# Palm Pilot: The Ultimate Guide

The PalmPilot PDA has been on the market for a few years now and is so simple to use that you would hardly think there was a need for a guide. O'Reilly, however, sees things differently and has produced this weighty tome dealing, in the most part, with fairly simple and self-explanatory subjects, or those things that are detailed in the instruction manual which comes with your PDA. The advantage of this book, however, is that it can afford to take more space to argue its case, which is great for novice users, but for anyone experienced in the use of a PalmPilot, it can become tedious.

Nevertheless, there are many useful tips, hints and anecdotes: everything is touched upon, from the name of the palm-tree mascot of Palm Computing
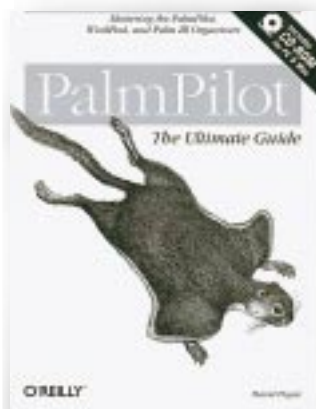
(it's Shelldon, if you must know) to a quick way of hiding the currency prefix in your expenses. Many areas are examined in depth: a 30-page chapter on programming for the Palm series should serve as a quick-start guide to getting your device to do what you want it to.

A whole array of undocumented procedures can be found scattered throughout the pages of this book. Everything seems to be covered, from unofficial easter eggs which show two-tone photographs of the original US Robotics programmers, to more useful functions such as opening the "developer's backdoor", which is a facility to force your PalmPilot to wait *ad infinitum* for your PC to respond,

instead of timing out as it usually would in an unresponsive Hot Sync session.

The real value of this book, though, is not so much what is written between the covers, but what is attached to them, for inside the back cover you will find a CD-ROM crammed with useful shareware and upgrades. Although many of these utilities are available on the internet, having them supplied on CD saves downloading them yourself.

NIK RAWLINSON

☞ *We are giving away an actual PalmPilot PDA as well as copies of PalmPilot: The Ultimate Guide. To win one of these prizes, put your name and address on a postcard and send it to "PCW/ PalmPilot" at the Editorial Office address (p10) to arrive before 16th October. PCW competition rules apply.*

PCW DETAILS
★★★
PALMPILOT: THE ULTIMATE GUIDE
Author *David Pogue*
Publisher *O'Reilly*
ISBN *1-56592-420-7*
**Price** *£21.95*

Java Beans for Real Programmers

A Java Bean is the equivalent of an ActiveX control, being a piece of Java code that can be used as a component in a visual programming tool such as Inprise JBuilder, Symantec Visual Café, or Sybase PowerJ. That makes this a key topic for anyone doing rapid application development with Java.

Peter Wayner's book is described on the cover as a "high-end developer's guide" but it is suitable for anyone who has done a little Java programming. It starts at the beginning, explaining the essential concepts behind Bean programming, and goes on to explain

PCW DETAILS
★★★
JAVA BEANS FOR REAL PROGRAMMERS
Author *Peter Wayner*
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Price *£29.95*

how to create a simple Bean. Next comes a chapter on persistence, which means saving a Bean to a file or other datastream. There is a brief explanation of events, a vital part

of Beans technology which allows Beans to communicate with each other and work in an event-driven environment. Finally, the book explains how to make international Beans and how to use BeanInfo, the object that lets Beans plug in to a visual programming tool. At the back of the book are a series of examples showing how to use events to link several different Beans. This is a book which scores highly on readability and real-world usefulness. There are plenty of tips and examples, along with warnings about common pitfalls. But there is no accompanying CD.

The problem with the book is that it is too narrow in scope. There is nothing about Enterprise JavaBeans (Beans that
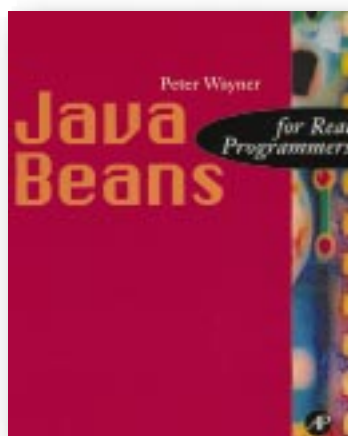
run on the server in a web or multi-tier application). There is nothing about integrating JavaBeans with databases. There is no coverage of Swing, the official new visual components built as JavaBeans. Since the concept of a visual builder is so important for JavaBeans, I would also have liked some comment on how to create and use Beans with the leading Java development tools. The book as it stands has an attractive simplicity, but as a specialist title it should provide more in-depth treatment. It is still a worthwhile read, though, offering a clear guide to the basics of coding with Beans.
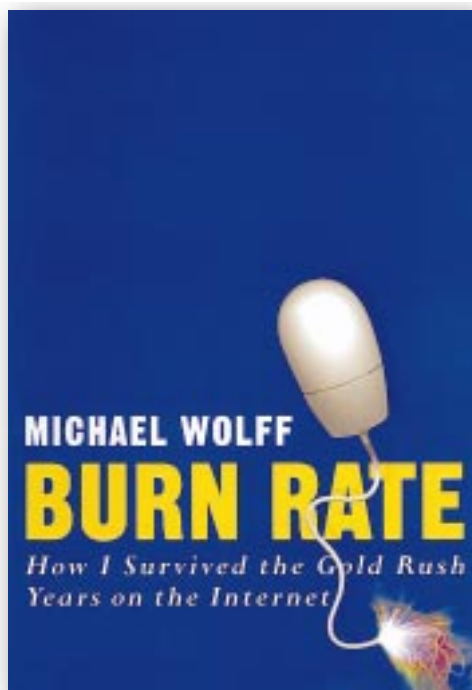
TIM ANDERSON

Burn Rate — How I Survived the Gold Rush Years on the Internet

Information superhighway. There! I wrote it. There is a fabulous whiff of nostalgia hanging around this phrase, now as much a relic of early nineties slang as "grunge' and "Generation X". It is becoming increasingly difficult to clearly remember the time when the internet was still effectively just a very popular bulletin-board and email service for a few thousand geeks. Michael Wolff's book charts the growth of the internet and its glamourous offspring, the World Wide Web, from the perspective of someone who was sucked into the madness of "the gold rush years".

In 1994, Wolff (originally a journalist) came up with the idea of replicating the US success of TVGuide, with NetGuide which would point people towards what was good on the web. As a self-proclaimed pioneer of the new media, Wolff writes about his early, hilarious meetings with venture capitalists and other would-be financial partners, few of whom had any clue about what it was they wanted to invest their millions in, other than it was supposed to be the Next Big Thing and therefore definitely A Good Thing. "It's a mass medium. Everybody will have internet. Everybody will have to have internet…like television," says one such idiot, before promptly paying Wolff $10m to use his "database" of a few thousand "outdated site lists", believing that he had, in fact, bought the internet itself.

Apart from this initial stroke of good fortune, the theme of the book soon becomes obvious: no-one was making money from the internet. The title *Burn Rate* refers to the disparity between a company's overheads and its revenues, which in Wolff's case was running at half a million dollars a month. The book covers Wolff's increasingly desperate attempts to keep his company afloat despite its continual financial haemorrhaging. He jumps into bed with unscrupulous venture

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capitalists, watches his mad hippy friend, Louis Rossetto, found a publishing phenomenon with *Wired* magazine, and attempts to screw money out of anyone who's ever heard of the internet.

This is a delightfully honest read, ludicrous and informative by turns, that should delight anyone with an interest in the black arts of financing and, of course, that information superhighway thingumajig.

PAUL TRUEMAN

PCW DETAILS

★★★★★

BURN RATE
Author *Michael Wolff*
Publisher *Weidenfeld and Nicholson*
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