

To: Rey Farve, San Dimas Technology & Development Center

12/12/06

From: Gerardo "JB" Paez, Osceola National Forest

Subject: Ike beta test report

I want to thank you for allowing me to participate in the testing of the new bundle of technologies brought altogether, in this specific case, in the form of the ike 304 device. It was gratifying to use and try get up to get up to speed with equipment that I refer to as "state of the art".

Learning the new system requires familiarity building. There is a tremendous, but not insurmountable, learning curve that requires a time, capability, and dedication investment despite any level of familiarity. I gave it a fair try and got fair results. Several layers of operability including the Windows OS, HP IPAQ, and device specific operations and applications are too decentralized and are not integrated enough. A do-it-all device should not occupy such a portion of the operator's mind to run the equipment than it does in freeing it up. I found the system cumbersome to learn without a person standing before me showing procedures. This may be a problem with many new users.

There are many applications and technologies available on this device which is a plus. Streamlining these applications is a liability. Obvious pluses include the ability to sync Outlook Contacts, Datebook (or Agenda), Windows Media Player files, and other convertible files to work on remotely from a field location. Also, I found the internal compass and inclinometer helpful for navigation. Furthermore, the DCA and the AABDCA provided an interesting data capture tool that I am excited about. I captured GPS locations, camera images, and user remarks. I was able to bring these points up using the portable Arc Pad GIS software. Unfortunately, I could not overcome sync issues to additionally manipulate the data and add personal databases when using these various applications. When a preliminary requirement returned an error I was not able to sidestep, I became limited in my use of these tools.

This is a listing of actual problems and, in some cases, remedies. On/ off button did not function on occasion, multiple system lock-up required a soft reset, Microsoft ActiveSync toggle switch was set incorrectly, the data capture application did not function. I was, reassuringly, guided along when I encountered a resolvable issue by the support folks at Survey-Lab who provided good instruction on use and trouble-shooting.

A suggestion would be to include a training and support package with each unit. Another suggestion is to put in an external 2.5 mm jack. This would allow the Windows Media Player to play sound files either through a pair of standard headphones or any device that accepts this jack size including most personal computers. I can understand how this engineered solution may compromise device ruggedness but I believe a simple rubber plug, like on many commercially available audio devices.

This is the upshot of my experience: Tough to learn but has potential that requires some user investigation. The user has to want the tools to work. The ike is a powerful work instrument once the smaller and learnable items are learned and operated effectively. The ike device that was tested is not user friendly enough, or, conversely, the device may be too new to the user. An argument can be made on either side, but suffice it to say that at the least, I do have a portable electronic device familiarity possessed by most of my technologically accepting contemporaries. I have owned and operated a PDA and regularly performed synchronization actions making some of the similar features understandable. Apparently other beta testers obtained applicable results. Unfortunately, I was not able to take much of the data I gathered to a level of meaningful fruition.

Appreciative for being included in the process,  
Gerardo "JB" Paez