



PDA

HP iPAQ hx4700

PC PRO
A LIST

PRICE £359 (£422 inc VAT)

DELIVERY £5 (£6 inc VAT)

INTERNET www.hp.com/uk

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com/uk/380LD1

VERDICT It may be big compared to other PDAs, but the hx4700 provides near-notebook flexibility thanks to the amazing screen, software bundle and the ability to add 5GB of storage.

We need to get this PDA's problem out of the way right from the word go: it's big. Less of a palmtop, more of a handheld, the hx4700 is a Pocket PC that was never designed to slip discreetly into a shirt pocket. But before everyone starts decrying HP as a fool of the greatest magnitude, we should make it clear that there's a huge amount of compensation for the size.

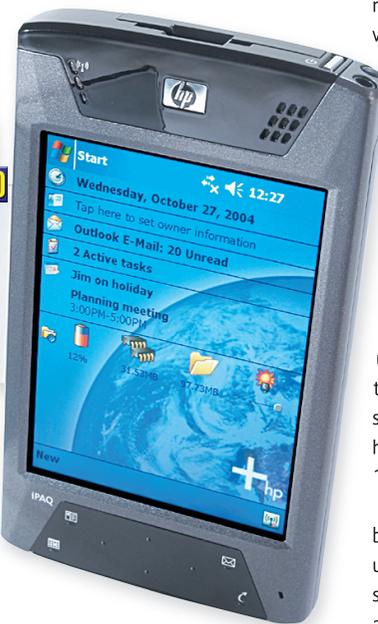
The first, and most striking, is the screen. Measuring 4in diagonally, it dwarfs the 3.5in screens that we previously regarded as large – the effect is far greater than the extra 0.5in sounds. Equally important is the resolution HP squeezes in. None of that 240 x 320 nonsense, the hx4700 boasts 480 x 640 bright pixels.

Fujitsu Siemens' Pocket LOOX 720 (see issue 121, p76) also included a 480 x 640 resolution, but it compromised by using a 3.6in screen. The HP's extra space makes a big difference to readability; for instance, the Today screen appears huge, so you'll never have to squint to read an appointment. It's also handy when browsing the Web.

But HP goes one better again by including Pocket Informant 5 (see *Mobile Computing*, p244), a program that will make you wonder how you ever lived with Pocket Outlook. Crucially, Informant takes full advantage of the larger viewing area. For instance, you can glance at your monthly schedule and see whether you have meetings in the afternoon or morning on any particular day; more contacts can be fitted on any one page, and are presented far more accessibly; and you can simultaneously search across your calendar, tasks and contacts.

As ever with its iPAQs, HP has opted for a quality screen too. The colours are vibrant, which means photos stand out, and the viewing angles are good enough for several people to crowd round the machine at once. But if you use the hx4700 only to display holiday snaps then you're wasting the power on offer.

A prime reason is the 624MHz Intel PXA270 processor. This doesn't make the hx4700 speed along quite as fast as we hoped: there's some minor stuttering when switching between applications, but this is due to the larger screen having to be



Put notebook power in your pocket with this versatile PDA.

refreshed. Certainly when we watched video it played back scenes smoothly, and searches were returned in double-quick time.

Another sign that HP is targeting the power user is the amount of memory on offer. There's the customary 64MB of RAM, but HP accompanies this with 128MB of flash memory – even if the battery dies, you won't lose any data if you store it here. In total, there's 85MB of flash memory set aside for storage, plus whatever you can steal from the RAM.

If you're willing to spend a little money, storage certainly won't be an issue. HP includes an SD card slot (which also supports MMC and SDIO cards) plus a Type II CompactFlash slot.

The latter could be home to IBM's 4GB Microdrive, for instance, or a camera.

HP wasn't satisfied with all this, however, and decided to innovate even further. For this PDA doesn't feature the navigation pad we've grown accustomed to, instead opting for a trackpad. In two years' time, this will either prove to be a stroke of genius or a madman's folly – luckily, we think it's the former.

This wasn't our first impression though. In the

default Navigation mode, the touchpad proved to be an unworthy replacement for the normal navigation pad. It's fine if you just want to press up, down, left or right, but if you try to activate a program by pressing in the middle of the pad then things get rather frustrating.

Switch the hx4700 into Cursor mode and you begin to see HP's reasoning: a familiar Windows-style cursor appears, which you can control in exactly the same way as on a notebook. On those occasions when you just want to leave the stylus in situ, the touchpad is an excellent way to zip around larger documents and browse web pages. It's only a shame that there's no USB port to enable you to plug in a standard mouse.

We can imagine some people ripping off the screen protector HP provides. Made of semi-transparent plastic, it's kept shut by a weak magnet. In general this will prevent damage, especially against sharp objects the iPAQ might find itself rubbing up against in a pocket, but you wouldn't want to throw the hx4700 in a bag with just the screen protector to guard it. Its major benefit, however, is that it doesn't add to the hx4700's 15mm depth.

Another plus is the battery life. Not only because the hx4700 lasts for 9 hours under light use (with the backlight set to medium), and the same amount of time if you choose to use it as an MP3 player, but because HP is already selling an optional battery for £94 (exc VAT).

This means you can switch on the 802.11b Wi-Fi or the Bluetooth radio to connect your phone, and hook up to your company network, browse the Web or just download email. With Bluetooth keyboards aplenty, it's easy to imagine the hx4700 as an effective notebook replacement that will last all day, and all night.

We admit that we're torn between the Pocket LOOX 720 and the iPAQ. Both have compelling features: we love the USB host port of the 720, which makes it easy to hook up flash drives and even full-sized keyboards. HP, on the other hand, makes far more use of the 480 x 640 resolution thanks to that fantastic 4in screen and a thoughtful software bundle. Then again, it costs about £40 more.

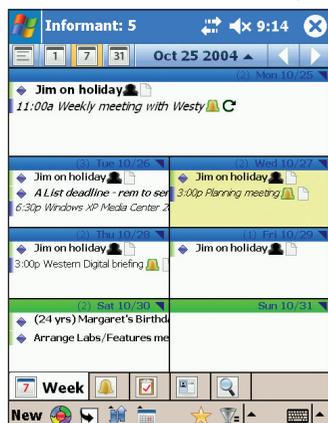
It's a points decision, but in day-to-day use the hx4700 has just enough in its favour to earn it a place on the A List.

TIM DANTON

PC PRO RATINGS

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES & DESIGN	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★

SPECIFICATIONS 624MHz Intel PXA270 processor; 64MB RAM; 128MB ROM; 480 x 640 transreflective TFT (60 x 80mm); SD/MMC/SDIO slot; Type II CompactFlash slot; Bluetooth; 802.11b; infrared; USB docking cradle; Outlook 2002; Windows Mobile 2003 for Pocket PC Second Edition. Dimensions: 77 x 15 x 131mm (WDH). Weight: 187g.



The 480 x 640 screen combined with Pocket Informant 5 makes it easy to see what's going on in your calendar.