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How to Carry Your Office in the Palm of Your Hand

By Brett Burney & Dominic Jaar

(Originally Published in *Law Practice Magazine*: Brett Burney & Dominic Jaar, [How to Carry Your Office in the Palm of Your Hand](#), *Law Practice Magazine*, March 2008.)

INTRODUCTION

Many lawyers today have a BlackBerry or equivalent smartphone, but the vast majority ignore the possibilities inherent in these devices. Most use only the basics that come bundled with the device: phone, email, calendar, contacts, a game or two and maybe some cheesy ringtones. A BlackBerry, though, is really a computer!

True, RIM and other smartphone makers don't provide you with everything you need to really use your smartphone like a PC, but third parties have created amazing applications that do the deed. Below you'll find ten tips on how to leave your laptop behind.

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FIVE HARDWARE TIPS

1. The Smartphone

Think of a smartphone as a cell phone that includes the general functions of a personal digital assistant (PDA) for checking email and keeping track of calendars and contact information. The most well-known smartphones run operating systems from Palm, Microsoft (Windows Mobile), RIM (BlackBerry), and most recently Apple (iPhone).

Each device has its pros and cons, so before purchasing one — whether it's your first or an upgrade — take a few moments to contemplate why you

need the device. Will you use it for Web browsing, wireless email, text messaging, editing documents, watching videos or something else? Also consider the options it offers in terms of WiFi, Bluetooth, keyboard, and ...

2. Memory Cards

You can add storage capacity to most smartphones by inserting a Secure Digital (SD) memory card. The original, standard SD memory card is about the size of a postage stamp, but newer miniSD and microSD cards are even smaller. These memory cards can store audio, pictures and documents, which you can transfer to your desktop computer with a USB memory card reader or move straight from your smartphone with a USB cable or via Bluetooth.

3. Bluetooth Headsets

Bluetooth headsets wirelessly "pair" with your smartphone so that you can talk hands-free while you're moving around your office or elsewhere. They're also much safer for driving, of course, since you don't have to hold a phone to your ear when your hands should be on the steering wheel (many states prohibit the use of a handset while driving). Just double-check to make sure the Bluetooth headset you buy works with your particular smartphone.

4. Portable Keyboards

Although most smartphones have tiny keyboards built right into the device, it's tiresome to type lengthy email messages on them. For greater ease, buy a folding, portable "full-size" keyboard that connects wirelessly to your smartphone via Bluetooth or infrared. If everything is set up correctly, you

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simply unfold the keyboard, prop up your smartphone next to it, and start typing like you do with a computer.

5. Battery Power

Most smartphones drain battery power quickly and require a recharge every night. To reduce the need to recharge, consider purchasing a second battery for your smartphone, so you can swap out batteries when necessary.

Some smartphones will also handle bulky “extended” batteries that keep the device running for a longer time. But you might be better off just purchasing an extra power cable to keep at the office or a car charger for your daily commute. Also consider a USB charger so that you can charge directly from your laptop when a wall outlet may not be available.

With the right hardware and software (and a little common sense), you can take your office on the road in the palm of your hand.

FIVE SOFTWARE TIPS

1. Mobile Office Suite

Most lawyers would have a pretty tough time getting through the day without the critical applications in their office suite — and with the right software, you can have them on your smartphone too. You are not limited to just viewing documents either. You can edit and save word processing documents, spreadsheets, presentations, PDF files and so forth.

One good choice for BlackBerry users is the eOffice suite from [Dynoplex](#), which enable you to work with a range of document and image formats. It comes bundled with most of Dynoplex’s software (like eFile, Masterdoc, eSpell and eZcase) for the super-reasonable price of \$99. It basically re-creates the classic Windows Explorer so you can handle documents and folders. It even permits you to ac-

cess an online database in which you can archive your documents. You can also modify attachments received by email, and then return them to the sender with comments and additions.

If you have a Palm-based smartphone, consider the DocumentsToGo office suite from [DataViz](#). Version 10 supports Office 2007 files.

2. Remote Desktop

Software remote access to your desktop is a must for the mobile lawyer. While you’ll find a range of product options, if you don’t have the time to learn how to use new software try [Shape Service’s RDM+](#), a remote-access client that connects to your desktop from your BlackBerry in real-time. It has an easy-to-use interface. In fact, if someone is working at your computer while you’re working remotely, you will see what that person does, and vice versa. eOffice permits you to remotely access your computer files as well. One caveat: Remember that a BlackBerry screen is very small (particularly if you’re accustomed to working with dual monitors).

3. Dictation Software

Most lawyers still like to dictate documents, either using older tape recorders or newer digital ones. If you want to dictate on the road without carrying two or three different machines in your suitcase, try VR+ (also from Shape Services). It transforms your BlackBerry into a digital dictaphone.

You simply press the Record button to dictate your letter, and then — voila — you can email it to your assistant for transcription. It is well integrated into the email client, so you can use it to reply to email, too. This is particularly helpful with longer messages that you otherwise would spend an hour typing with two thumbs.

Voice recognition users out there should know that the recording quality is sufficient for having Dragon NaturallySpeaking transcribe your recordings in seconds.

4. Fax Capability

It’s very helpful to send and receive faxes via email to your smartphone when you’re out of the office. (And in the province of Quebec, where one of the

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authors practices, the only legal means to serve documents on opposing counsel is by fax, so a remote solution for those last-minute pleadings can prove critical.)

One option is the online service [eFax](#), which is terrific for what it does. A cheaper solution for the BlackBerry, however, is the previously mentioned eOffice, which also offers fax capabilities. By the way, if you have trouble reading documents on your smartphone's little screen, use the fax capabilities to send the document you want to a fax machine near you for a printed copy.

Also, [ScanR](#) is a nice free solution for those with a camera on their phone. You simply take a picture (make sure it is focused), then send it to one of ScanR's email addresses and include the recipient's fax number in the subject line or body of the message.

5. Telephone Services

If you want to save a few voice minutes, and have an unlimited data plan, you should get your hands on mobile VoIP software. Many solutions exist, geared to different types of mobile handhelds and operating systems. One good choice that works with many of the major devices is [iSkoot](#). It offers easy access to your Skype account, including most of its features.

BEWARE THE DANGERS OF WEB-BASED APPLICATIONS

We would be remiss if we didn't discuss the many Web 2.0 applications, many of which are free and work with smartphones. However, always read the terms and conditions before using Web-based apps — and be particularly cautious when privi-

leged material is involved. Big Brother or someone else could be watching you. For example, Google Mobile offers email, calendar, RSS feeds, search capabilities and even photo support for smartphones, but remember that the Google servers (though not necessarily the people who manage those servers) read everything that goes through your account ... so be careful.

CONCLUSION

With the right hardware and software (and a little common sense), you can take your office on the road in the palm of your hand, get some work done, and have some fun — all at the same time and without your laptop.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Brett Burney is the Principal of [Burney Consultants LLC](#) where he focuses his time on bridging the chasm between the legal and technical frontiers of electronic discovery. Burney Consultants also provides exceptional support for litigation databases, document review projects, and trial technology. Visit his blog at [www.ediscoveryinfo.com](#).

Contact Brett:
E: burney@burneyconsultants.com

Dominic Jaar is a commercial litigator and in-house counsel at [Bell Canada](#). He specializes in technology-related matters and blogs at [www.dominicjaar.blogspot.com](#).

Contact Dominic:
E: dominic.jaar@bell.ca

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