

## **6 Criteria for Deciding if an Electronic of Paper Calendar is Best for You**

By Daniel Roth

As our lives speed up and become more complex, the common calendar system does not seem to be as effective as it once was. Or is it? If you are unsure about an upgrade, this article helps you decide between a mobile, electronic calendar system (MS Outlook and a PDA for example) or a paper-based system.

There are six criteria you can use to decide which makes more sense to you.

### **Mobility**

A paper calendar system is excellent if you stay in one place whenever using it. Receptionists are legendary for having large paper based calendars. A paper-based system will become a challenge to tote if it is bulky and does not fit in your purse, briefcase, or pocket. On the other hand, a PDA, such as a Palm Pilot or Compaq IPAQ, is very portable and will fit in a pocket. The Palm Pilot is great if you go from meeting to meeting and are rarely in one place.

### **Computer Literacy**

If you are comfortable with computers, a Palm Pilot and Microsoft Outlook will be easy to start using. However, if you find computers to be daunting avoid using them then it makes sense to stick with your paper calendar.

### **Frequency of Changes**

If you are using a paper-based system today but have lots of scratch marks in it or need to carry white-out with you, it makes sense to change to an electronic system. The calendar will be easier to update and read. Conversely, if you seldom make changes to appointments an electronic system carries no benefit.

### **Shared Calendar**

The data in a Palm Pilot can be synchronized with any computer that contains a calendar program (Outlook, Act, Palm Calendar). Also, if you synchronize your PDA with your calendar program and you are connected to a network, others will be able to access your calendar with permission. This is helpful if others set appointments for you or when scheduling meetings or conference calls. If only you use your calendar, the paper-based system is sufficient.

### **Additional Information**

Daily task lists, contacts, and notes are some the types of information typically carried with a calendar. A PDA makes it easy to keep all of this information in one place and share it. This reduces the effort required to set-up a contact to call to confirm an appointment on your calendar. A paper-based system can also store the additional information. However, every piece of new information takes up extra space and causes your calendar to increase in size and weight. Think about how much information you store in your calendar other than appointments to make a decision on this point.

## **Price**

A basic paper-based system is less expensive to get started. However, a Franklin Covey type planner can cost upwards of \$100 initially. Also, there are annual refills to take into consideration. A small calendar will cost under \$10 if that is all you need. Alternatively, a PDA is always over \$100 and most people tend to buy more than they need, causing the price to be even higher. Look for a used one or purchase just the features you need to control the cost of getting started.

Now you can intelligently decide if a paper- based or electronic system coincides with your habits. By making the right decision, you can make the calendar work for you, increase your productivity and reduce stress at the same time. What could be better?

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