

How may I (digitally) assist you?

TECHWIT

Posted: Sunday, April 28, 2002

By JASON OHLER

I know life is already full of too many TLAs (Three Letter Acronyms), but here's another: PDA. Heard of it? Stands for Personal Digital Assistant. Strictly speaking, a digital assistant is a helper that requires the use of your digits - your fingers - making the knife one of the first cutting-edge PDA technologies. More modern examples include PalmPilots, hand-held computers and other tiny computerized gadgets small enough to hold with one hand and scribble or peck on with the other. They're crammed with useful stuff to keep us organized, like calendars, address books, and list organizers so we can keep track of all the things to do in our spare time when we're not making lists of things to do on our PDAs. But this is nothing compared to what's coming.



(http://juneauempire.com/subscription/rewards?utm_source=juneauempire.com&utm_medium=banner&utm_content=meadpromo&utm_campaign=Subscriber%20Rewards)

(http://)

Trending this week:

Soon we will use our PDAs for video conferencing. Think of this as e-mail that allows you to see and hear the people you are communicating with. Your PDA will act as a mini-video camera. You'll be able to set it on the table in front of you and "go online" to attend a meeting.

Of course this will cause some problems. After all, one of the wonderful things about using e-mail is that no one knows just how awful we look in the morning. Soon after we start using video conferencing we will resent having to get dressed up just to sit at home and talk to our PDAs. This will give rise to a market for PDA "appearance filters," which use special effects to change your appearance on screen. We'll go after them like 9-year olds after a Harry Potter book. Here are a few filters that promise to be on your digital shelf sometime soon.

Guys will be interested in the shaving filter. They can set it for clean-shaven, day-old beard (for video dating), or full beard in case they want to look more Alaskan than they really are. Women will appreciate the JAM filter: Jewelry And Makeup. Punch in the mood needed for the meeting (assertive, cooperative, passive aggressive, whatever) and they'll find themselves outfitted in just the right combination of facial add-ons. For a little extra money users can purchase the "dress up filter" putting them in a killer tie, power blouse, or whatever's necessary to get the job done. I recommend everyone get the pants option. Otherwise if you stand up without thinking you might find that your dress shirt and pajama bottoms don't match.

This is just the beginning. Everyone will be interested in the "look alive filter." It will massage your video image so that you appear thoughtfully engaged in what others say when you are anything but. Another feature will be "laugh at the boss's jokes," which needs no explanation. And you've heard the old saying, "When you're mad at someone and need to lighten up just imagine them with underwear on their head?" Easily done with the new software coming your way.

Technological evolution won't stop here. We will have PAEs (Programmable Alter Egos) that will attend meetings for us. PAEs will come with a lot of standard programming. For example, when they hear the phrase "paradigm shift" they will respond by saying, "I'm sure it will boost sales!" And when they hear the word "innovation," they jump into the conversation and say enthusiastically, "That's my middle name!"

Some fear we will become a world of vidiots, glued to screens to avoid real contact with humans. But think of it this way: Not only can we be anywhere, anytime, but we can also be whoever we want while being nowhere in particular. As a friend of mine put it, in the future we will be able to do virtually anything but nothing really. What a great time to be alive. Really!

Jason Ohler is author of many books and articles about living and learning in the Digital Age. He is a professor of educational technology at the University of Alaska Southeast. © Jason Ohler 2002.

Related Searches

DIGITAL ASSISTANT (http://juneauempire.com/search-results?utm_source=juneauempire.com&utm_medium=link&utm_content=related-searches&utm_campaign=mead-related-search&&querystring=%22DIGITAL ASSISTANT%22) **PERSONAL DIGITAL ASSISTANT** (http://juneauempire.com/search-results?utm_source=juneauempire.com&utm_medium=link&utm_content=related-searches&utm_campaign=mead-related-search&&querystring=%22PERSONAL DIGITAL ASSISTANT%22) **UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA SOUTHEAST** (http://juneauempire.com/search-results?utm_source=juneauempire.com&utm_medium=link&utm_content=related-searches&utm_campaign=mead-related-search&&querystring=%22UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA SOUTHEAST%22) **EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY** (http://juneauempire.com/search-results?utm_source=juneauempire.com&utm_medium=link&utm_content=related-searches&utm_campaign=mead-related-search&&querystring=%22EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY%22) **PDA** (http://juneauempire.com/search-results?utm_source=juneauempire.com&utm_medium=link&utm_content=related-searches&utm_campaign=mead-related-search&&querystring=%22PDA%22) **PERSONAL DIGITAL ASSISTANT**

(http://juneauempire.com/search-results?utm_source=juneauempire.com&utm_medium=link&utm_content=related-searches&utm_campaign=mead-related-search&&querystring=%22PERSONAL DIGITAL ASSISTANT%22) PDA TECHNOLOGIES (http://juneauempire.com/search-results?utm_source=juneauempire.com&utm_medium=link&utm_content=related-searches&utm_campaign=mead-related-search&&querystring=%22PDA TECHNOLOGIES%22) PROFESSOR OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY (http://juneauempire.com/search-results?utm_source=juneauempire.com&utm_medium=link&utm_content=related-searches&utm_campaign=mead-related-search&&querystring=%22PROFESSOR OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY%22) **AUTHOR (http://juneauempire.com/search-results?utm_source=juneauempire.com&utm_medium=link&utm_content=related-searches&utm_campaign=mead-related-search&&querystring=%22AUTHOR%22) UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA SOUTHEAST (http://juneauempire.com/search-results?utm_source=juneauempire.com&utm_medium=link&utm_content=related-searches&utm_campaign=mead-related-search&&querystring=%22UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA SOUTHEAST%22) **JASON OHLER** (http://juneauempire.com/search-results?utm_source=juneauempire.com&utm_medium=link&utm_content=related-searches&utm_campaign=mead-related-search&&querystring=%22JASON OHLER%22) **VIDEO CONFERENCING** (http://juneauempire.com/search-results?utm_source=juneauempire.com&utm_medium=link&utm_content=related-searches&utm_campaign=mead-related-search&&querystring=%22VIDEO CONFERENCING%22)**

Juneau Empire © 2015. All Rights Reserved. Terms of Service (<http://juneauempire.com/terms.shtml>) | Privacy Policy / About Our Ads (<http://juneauempire.com/privacy-policy>)

