

PDAs: A Year With The Palm Z22

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In my article, \â?•PDAs: Back To Basics\â?•, I outlined my plan to attempt to simplify some things in my life, and one key area was my PDA use. Having the latest and greatest PDA was always my goal. I couldnâ??t get enough of the new features and capabilities that the newer PDAâ??s offered. Yet over time, I found that of the many amazing and cool features, most either went unused or were just plain distractingâ??distracting to the point of sucking up valuable time that could otherwise be used for more productive things. So I opted for the Palm Z22 to see if its limited feature set could help me to simplify my PDA use.

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Well, itâ??s been just over a year since I moved to the Palm Z22, and so far, Iâ??ve not looked back. The Z22 has proved to be a very useful and solid PDA, and has served my goal of simplifying things. Is it limited? Yes. Do I wish it had more features? Yes. Is it doing what I had hoped it would do? Yes! Read on to see how the Palm Z22 has fared, what I would like to see added to future models, and what are my future PDA plansâ?¦.

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Itâ??s about a year later, Iâ??m still using the Z22, and I have no regrets. I find it to be an amazingly powerful, useful, and productive PDA. Yes, Iâ??ve been stung on occasion by some of its limitations, (notably, its incompatibility with a few applications) but overall, itâ??s been a very positive experience. Iâ??ve honed my original list of installed applications to a solid set that works well for me. In fact, I just realized that it has literally been several months since I even installed anything new! For example, after having a couple \â?•issues\â?• with mNotes, I decided to just sync my PIM with the Palm Desktop and not worry about it. True, it no longer syncs with Lotus Notes, but I have access to Lotus Notes at work all the time. It turns out that almost all Palm-related alarms and appointments tend to be personal ones, so for me, itâ??s very manageable.

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\nSome might see my move to the Z22 as an \â?•innovative step backwards\â?• but the reality is that I no longer focus on the nuances \â?•of the device\â?•â??I just use it. While the imposed limitations of the Z22 can be both a blessing and a curse, so far, the positives far outweigh the negatives. There are a couple things I wish were improved (see below) but these limitations havenâ??t drawn me away from it.

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Combined with the Palm Air Case, my Z22 is completely front-pocketable. This has been key to its usefullness because after all, if you canâ??t take it with you, you canâ??t use it, right? And because I almost always have it with me, thereâ??s no no real excuse not to use it.

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\n**So, am I more productive?**
\nWell, thatâ??s debatable! The time I used to spend tweaking, adjusting, and playing with the extra features of my other PDAâ??s has definitely gone down. I rarely tweak the Z22 simply because I donâ??t need to. In fact, the it has truly become an applianceâ??itâ??s just there when I need it, and doesnâ??t get in the way. And that extra time can certainly be spent on more productive things. Obviously itâ??s what I do with that extra time that determines my productivity!

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Unfortunately, Iâ??m not the most organized person, and it is a continuous struggle for me to manage priorities and general organization. But now, at least I canâ??t attribute that to a PDAâ??itâ??s a personal issue. Iâ??m slowly learning better organizational skills, and trying to pick up better habits. But the fact that Iâ??m no longer distracted \â?•by the device\â?• means that I can at least spend that time elsewhere.

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\n**Some Wishes**
\nNo assessment of the Z22 would be complete without recommendations for improvements. After all, this PDA is not a feature-rich one. Amazingly, I have but two feature requests in improving the Z22 which, to be effective, would have to come without impacting performance or battery life:

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1. SD Memory Card Slot
\nBelieve it or not, after a year using the Z22, I have about 3.9MB free RAM. This is actually slightly more than when I started using the Z22! The limited amount of RAM and no memory expansion has been key to

maintaining its simplicity by forcing me to limit the applications I use. But I admit that there are times that I wish it had an SD card slot. I would like to be able to have access to additional data and to be able to backup the system RAM. But is this a \â?•must have\â?• feature? No. But then againâ?¦.

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2. High-Resolution Screen
\nI find the Z22â??s screen to be its biggest area of potential improvement. The 160Ã?160 color screen is adequate, and thatâ??s about it. It displays PIM data well, and overall, PalmOS applications are readable and usable. But itâ??s simply not stunning or impressive. But coolness aside, its readability could be improved. Iâ??d like to see the screen replaced with a full, high-resolution screen extending into the Graffiti area as on newer PalmOS models. It would certainly be easier on the eyes. Fortunately, this is not a huge deal, but it does detract from the overall feel and readability.

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And on a side note, when is someone going to come out with a decent color LCD screen that will look great in both office lighting and in bright sunlight? PDAâ??s suffer from this. Cell phones suffer from this. Itâ??s simply annoying that when I go outside, the the screens become completely useless. I was playing around with an old Palm III the other day, and remembered just how readable the monochrome PalmOS PDAâ??s were in bright light. OK, so they werenâ??t high resolution and they werenâ??t color, but man, were they sure functional!

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\n**The future**
\nWill I be replacing the Z22? Will I revert back to an older model? As it stands, the Z22 has really served its original purpose of simplicity well. Iâ??m not saying that the Z22 is the best PDA out there for everyone, but half the battle in simplifying was buying into the concept that less features and imposed limitations would help in simplifying things. And for me, it worked. Other than the couple features I wish it had, Iâ??m truly impressed with the Z22â??s performance, capabilities, usefulness, and portability.

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So, I donâ??t foresee purchasing a new PDA or reverting to an old one any time soon. This comes at an interesting time too, because I feel that the whole PDA world has really slowing down in favor of the Smart Phone and integration. Unfortunately, I donâ??t see much in real innovation happening in the PDA world, so an improved Z22 probably isnâ??t likely. That said, should Palm decide to release an improved Z22 with a full high-resolution screen and an SD card slot for a reasonable price, Iâ??ll buy it in a heart beat. But until then, Iâ??ll stick with my Z22!

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Date
11/09/2026
Date Created
05/01/2007

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