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Unitech PA600 Review

Product: PA600
Manufacturer: Unitech
Type: Handheld Mobile Computer
Support: 1 Year Warranty with optional extended service plan through Unitech;
Lifetime Support through POSGuys.com

The Unitech PA600 mobile computer features a laser scan engine and 520 MHz Intel processor. It has a more rugged design than the PA500, with a heavy duty body and IP64 seal to protect it from the elements.

Typical uses and environments:
The PA600 best finds use in rough retail, warehouse, and field mobility environments.

Unique Features & Advantages:
Unlike most mobile computers in its class, the PA600 ships with all the equipment necessary to get up and running, including charging/interface cable. This reduces the headaches and extended costs that occur when trying to ensure your mobile computer works properly with your PC.

Standard Features:
The PA600 ships with Windows Mobile 5.0 preinstalled on an 520 MHz Intel PXA270 processor with 64 MB of RAM and Flash ROM. 18 keys on the face act as a cellphone-style alphanumerical keypad, with two buttons on either side for triggering the scanner or other tasks. A red indicator LED above the screen indicates when the scanner is activated and flashes green upon successful scans. The accurate read tone is loud enough to hear over a noisy retail environment, and can be changed to any .wav file you can store on the PA600. For expansion, the PA600 features an SDIO card slot on the top of the unit, allowing for an extra 2GB of storage space on the unit.

The PA600 features Bluetooth and optional 802.11b/g WiFi as well as WWAN GPRS communications methods to keep data up to date. The GPRS connectivity provides cellphone capabilities for the PA600 and lets it transition into being a field use device easily.

Drawbacks:
To ensure a proper seal when inserting an SD card, the PA600 features a screw-down cover which prevents water & dust from getting in. Unfortunately, the screws on the cover are incredibly small, requiring a jeweler's screwdriver to gain access. This can make it difficult to replace SD cards quickly.

Also, the charging/interface cable plugs into the base of the PA600 with the release button facing down, opposite of the PA500. Though this doesn't make it any more difficult to disconnect, it's an aesthetic change that users may not be accustomed to.

Performance:
To determine the capabilities of the Unitech PA600, we ran it through a battery of tests designed to show ease of setup, barcode scanning capabilities, and battery life. We tested PA600-956ADG, which includes a 1D laser scanner and Bluetooth connection. Our testing showed the PA600 to be an excellent mobile computer in its class.

Setting up the PA600 is very easy, requiring no driver installation. To promote proper conditioning of the battery, Unitech places a note on the screen telling users to

charge the PA600 for at least 16 hours prior to first use. This ensures longer battery life and better overall use.
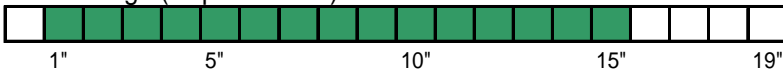
To test the battery and processor performance, we played a 20 minute video file encoded in XViD format with a video data rate of 148 kbps. The PA600 played it well on default settings, and only 10% of the battery life was used in order to play back.

The optimal scan range for the PA600 is from .5" to 15", excellent for scanning products that may be out of reach. It can scan barcodes as dense as 3.9 mil, making most standard barcode scanning a snap. For damaged and dirty barcodes, the PA600 was able to scan all of them with ease, showing off the prowess of the aggressive scan engine. The PA600 is fully light immune, excellent for outdoor barcode scanning. It was difficult to see the beam in bright light, but that would only prove troublesome with densely populated barcodes.

A breakdown of the Unitech PA600 capabilities is listed in table and graph form below.
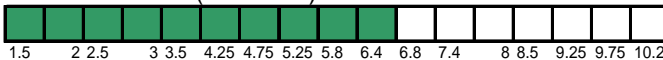
Scanner Performance Testing
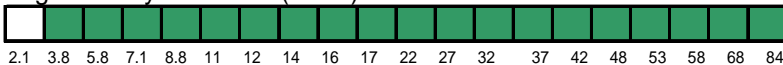
Scan Range (Depth of Field)

1"   5"   10"   15"   19"

Good scan range
for most environments

Wide Barcodes (In Inches)

1.5   2 2.5   3 3.5   4.25 4.75 5.25 5.8   6.4   6.8   7.4   8 8.5   9.25 9.75 10.2

Scans well above standard
retail/light industrial sizes

High Density Barcodes (In Mil)

2.1   3.8   5.8   7.1   8.8   11   12   14   16   17   22   27   32   37   42   48   53   58   68   84
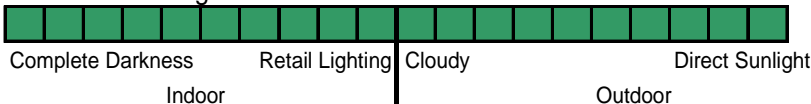
Excellent range for retail
and industrial barcode density

Poor Quality Barcodes*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Could read all damaged
barcodes. Excellent robustness

Resistance to Light

Complete Darkness   Retail Lighting Cloudy   Direct Sunlight
          Indoor   Outdoor

Excellent light resistance

1D Results

Highest Density Barcode Scanned	3.9mil	Average
Widest Barcode Scanned	88.9mm	Average
Shortest Barcode Scanned	38 mm	Good
Range Ideal Conditions (Standard 100% UPC-A)	.5 inches – 15 inches	Excellent
Scratched Barcode	3 of 3	Good
Worn Barcode	3 of 3	Good
Warped Barcode	2 of 2	Good
Curved Barcode	2 of 2	Good

Multiple Barcodes in close proximity	Relatively accurate, but dependent on distribution of barcodes relative to width of beam	Good
Scan through plastic layers	10 Layers	Good
Multicolored Barcodes Successfully Scanned	Blue, Grey	Good
Multicolored Barcodes Not Scanned	Red, Yellow, Black on Dark Grey	Average
Simulated Sunlight Test	Light Immune	Excellent

Conclusion:
The Unitech PA600 is an excellent choice for locations looking to go mobile quickly in rough locations. The IP seal and rugged design protect it from the elements, while the optional GPRS connectivity extends the range in which it can communicate.

To Purchase this product, go to the Unitech PA600 page.

To see our complete line of mobile computers, visit our Mobile Computer section.

For Additional Reviews, visit our Product Reviews page.

	Ideal Setting	Description
PA500	Mobile retail, inventory management	With a 520MHz processor and incredibly aggressive laser scanner, the PA600 provides fast and efficient mobile data collection.
PA600	Rough mobile retail, warehouse inventory management	The PA600 combines the features of the PA600 with a rugged design, providing greater shock resistance and an IP64 seal.
PA962/PA963	Rough mobile retail, warehouse inventory management	Available as a handheld or gun-style design, the PA962/PA963 is a heavy duty mobile computer for the most demanding of environments.

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