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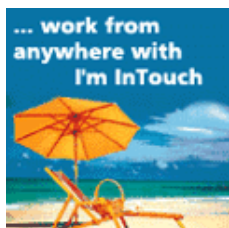


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REVIEW: 01 Communique's I'm InTouch

Posted by [Arne Hess](#) under [[Pre & Reviews](#)] - (Tuesday November 26 2002 @ 01:08PM MET)



While the Pocket PC did a good job of holding all my Contacts, Calendar entries and E-Mails as well as my most important files, there are some reasons where you need access to your main PC because you need a file which isn't stored on your Pocket PC or need to re-read an older E-Mail which isn't available anymore on your Pocket PC. But maybe you want to simply check if everything at home is okay.

During the past weeks I've scanned the market and found 01 Communique's I'm InTouch which nicely works with my Pocket PC through GPRS.

I'm InTouch is the latest addition to the 01 Communique line of software products. I'm InTouch is designed to let you maintain complete control over your communications system while still having the freedom of universal access to all your messages and contact manager from anywhere in the world.

The I'm InTouch Remote Access Service provides:

- Access from any Internet PC, wireless Palm, Blackberry, Pocket PC, or web-enabled phone
- Complete Integration with Microsoft Outlook / Outlook Express
- Calendar and Contact Management
- Access to the files on your PC and network drives

I'm InTouch installs a Apache Web Server on your PC because everything is Web driven. This means also, and this you have to keep in mind, that I'm InTouch isn't a remote synchronization between your Pocket PC and your Desktop PC but a real time access tool!

Beside the Apache server, I'm InTouch is also a DNS recognition/redirection system. It takes care that you get a connection to your PC, even if your PC is connected through dynamic DNS only like mostly used by ISPs for ISN, DSL or Cable. However, your PC have to be switched on and connected with the Internet. So at least you need a flat dial-up connection, better a DSL or Cable connection.



Configuring the Desktop PC

After you've installed I'm InTouch you need to configure your PC. It works great with every Microsoft standard application like Outlook or Outlook Express. But first of all you have to give your PC system a unique name to be identified later if you remote access your PC as well as a login name

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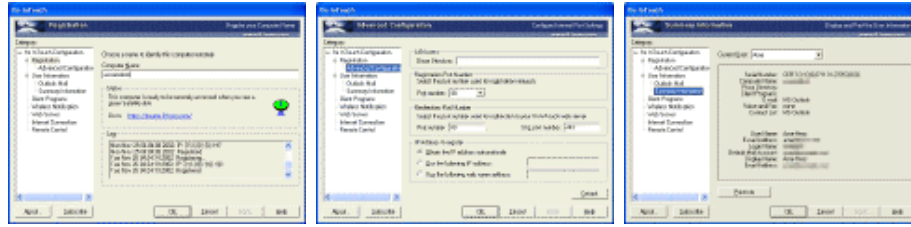
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and password. I'm InTouch supports standard HTTP access as well as secure HTTPS access.



If everything is configured, your PC will connect with the I'm InTouch server which is indicated by the satellite dish in the Task bar. If it switches to green you are connected and ready to use.



Using I'm InTouch with the Pocket PC

Now you can remote access your Desktop PC from at least every Web browser in the world. Doesn't matter if it is your office PC, a public Internet terminal or your wireless connected Pocket PC.

Connecting

Point your PIE to a central login page (this isn't the IP address of your PC) and enter your unique PC name. Here you can also select how you want to access your PC: through a Desktop Browser or via a Wireless Browser. While the Desktop Browser access is optimized for larger screens and supports some Java Applet functionalities, the Wireless Browser access is perfect for Pocket PCs.

Now you will be connected with your PC, in fact with the Apache Web server and you have to enter your Login Name and Password you have given before.



Service Menu

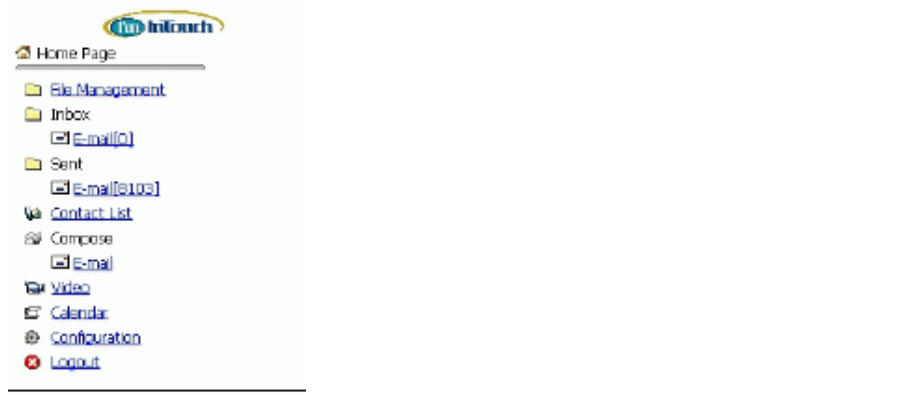
After your successful login you are redirected to the I'm InTouch service menu. Here you get access to all kind of functionalities, from File Management to Inbox to Contacts, up to Calendar and Video.



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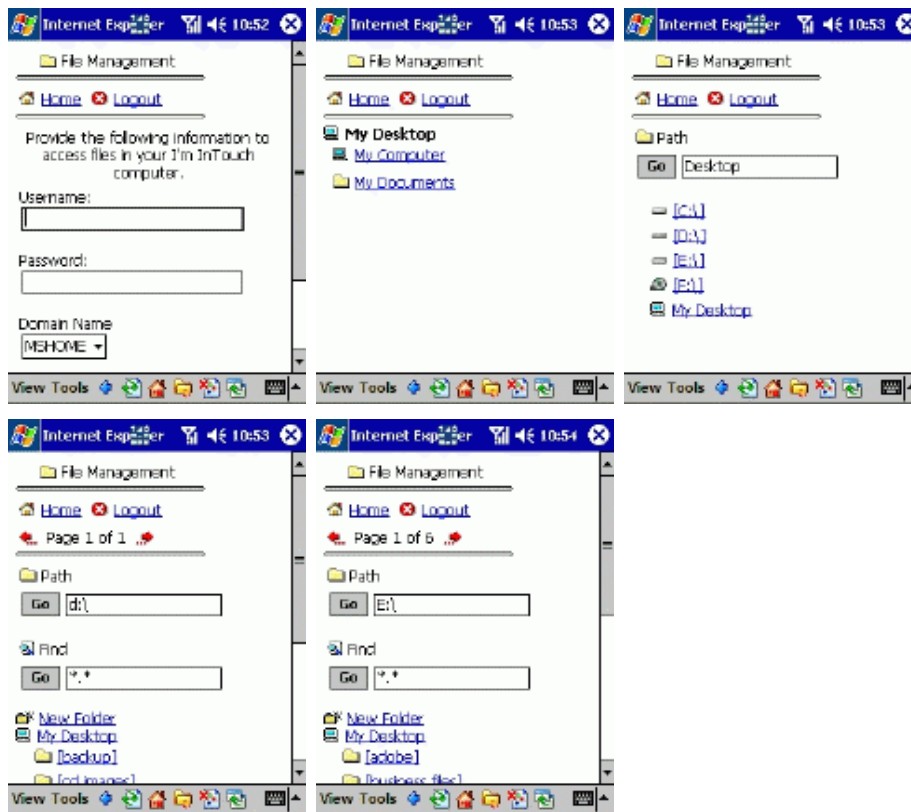
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Got the new HP iPAQ H5450 for review at PPCW.Net [UPDATE] (Arne Hess)



File Management

The remote File Management might be one of the most interesting applications. My Pocket PCs have up to 64 MB storage capacity and if I use my Toshiba HDD I can add additional 5 GB storage capacity. That's great but at least my home PC have 200 GB of data. And who wasn't in a situation where need a file but haven't it synchronized. With the File Management functionality you can access every drive of your PC as well as every file and simply download it from the PC to the Pocket PC. Even the access to the complete network is possible if you run more than one PC only at your environment.

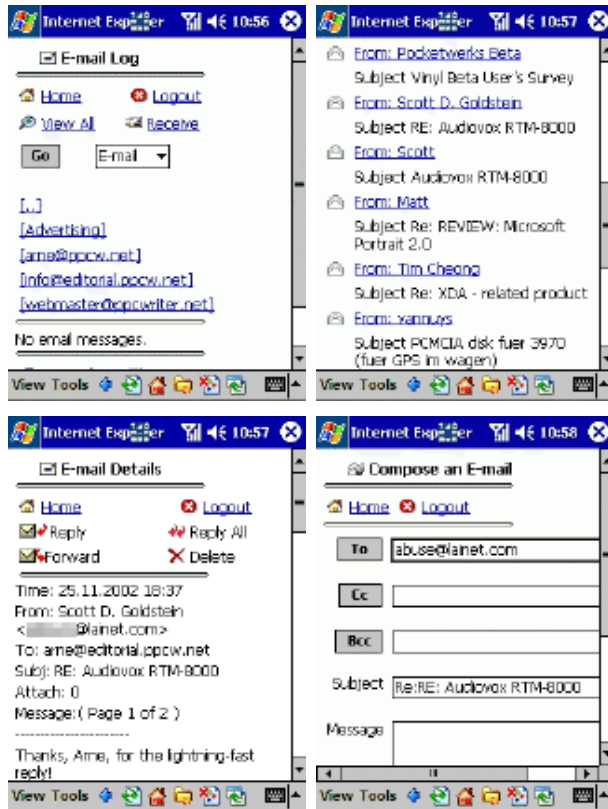


As good this works, please keep in mind that this functionality could become pretty expensive. Downloading a 6 MB PDF file or MP3 through GPRS might work from the network speed but doesn't work with today's GPRS fees.

Also the Pocket Internet Explorer still have a lack of functionalities. So you can not upload files from your Pocket PC to your remote PC. While I'm InTouch supports this functionality with the Desktop/Java version it can't be supported with the Pocket PC version. This lack of functionalities is something I hope to see fixed by Microsoft anytime.

E-Mail

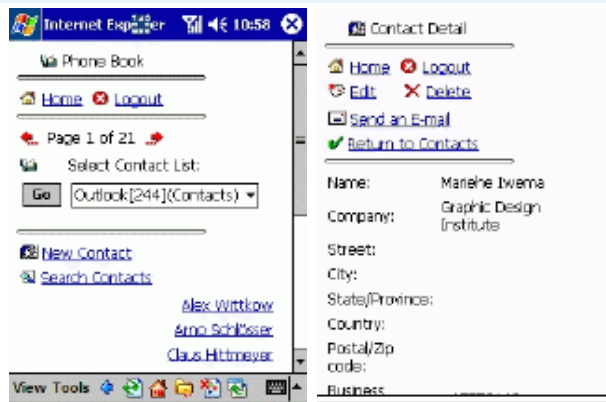
Another interesting feature is the E-Mail access. Here you can access all E-Mail folders including sub-folders which gives your 100 % access to every sent and received message. Again, as good Pocket PC works for E-Mail access, directly through POP3/SMTP or Active Sync, you can not have all your E-Mails stored on your Pocket PC. At least for me I have around 1.4 GB of E-Mail messages and this functionality gives you the option to read even the oldest E-Mails.



Beside reading, replying or forwarding E-Mails composing an E-Mail is pretty interesting if you need to attach a large file to your message. You can attach every file from your remote PC to the E-Mail message, doesn't matter how large it is because it's send through your PC connection, not though your wireless Pocket PC connection. That's a real benefit of I'm InTouch's Inbox access. The only disappointing feature here is that you can E-Mail messages through a pre-defined account only. Unfortunately I'm working with several E-Mail accounts and the pre-defined is used for every mail message I sent. Here I would like to get more flexibility!

Contacts

Another great feature - even if it is not so important for Pocket PC owners - is the Contacts access. While I have synchronized all my contacts with my Pocket PC it might be useful if you access your PC through a public Web terminal or your office PC.



At least you get all important information from a contact like addresses, phone numbers and E-Mail addresses. Also you can create an E-Mail message right from the Contacts feature.

Calendar

More or less the same for my appointments. I've synchronized every future appointment with my Pocket PC but it might be useful to get access to past ones.



Here I'm InTouch provides you a day, week and month view as you used to use it from every PIM.

Video

Maybe most fascinated I was by the Video application. If you have a Web Cam connected to your PC you can get a real time picture of it. So you can check if everything at home is okay. That's pretty nice if you use I'm InTouch in your home or small office environment!



Even 5/10 seconds snapshots and a video stream is possible and all it worked great! So you can absolutely get a real time overview what's up at home! Pretty nice, specially for me as I live alone to check if anyone is in my apartment! Please never use it to spy your family or employees!

Final Conclusion

As much I like the synchronization capabilities of my Pocket PC as much I like the wireless functionalities. And using the wireless functionalities of my Pocket PC to access my brain, my live the center of all my information - my home PC - gives me another good reason for wireless enabled Pocket PCs. At least every important information is stored on my PC and now I get the more or less full access to this and I'm InTouch is supporting me perfect here. As you can improve a product always it gives me most of the functionalities I'm looking for today and if I compare the Desktop version with the Wireless Browser version, I'm InTouch is even completer; so it's not a lack of product features but more or less a lack of feature support on the Pocket PC. However, even with a more limited Pocket PC access I reach every target and this is perfect for me.

Two weeks ago I was visiting my parents in Frankfurt (400 kilometers away from my home) and I was able to access some important files as well as all my E-Mails and checking what was up at home through the Video even kicked my parents who aren't tech geeks like me.

I've tried a lot of other products/ways in the past from LapLink to FTP server to Terminal Client and all of this have it advantages but finally I'm InTouch combines all this more or less perfect. The only functionality I miss now is to get the synchronization possibility through I'm InTouch as well. This would enhance that product to a more or less 98 % fit for me.

For sure I'm InTouch isn't a corporate product and didn't replace products like the Microsoft Mobile Information Server but for a professional personal use and So/Ho's (Small Offices/Home Offices) it's a perfect and easy to use enhancement and it's another product which let's me think of 3G networks. As good it works today with 2.5G networks I see a lot of feature enhancements with 3G networks which will provide faster wireless access.

All together - if you are a professional user - I'm InTouch is worth the money. It costs US\$ 9.95 per month or an annual fee of US\$ 99.95 but it really can increase your productivity.

You can give it a 30 days free trial before you sign-up anything, without giving your Credit Card details and currently PocketGear.com is running a special price promotion of US\$ 39.95 only for a 6 month access!

Cheers ~ Arne

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