you set the mileage and billing information. A revolutionary but slightly messy feature is the Outlook Journal where you can automatically log and store all of your Office documents, contact calls, e-mail, and other communications.

Outlook is good to look at and easy to use and it integrates perfectly with the Office suite. There are a few off-putting deficiencies however, and the price seems a mite high.

○ £125.72 (inc VAT)

○ Microsoft: 0345 002000

● www.microsoft.com/outlook

Outlook

Ease of use	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Features	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Value for money	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Overall	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Organizer 97

Organizer is used by more than 10 million people worldwide and has an established pedigree stretching back to October 1991 when it was released in the UK by a British company called Threadz. The product was an immediate success, largely because of its on-screen resemblance to personal organisers such as Filofax.

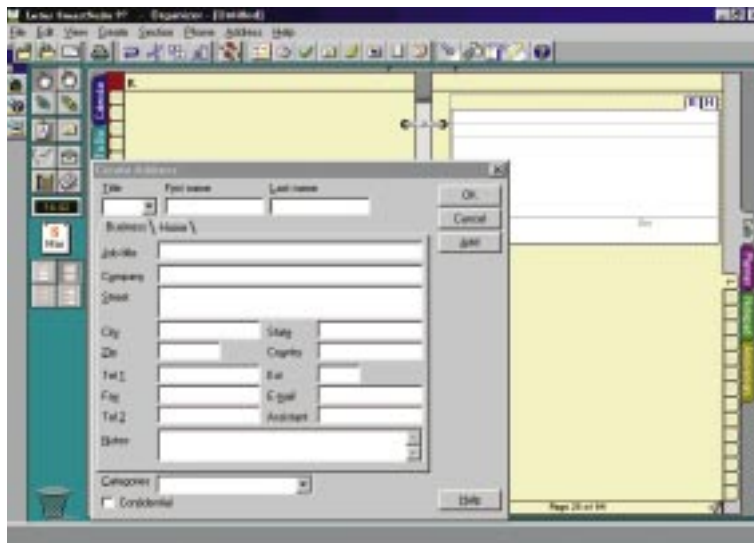
This familiarity of look and feel made it out-of-the-box easy to use for the majority of people. Its initial success led to it being purchased from Threadz by Lotus in 1992, although Threadz continued to design and develop Organizer until June 1996. The PIM is now avail-

Lotus Organizer has a traditional ringed notebook look, with a neat, simple-to-use address book.

able as a standalone product or as part of Lotus's SmartSuite.

In appearance it looks like a traditional ringed notebook with tabbed sections for the address book, an appointments calendar, To-Do maker, a notepad, a wall-chart type planner, a calls log which automatically logs incoming and outgoing calls, and a special section for recording anniversaries.

The address book is neat and simple to use, providing all the address and telephone details you need at a glance. The appointment calendar provides day, week, two-week, or month views and the To-Do list maker lets you sort tasks according to priority, status, date, or category and set alarms. The wall-chart planner is a good idea for office users, letting you schedule up to 15 events, book overlapping events of varying duration and display quarterly or yearly views.



A key feature is the Notepad, which lets you store freeform notes, graphics, and charts. Documents are organised to form a book-like table of contents, which is a simple way of being able to quickly find and access the documents you want. The Notepad isn't as fully-functional as the word processor integrated with Sidekick, but you can include formatting such as bold, italic, underlining, and font size, type, and colour using RTF (Rich Text Format).

The Anniversary Reminder is also a nice touch and can be a life-saver. If you tend to forget birthdays and anniversaries, with Organizer you can log them and set reminder alarms.

Organizer 97 is a full 32-bit application and supports Windows 95 and Windows NT. There are strong group-scheduling and shared calendaring features and, shades of Internet Sidekick, remote users can stay up to date on tasks and schedules via the Web by using the Organizer Web Calendar. Otherwise, Organizer 97 doesn't exactly overflow with new features and although Organizer is unquestionably one of the best PIMs, we can't help feeling that it has just about achieved all it can do. With a product like Sidekick you feel that there is room for expansion – such as an integrated personal finance manager – but with Organizer you wonder what further enhancements it can be given.

An old stager, still a top-flight entertainer, but beginning to show its age and with little new to add to its repertoire.

○ £49.35 (inc VAT)

○ Lotus: 01784 445808

● www.lotus.com/organizer/

Organizer 97

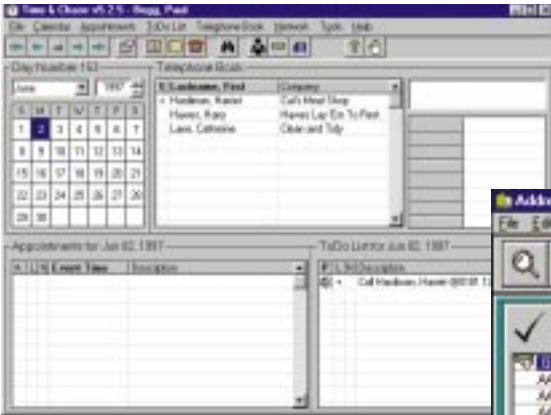
Ease of use	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Features	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Value for money	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Overall	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Time & Chaos 32

Time & Chaos is an exceptional PIM. Not only does it have an easy-to-use interface, offer a lot of power, functionality and flexibility, but it is also available as shareware for you to try before you buy.

The main screen has a small calendar in the top left of the screen, next to it is the contact and company name, and then a box listing the various phone and fax numbers. By default it also lists a Pager num-

Time & Chaos: you can try before you buy.



ber, and there are three user definable fields for things such as home fax numbers. Information is entered on tabbed cards which cover most needs – primary and secondary addresses (work and home), phone numbers, 12 user-definable fields for information such as spouse's name, plus areas for associated files, appointments, and To-Do items. You can drag and drop to schedule a phone call or an appointment.

The 'Overlays' feature can be used to separate groups of contacts, such as friends from relatives, or business contacts from friends and family. You can also use the Overlays to separate your To-Dos, such as home projects from business. There are excellent communication facilities. You can dial your phone, fax, send e-mail and launch your World Wide Web browser from within the program.

Time and Chaos is also network aware and comes in 16-bit and Windows 95 32-bit versions.

An excellent PIM, albeit lacking the flexibility of other products, but it has the advantage of being available as shareware so you can try it for yourself.

- £37.76 (inc VAT)
- Springsoft: 01352 770049
- Download from: <ftp://ftp.springsoft.com/pub/springsoft/win32/pim/>

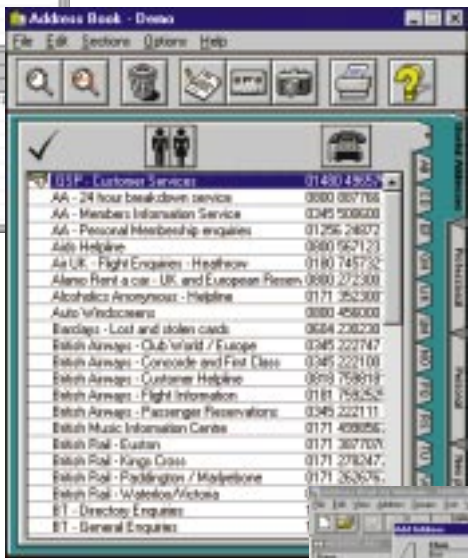
Time & Chaos 32

Ease of use	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★

Address Book

Address Book from GSP is among the simplest PIMs and is really just an address book for your computer, with no capacity for adding appointments or To-Dos. A series of tabs down the extreme right-hand side divide the address book into 'personal', 'professional', and 'useful' numbers.

You can access your contacts by scrolling through a list of names and numbers or by clicking on alphabetical tabs. Clicking on the contact name expands a card on which you enter details such as name, address, telephone and fax number. There is no provision for other numbers such as mobile, home fax or pager, but these can



Address Book (above) is neat and easy to use, but lacks the features of Address Book for Windows (right).

be added to an area for Notes. You can't add an e-mail address or a Web site either. However, you can add photos and sounds. The fields do differ slightly according to the address book being used.

The 'Personal' address book, for example, has fields for birthdays.

You can use Address Book to call up your word processor and automatically insert the address and date into a letter. The software will automatically dial the phone and alert you when outstanding telephone calls or letters are due. And you can make notes during a phone call.

Good but not brilliant.

- £14.95 (inc VAT)
- GSP: 01480 496666

Address Book

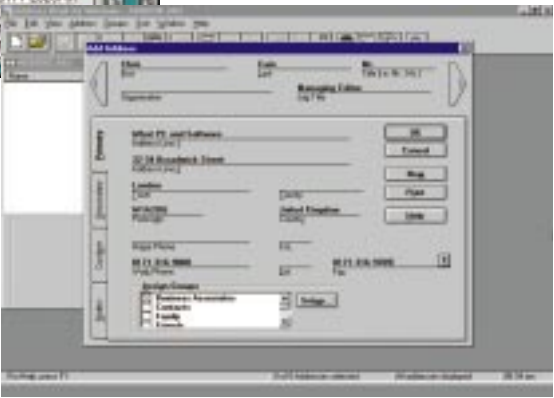
Ease of use	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★

Address Book for Windows

Address Book for Windows from Parsons Technology is also a simple address book rather than a PIM, but on a grander scale than GSP's. The contact's name, business and job title are listed along the top of the screen and the address details added below. Down the left-hand side of the screen there are four tabs: Primary, Secondary, Custom, and Notes for primary address details (say, business address), secondary address details (home), fields of your own choice (there are four), as well as a Notes field. Address Book for Windows will also dial the phone and log calls.

It isn't uncommon to be able to assign your contact to a group such as family or friends, but Address Book for Windows takes this one stage further and provides a number of other categories as well as giving you the ability to add your own. This is useful as it lets you filter your contacts to isolate, say, repair services, so that you can immediately find the telephone number of the people who repair your washing machine. In the notes section you can record all the necessary information you will need to hand, such as the make and model number of your machine.

You can also assign a category such as 'Christmas Card List' so



that, come the festive season, you can simply create a list of everyone to whom you need to send a card and print the mailing labels. If you use a handwriting font the label looks less businesslike.

Address Book for Windows is unquestionably the best of the simple address books and has some nice touches which the more heavy-weight PIMs could adopt.

- £37 (inc VAT)
- Guildsoft: 01752 895100

Address Book for Windows

Ease of use	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★

Palmtops for mobile users

It is all very well having all your contact information to hand on your desktop computer, but what do you do when you're away from your desk? The answer is a PDA (Personal Digital Assistant), an appalling bit of jargon for a palmtop or hand-held computer. They range in price from a little over £10 for a simple computerised address database to several hundred pounds for something like the popular Psion which incorporates an address module, word processor, spreadsheet, and assorted add-on programs which include a map of the London underground system!

The latest breed of PDA is called a Hand-held Personal Computer, which has inevitably been 'acronymised' to HPC. These HPCs run Windows CE, a new operating system from Microsoft. Formerly known as Pegasus, it is a 32-bit, multitasking, multithreaded operating system designed to give a high-performance Windows environment within the limited memory configurations of a hand-held.

You won't be able to buy Windows CE except pre-loaded on an HPC – there are several of these hitting the shops about now, among them products from Casio, Hewlett-Packard, LG Electronics, NEC Corp, and Philips Electronics. And over 40 leading hardware and software companies have committed to developing products for the new Windows CE platform – for example, Pocket On-Schedule for Windows CE, briefly described on page 113.

Windows CE aside, there are several PDAs to choose from. The most popular PDA in the UK is undoubtedly the Psion 3a, which has recently been superseded by the 3c, which isn't significantly different. It has a full suite of built-in applications, including a

word processor, database, diary, world clock, calculator and spreadsheet, and there is a veritable heap of other software you can load.

Close behind comes the US Robotics PalmPilot, which is marketed as a portable PIM. It incorporates an address book, diary, memo pad, task manager and a calculator. There are no links to a mobile phone, so you are free from faxing, e-mailing and Web browsing (and with mobile phone costs being what they are, where's the noodle of a boss who'll sanction surfing the Web as a legitimate business expense?). As a PIM, the Pilot is compact, lightweight, enjoys a long battery life, and has a pen/touch screen which allows handwriting recognition. Also supplied in the box is a HotSync cradle which plugs into your desktop PC's serial port and lets you update any information to and from the Pilot.



Psion 3c
Compact, portable, with a full range of applications. A superb PDA and you'll wonder how you got along without it.
£289 (1Mb), £312 (2Mb)
(both prices inc VAT)
Psion: 0990 143050
www.psim.com

US Robotics Palm Pilot

Lightweight, compact, pen/finger touch, easy synchronisation and the HotSync cradle is included in the price. It doesn't have the range of applications available for the Psion; otherwise, it is the perfect pocket organiser.
PalmPilot Personal \$299,
PalmPilot Professional \$399,
(UK pricing to be decided)
US Robotics: 0800 225252
www.usr.com/palm



Windows CE

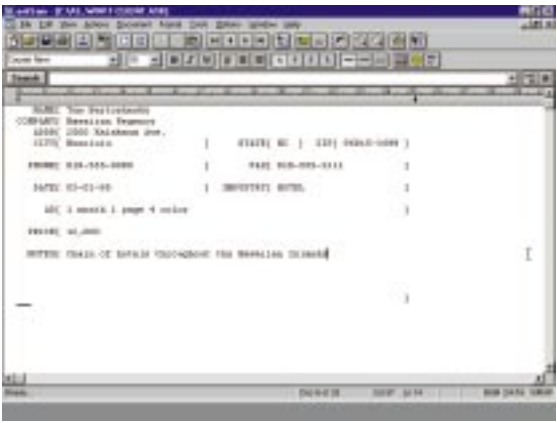
Microsoft:
www.microsoft.com/windowsce
Casio: www.casiohpc.com/main.html
Compaq: www.compaq.com/us/common/prodinfo/handhelds/
Hewlett-Packard: hpc998.external.hp.com/handheld/
Hitachi: www.hitachi.com/



askSam 3.0

Rather than being a PIM or a contact manager, askSam is a freeform database. It uses fields, just like any other database, but it also lets you store unstructured information (like a word processor document). You can then search the database by various criteria or even by word. This means you can use it to store names and addresses, along with all the other contact information you want. Unlike a traditional database, however, askSam does not require predefined field lengths or field types. Fields expand as you enter information, so there isn't any fear of running out of room. You can also add notes of any length.

It also provides the widest variety of searches in any database program: full-text, fuzzy, wildcard, Boolean, proximity, date and numeric. You can design useful front ends for



your databases so that they look professional and even add pictures. For information management askSam simply can't be beaten.

The only serious drawback is that askSam isn't the easiest piece of software to use, which is a pity. For example, you can't create a

askSam stores all your information, even long text files, and you can search for any word.

drop-down list of names to scroll through. That said, if your life needs the sort of order that only an unstructured database can bring to it, askSam is your best choice and will repay perseverance.

Superb for handling structured and unstructured information, but not easy to use. There is no real alternative, however, when you need to link information with contacts.

- £117.44 (inc VAT)
- Guildsoft: 01752 895100
- Demo version of askSam 3.0 downloadable from www.asksam.com

askSam 3.0

Ease of use	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★



Personal information managers compared

Detail	askSam 3.0	Janna Contact Personal	Maximizer Lite	On-Schedule Personal 97	Organizer 97	Outlook	Internet Sidekick	Time & Chaos 32	Address Book	Address Book for Windows
Contact	Guildsoft	Janna Systems	Jl Software	Prisma Office	Lotus	Microsoft	Starfish Software	Springsoft	GSP	Guildsoft
Telephone	01752 895100	01628 789878	01234 214004	01753 810899	01784 455445	01734 270001	0181 875 4455	01352 770049	01480 496666	01752 895100
Price inc VAT	£117.44	£58.74	Free	£61	£49.35	£125.72	£49.99	£37.76	£14.95	£37
Windows 3.1	●	○	●	○	○	○	○	● (3.1 version available)	●	●
Windows 95	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
CPU	486	486	486	386	486	486	486	486	386	386
RAM (Mb)	4	16	8	8	12	8 (16 NT)	8	8	2	4
Disk space (Mb)	4	8	3	10	15	26-46	12	3	2	2.5
Address book	n/a	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Contact history	n/a	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○
Customisable database	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		○	○ – user-definable fields
Diary/calendar	n/a	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
Task/To-Do lists	n/a	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
Notebook	n/a	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●
Expense tracking	○	○	●	○	○	○	●	○	○	○
Time logging	○	●	●	○	○	●	●	○	○	○
Calculator	●	○	●	●	○	○	●	○	○	○
Integrated word processor	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	○	○	○
Links to other word processors	●	●	○	●	○	●	●	○	○	○
Word	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	○	○
WordPerfect	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	○	○
Ami Pro	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	○	○
Others	●	●	●	WordPad	○	●	●	○	○	○
Spell-checking	○	○	●	●	○	●	●	○	○	○
Auto dialler	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Launch WWW	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
e-mail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
Fax	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○
Link to Timex	○	●	○	○	○	●	○	●	○	○
Link to PDAs	○	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	○

● = Yes ○ = No



When you think about it, a personal information manager does a very simple job. Why, then, is choosing the best buy fraught with so many difficulties? One reason is that PIMs do the same thing in different ways, which means that a lot of personal likes and dislikes come into play. Overall, in terms of value for money, features, and ease of use, the unrivalled best buy has

to be Internet Sidekick (or, indeed, any member of the Sidekick family). It is powerful, will store almost anything, is easy to learn and use, and currently it looks like a product that will get better and better.



Microsoft's Outlook is a powerful contender for the best buy award and perhaps would be the best choice for users of the Office suite, with which it

integrates so well, providing they can live with its minor deficiencies. On-Schedule 97 is also a very good PIM and comes highly recommended. If you don't need the To-Dos and appointment scheduling features of a PIM, Address Book for Windows is the best choice. And, of course, for portability choose the Psion. Finally, to have those important numbers to wrist, the Timex DataLink looks good and also tells the time!

Paul Begg