

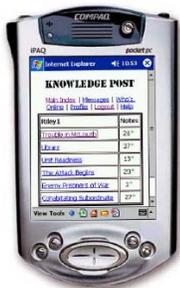


## Personal Digital Assistants:

### A Leader Information Management & Communication Tool

**Background.** The U.S. Army is transforming its NCO and Officer Education System to meet the needs of the objective force. Part of this transformation involves putting needed technologies in the hands of leaders to make them more flexible, adaptive, and effective. To this end the Army Research Institute (ARI), is coordinating with TRADOC to field the use of portable hand held electronic devices by Army personnel to support hip-pocket training, life-long professional development and more effective job performance. The first trial at Ft. Lewis with NCOs is being run by ARI and a contractor, Knowledge Analysis Technologies. This and subsequent trials will inform the Army's strategies for acquisition, distribution, and use of portable hand-held electronic devices.

**Approach.** *Project PDA* examines PDAs' use and usefulness: the effectiveness of anytime/anywhere access to training and operation documents; the extent and improvement in communications among NCOs and officers; the effectiveness of technology for accessing communities of practice for professional development, information exchange and decision making; the value of local vs. internet accessible information; and the cost effectiveness of replacing paper documents with digital versions.



Through data obtained from face-to-face interviews, surveys, and measured usage statistics, *Project PDA* will determine the usefulness of PDAs; assess usage differences between schoolhouse and field; describe the differences and similarities of Active and Reserve Component use; calculate total-cost-of-ownership of such devices; collect descriptions of the best practices in the school house, field, and off duty; and document novel operational and training uses. A community of practice threaded discussion group *Knowledge Post* will be used to collect descriptions of all unique contributions to operations and training effectiveness, e.g., just-in-time correction of errors in the field.

*Sample of PDA tested*

**Progress.** ARI and Knowledge Analysis Technologies began Project PDA in FY02. Active and reserve groups received PDAs and were trained on their use. One group was SGTP/LDC class at Ft. Lewis. Their usage patterns are tracked from classroom to the field. Another group, the Oregon National Guard is using PDAs equipped with GPS in field maneuvers. Monitoring usage and its effects on improved knowledge, skills and attitudes; and increased commitment to the Army will continue through March of 03.

*Soldiers work with PDA's wireless capabilities out of classroom.*

