



PalmPower Magazine

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FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Calibrating David's crystal ball

By David Gewirtz

Happy New Year and welcome to the start of PalmPower's fifth year!

What a year we've had. From a presidential election controversy to a recession to September 11th and the Anthrax scare, 2001 was anything but dull. For many, it was just a very stressful year. For a sad few, it was a devastating year as family members and loved ones were lost forever.

And now we're looking forward to 2002. It is our fervent and nearly universal hope that 2002 will be a better, brighter, bolder, and more bountiful year than we've seen in the last twelve months.

Sometimes it's hard to believe, but in between all the chaos and all the headlines, life and technology moved on. In fact, quite a lot went on in the handheld arena in the past year, and I'll discuss some of that in upcoming paragraphs.

Last year at this time, in <http://www.palmpower.com/issues/issue200101/ppeditorial0101001.html>, I wrote my predictions for 2001. Fortunately, I limited my opinions to predictions within the world of the Palm OS, because I never could have predicted the rest of 2001!

Predictions from January 2001

It's always a fun exercise to go back over old predictions and see just how accurate my crystal ball was last year. Here we go.

1. Form factor

My 2001 prediction: *While most new devices are sure to fit the same general form factor (and, especially, the 160 by 160 pixel screen), I predict there will be at least one radical departure from this form factor in 2001. I predict we'll see a manufacturer (and it'll probably be a Palm OS licensee, rather than Palm, Inc.) introduce a much smaller device (like a watch-sized item) or a much larger one (perhaps even something more tablet in nature). Alternatively, we can expect a device of just a completely new, unexpected shape (and yes, I am covering all bases with this prediction).*

While we didn't see a much larger or smaller device, we did see some departures from the standard Palm OS device of prior years. Devices like the Sony CLIE and the HandEra 330 upped screen resolution considerably. Devices like the Samsung SPH-I300, the upcoming Handspring Treo, and the Kyocera Smartphone have integrated phones into the Palm OS handheld. Additionally, the keyboard-equipped Treo marks the first departure from the Graffiti entry area on a Palm OS device.

For 2002, I stand by my prediction of a radical departure. I still believe we'll see a size change, especially when people start getting used to the higher-resolution screens.

2. Bluetooth

My 2001 prediction: *Bluetooth is the near-area wireless networking technology that's all the rage (and still not deployed). While I think Bluetooth is interesting, consumers won't--at least not in 2001. It'll be too expensive, and the first uses of Bluetooth will be of the, "Why the heck did they think that was interesting?" nature.*

I got that one right on the nose. Bluetooth still isn't that interesting. There's been some noise about a Bluetooth SD card, and there's a

large Bluetooth cradle out. However, there's just no compelling reason to care yet, unless you're a manufacturer invested in Bluetooth.

For 2002, I predict Bluetooth will fade into obscurity, except for a few special purpose applications. The technology known as 802.11 or WiFi (the local area wireless networking technology used in Apple's Airport) will win by a landslide. 802.11 installations are showing up all over, it's easy to install, it has a much longer range than Bluetooth, and it's a lot faster. For 2002, I predict 802.11 will leave Bluetooth in the dust.

3. Price

My 2001 prediction: *I predict 2001 will herald the introduction of the first under \$100 Palm OS device. Expect such a device to have substantial trade-offs to make the price possible. Certainly, there won't be a cradle. We can expect this device to use the least expensive materials and possibly be a bit bulkier than the more expensive devices.*

I got this one partially right. I have seen Palm handhelds available in special retail promotions for as low as \$49. And, amazingly, you can buy a refurbished Palm m100 from the Palm store for a shockingly low \$69.30. But we did not see a mass market, widely distributed product under \$100 in 2001.

After all the financial upsets many of our favorite manufacturers have been through, along with their avowed focus on the enterprise, I honestly can't predict that there will be a mainstream, sub-\$100 Palm OS handheld in 2002. I think there's a slim chance, but I certainly wouldn't bank on it. That said, I think you can definitely count on being able to buy a Palm OS handheld for under \$100 in 2002. It just won't be part of a mainstream product-pricing event.

4. Major PC manufacturer

My 2001 prediction: *I predict we'll see Dell, Compaq, HP, or Gateway (or, wild shot, Apple) introduce a Palm OS device with unique design elements.*

This one I got wrong. The Pocket PC came on strong, and HP, Compaq, and Toshiba each came out with well-received devices. Surprisingly, Dell has yet to put its label on any handheld device. Also, both Sony and Apple surprised me. Sony came out with a compellingly differentiated device in their color, MP3-playing, higher resolution Sony CLIE.

Apple completely surprised me, introducing a handheld-sized MP3 player (the unbelievably sexy iPod). Sadly, the amazing iPod is only limited to new model Macintoshes, so even folks who have a ton of slightly older machines (like me) can't take advantage of it.

We also saw adoption, not by PC makers, but by phone makers. Both Samsung and Kyocera have integrated Palm OS phones that are functional as well as lust-worthy.

For 2002, I suspect we'll see some interesting shakeout between HP and Compaq, especially as a result of their proposed merger. Rather than seeing another major PC manufacturer move into the Palm OS world, I predict we'll see more aggressive innovation by current Palm OS licensees. And I think we'll see the Palm OS licensed in some new, interesting, and unpredictable ways.

5. Multifunction Springboard modules

My 2001 prediction: *In 2001, we'll start to see some multifunction modules, as well as support some form of Compact Flash or Smart Media, all in one module. We'll also see modules that integrate telephony and wireless Web access. Bonus: a few more Springboard modules announced in 1999 and 2000 will actually ship in 2001.*

Lots of Springboard modules are now on the market, but only a few multifunction modules are available:

- The Thinmodem Plus from Card Access combines a 56K modem with an extra 8MB of RAM, in one module.
- The DataQuake module from PoGo! Products combines 8MB or 16MB of RAM with silent alarm and vibrating feedback functionality.
- Hagiwara combined a flash backup capability with an additional 8MB of memory.

Honestly, there were two things about Springboard modules that disappointed me in 2001. First, most of them were quite overpriced. For example, when it's possible to buy 128MB of CompactFlash or SD media for about a hundred bucks, it seems ludicrous to spend almost \$50 for 8MB. Second, there really weren't any Springboard modules that really extended the experience.

For example, why not integrate CompactFlash with an MP3 player and use the large Handspring screen to create an incredibly compelling music experience? Or why not integrate a *huge* RAM array with an entire library of reference materials?

In 2002, I hope we see more Springboard modules. While some modules are excellent, many seem to be weak in one area or another. I'm hoping that in 2002, we'll see more aggressive innovation and more attention to detail in new modules.

6. Voice recognition

My 2001 prediction: *Viabile voice recognition and dictation won't be available on Palm OS devices. That's it. That's the whole prediction. Get over it. Move on to my next prediction.*

I was right. It didn't happen. It still won't happen in 2002.

7. Automotive integration

My 2001 prediction: *Now we're seeing that Palm and Delphi Automotive Systems have formed a partnership and announced the Communiport Mobile Productivity Center, which will give drivers hands-free access to Palm V series devices and certain Ericsson phones. They've also invested in a start-up called MobileAria that plans to develop a new, hands-free mobile Internet service platform for the automobile. Don't these people ever learn? It's not going to work. I wish there were a specially integrated, ultra-cool car device, just so I could buy it. But I predict that there won't be, coolness will be sadly lacking, and no one will care. Sorry guys.*

I was right on track with this one. Nothing ever really came of these announcements, and there are certainly no compelling consumer products in this area. And there won't be for 2002, either.

8. Craaazy stuff

My 2001 prediction: *In 2000, the Palm handheld really became mainstream. I don't know exactly what form it'll take in 2001, but I predict we'll certainly see more weird and wacky stuff that can only be called "craaazy."*

We didn't see nearly the wackiness I honestly expected. I think the ups and downs of 2001 got in the way of most of it. However, we have seen some strange stuff. Two products, in particular, stand out in my mind, and both are Springboard modules.

The first is the Raycom Personal Massager, a Springboard module that sends minute electrical currents into your body as an aid to muscle tension.

The second is the JETLOG 24x7 PowerNapping Module. This thing apparently keeps you awake, except during the times you're supposed to sleep for optimal napping. Now, on the surface, this is a crazy idea. But what they're talking about is actually very interesting.

The National Sleep Foundation tells us that nearly two-thirds of American adults (62%) experience a sleep problem a few nights per week or more. Jetlag and on-the-job sleep problems abound in areas from the military to business travelers. And there are ways that can combat these sorts of sleep problems, chief among them being sleeping at the right time. Now, we haven't yet tested the PowerNapping module, but it seems reasonably clear that they're going after a very specific set of people who need help getting better sleep.

We've also seen more than our fair share of genuine craziness, as is the case in any environment where it's easy to write software. I'm not going to focus on those products; they'll be clear enough when you bump into them.

For 2002, I predict we'll see more unpredictable products. Who would have thought that Palm OS devices would be used to shock you and then help knock you out? The next year, I'm sure, will produce even more interesting gadgets.

9. Palm in the enterprise

My 2001 prediction: *We've been covering this in-depth in PalmPower's Enterprise Edition at <http://www.palmpowerenterprise.com>. The more I look at it, the more I'm convinced that Palm handhelds are going to take the enterprise by storm. Stay tuned, you'll see.*

I was certainly right on track with this one. We'd only published a few issues of PalmPower's Enterprise Edition as of last January. We've now published more than a year's worth, and the breath of enterprise solutions is astounding. The past year saw Palm continuing to make great strides in the enterprise marketplace. You can visit our month-by-month journey through 2001 and take a look back at all the great enterprise-related happenings of the past 12 months at <http://www.palmpowerenterprise.com/issues/>

[issue200201/eyear001.html](http://www.palmpower.com/issues/issue200201/eyear001.html).

For 2002, I predict more of the same. There's going to be some encroachment by other competitors, but there's no question Palm has the upper hand. There will be a battle over spin, however. Already we're seeing some sadly uninformed analysts reporting that Microsoft has the enterprise locked and that the Palm OS is only suited for the commercial realm. 2002 will continue to prove them wrong.

10. PalmPower search engine

My 2001 prediction: *Mrs. Gewirtz didn't raise a stupid boy. I'm not going to do a set of predictions without knowing, with absolute certainty, that at least one of them will come true. PalmPower will have a search engine in 2001.*

What can I say? I stacked the deck. I'd been working on the search engine technology when writing this. Early in 2001, we introduced a search engine, which is available from the home page of each of our magazines. During the summer, we then introduced a polling interface, which has given us some very interesting information. Of course, lacking self-control, our first question was "boxers vs. briefs," and we were amazed that the results came up a statistical dead heat.

For 2002, I'm less inclined to stack the deck, although I can predict with fair confidence that there will be a section of the magazine devoted to links to other sites and resources. Beyond that, stay tuned. We can't tell you everything now, or there wouldn't be much of a surprise!

That wraps up my list of predictions, with one exception. I'm going to predict that everyone will have a really good year! Let's hope I'm proven right.

See you next month!

Product availability and resources

For the article, "I'm sorry, Dave, I'm afraid I can't do that" by David Gewirtz in the January 2001 issue of PalmPower, visit <http://www.palmpower.com/issues/issue200101/ppeditorial0101001.html>.

For more information on the Sony CLIE, visit <http://www.sonystyle.com/micros/clie/>.

For more information on the HandEra 330, visit <http://www.handera.com>.

For more information on the Samsung SPH-I300, visit http://SAMSUNGelectronics.com/mobile_phone/ads_awards/trade_shows/cebit_2001_pdaphone.html.

For more information on the Handspring Treo, visit <http://www.handspring.com/products/communicators/index.jhtml>

For more information on the Kyocera Smartphone, visit http://www.kyocera-wireless.com/kysmart/kysmart_series.htm.

For more information on the Ipod, visit <http://www.apple.com/ipod/>.

For more information on the Raycom Personal Massager, visit <http://www.handspring.com/products/sbmodules/massager.jhtml>.

For more information on the JETLOG 24x7 PowerNapping Module, visit <http://www.jetlog24x7.com>.

For more information on Palm handhelds, visit <http://www.palm.com>.

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David Gewirtz is Chairman and Editor-in-Chief of ZATZ: Pure Internet Publishing. With the fine ZATZ team, he publishes PalmPower, DominoPower, and Windows CE Power Magazines. He's also the author of The Flexible Enterprise and Lotus Notes Revealed! He can be reached via email at

david@zatz.com.

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