

Logitech io
MSRP: \$199.95
www.logitech.com

WHEN YOUNG, gadget-savvy executives need to take notes, they often whip out the latest ultralight notebook, power up into MS Word, and start typing. But some of us still handwrite faster and more accurately than we type. Also, a notebook can be a \$2,000 liability to lug around and risk damaging or losing. Not least of all, sometimes taking notes entails copying down illustrations, a process that is all but impossible in most applications. Often, nothing beats an old-fashioned pen and paper, but retyping these notes into a computer or scanning the illustrations with a page scanner can be a tedious, costly process.

Enter Logitech's io, the latest and greatest in digital pen designs. The rotund, 1.9-ounce io sits in your hand like a fat marker. (This may prove uncomfortable for those with small fingers.) Right below the ballpoint pen tip is a laser sensor that tracks the pen's movement, just like an optical mouse. The technology hinges on using specially crafted paper that incorporates a sort of watermarked gridwork. The precise location of each dot group in the grid tells the io exactly where it is on the page. Currently, there are three vendors making io-compatible paper products: Mead spiral notebooks, FranklinCovey planner inserts and other pages, and 3M Post-It Notes (a bit bigger than the usual squares).

The Mead notebook, for example, features pages with a large, ruled area for writing notes and illustrations, a line for the note's subject or keywords, a To: field, then check boxes for E-mail, Note, and Other. So a customer could draw up an illustration,

highlight it with written text describing certain features, give it a subject, write who the note is for, check the E-mail box, then mark the Done box that appears at the bottom of every io-compatible page. When this is done, the pen will vibrate and record the page number being written on. Every page gets saved as a separate file in Logitech's Windows-based software when the pen gets docked in its cradle, and the pen can store up to 40 pages.

The io isn't perfect. Only fields like Subject and Due Date actually involve character recognition—provided you write very clearly in capital block letters. The main note area is merely recorded as a graphic image, so if users need notes recorded as cut-and-pasteable text, there will still be some transcription to do. Additionally, the consumables aren't for the faint of wallet. Once the first batch of paper is gone, three Mead notebooks cost \$24.99 (\$10 for one) and a 3-pack of Post-Its is \$14.99 (\$5.90 for one). Six months of planner pages runs \$49.95.

Obviously, the io is a tough sell for your average consumer. (It does make a great gift for the someone who has everything, however.) This is an easier pitch as a boardroom product, although FranklinCovey's graph paper presents some interesting opportuni-



ties in science and engineering markets. Certain managers may also like the ability to scribble off Post-It notes (always a more personal alternative to a text message) and still retain a digital copy for their records. Moreover, the product's potential in many vertical markets is impressive.

"There are a number of key business applications in our target markets that will be an excellent match for the combined power of the Logitech io Personal Digital Pen and the Mi-Co Software system—specifically designed for enterprise data capture, processing for accuracy and the subsequent transmittal to on-line databases," said Barrett Joyner, senior vice president of sales and marketing for Mi-Co, which makes software and complementary products for the io. "For example, mobile data capture by home health care professionals interviewing clients in the patients' homes is an excellent application. Often, this type of data capture is being done with pen and paper—and Logitech and Mi-Co take the benefits of paper and pen and combine those benefits with the benefits of electronic data capture and digital storage. This is truly a winning combination."

Other excellent verticals would be in the legal and hospital spaces. This is a niche product, but a high margin one with good potential for repeat consumable business.

