

The write stuff?

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Imagine being able to communicate in your own handwriting with your mobile phone, PDA, laptop or PC without any cables. The VPen does just that. It looks like a space age pen, but works like a mouse, pen, keyboard or graphic tablet.

Dealing with cables during mobile working can be awkward. VPen, developed by partners in the IST programme-funded VIPDATA project, is wireless, yet features a long talk and standby time of several days. It is a convenient little device the size of a slim highlighter pen that connects to numerous host devices using Bluetooth, which makes it compatible with a wide variety of hosts.

“Instead of clumsily entering SMS or other text through the tiny key pad

of the GSM, or scribbling into your PDA, VPen allows users to write naturally on any type of surface,” explains project partner Alberto Zanettin of Philips Consumer Electronics. “The device uses an exclusive handwriting recognition software that processes characters written in many languages.”

VPen’s mouse-like operation uses a high-performance optical sensor that estimates movement by the changes in contrast with the area scanned on the writing surface. Recognition software works word by word as handwriting is identified. Tests show a 90 per cent degree of accuracy.

Another difficulty is writing on the move. The VPen writes on any surface, including paper, metal, plastic or even the user’s knee. “This means ultimate freedom, allowing users to enter text when and where they want,” says Zanettin. “Instead of having to turn on the host device before preparing text, users can start writing, store the text or message and transfer the whole text through the Bluetooth connection.”

The system uses a revolutionary OLED (organic light emitting diode) display that shows the characters or messages entered and stored in the 4 Mbyte-memory, but also the pen status and the control messages. What sets VPen apart from the competition is its ease of use, mobility, affordability and its ability to interact with several devices, developers claim.

The consortium’s target audience includes early technology adopters, those with high expectations who want to have the best and are sensitive to personalisation, as well as people on the move.

Zanettin says VPen’s potential is “real”, but the product is not yet ready to launch. VIPDATA project partners are still ironing out the final technical difficulties.

Source: [IST Results](#)

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