

# Technology

## My Favorite Things

### *Three Indispensable Gadgets For Today's Mobile Lawyer*

By DANIEL J. SIEGEL

One of the most common complaints about technology is that everything is too complicated. Software is too hard to use, computers seem to require advanced degrees to operate, and unless you are a geek, you simply can't understand the language. While technology can certainly be complicated, that is not always the case. In fact, some of the best new technologies are actually easy to use, make our lives easier, and allow us to do things more efficiently. With apologies to Rodgers and Hammerstein, in this column I will discuss "a few of my favorite tech things" that have made my life easier and, hopefully, can do the same for you. In no particular order, here goes.

#### NEAT RECEIPTS SCANALIZER

To many people, scanners are the first step to an office with "less paper." While true, technology has improved so much that scanners have become far more versatile time savers. Surprisingly, my favorite scanner isn't a huge machine, it's the Neat Receipts Scanzler, which weighs about 11 ounces, measures only 10.8" x 1.6" x 1.3", is powered by a single Universal Serial Bus (USB) cord that plugs right into your computer, and doesn't require any electricity.

What do I use this little gem for? Just about everything. Primarily, the Scanzler is designed to scan receipts and business cards, but it actually does more. It records the information on your receipts (you can edit it as well), creates PDF files of them (so that you can save them for business and tax purposes), and transfers the information into many other formats and programs, including Excel, Quicken, QuickBooks, Microsoft Money and others. It also can help prepare tax reports.

For business cards, it's equally useful. You scan the cards, and the scanner's software fills in a template with all of the information. After you verify that the Scanzler software got everything right (I would say it's about 80 to 90 percent accurate), you just click a button and transfer the information into other formats, including a vcard, which you can insert into your list of Microsoft Outlook contacts.



The Scanzler also allows documents to be in either color or grayscale. While not intended to be a document scanner, the quality of the scans is excellent, and you can save the documents as a PDF or in other generic formats without having to get up and walk over to the giant scanner in your office.

For travelers, the Scanzler is an enormous timesaver. Just plug the scanner into a USB port and scan your receipts as you get them — and (if your accountant permits) then throw them out. While you're at it, you can scan all those business cards you've received as well as a few of the articles you clipped for later reading. With all of that information on your computer, you won't have to carry all that paper around. Plus, when you return home or to the office, you can easily transfer the receipts and data to your financial software, add your new business contacts to Outlook, and read whatever documents you scanned whenever you want.

You'll save time, will schlep and lose less stuff, and wonder how you ever lived without such a tiny timesaver. And it only costs about \$200.

#### THUMB DRIVES/FLASH DRIVES

When I first wrote about these portable storage devices a few years ago, they stored the equivalent of a few floppy disks worth

of information and cost upwards of \$100. Now, for far less money, you can save a lot more information, including photographs, music, presentations, files you are working on, etc. And these little tchotchkes are incredibly versatile.

For example, if you are giving a seminar, you can simply plug in your flash drive and run your presentation on the on-site computer — as long as it has the right software, such as PowerPoint. Another option is to provide a thumb drive to everyone in the office so that your staff can take work home or on the road, without having to supply them with laptops.

In addition, there is a growing industry creating programs designed to run from these drives. For some examples, just go to [www.portableapps.com](http://www.portableapps.com) or [www.portablefreeware.com](http://www.portablefreeware.com). But despite all the hoopla, the joy of these drives — which have become popular promotional giveaways — remains the ease with which you can transport large amounts of information.

For law firms and other businesses, however, there are downsides to using these devices. First, every computer on which they are used must have up-to-date anti-virus software, because viruses can easily be transmitted by them. Similarly, because these devices are so small and store so much data, businesses must be extremely careful to protect confidential and other important business information so that an employee does not — or indeed should not be able to — remove and use the information for other or personal purposes.

#### GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEMS (GPS)

Who needs a GPS, those global positioning systems that have become increasingly common? I never thought I did because I have an excellent sense of direction. But my wife doesn't. So I bought her one so that she could find her way if her route to and from her job suddenly was closed.

A GPS is nothing more than an in-car device that provides maps and driving directions, usually both on-screen and verbally. All you do is plug-in where you want to go, and the GPS, usually satellite technology — calculates the most efficient

route and supplies step-by-step instructions for how to get there. A GPS is so easy to use, and there are generally no monthly fees. So, you buy it, plug it in, and you're on your way.

But I digress. Why do I like my GPS so much? Because it eliminates the thinking and tension that often accompany traveling to a new or strange location. It's particularly useful while traveling. Here's what I do. I take my GPS with me, rent a car and then plug the GPS into the cigarette lighter slot. Most GPS devices mount with a suction cup on the inside of the windshield. As soon as the GPS turns on, it knows where I am and can tell me how to find my hotel or wherever my journey is taking me. I don't have to pay the rental car company \$10 to \$50 per day to rent one, and more importantly, I no longer have to worry about printing directions from MapQuest or some other Web site before I leave.

At home, my GPS, the Garmin C330, which sells for less than \$500, also has lists of businesses and other locations. When I want to go somewhere, I can search by the business' name or can locate it by category and its proximity to me. Plus, when I find the listing I need, my GPS generally provides the company's phone number, so I no longer have to pay the exorbitant fees that cell phone providers often charge for directory assistance.

I always enjoyed the challenge of finding places on maps or in cities to which I had never traveled before. But candidly, it's kind of nice to know that I no longer have to think, and that the lady (the pre-programmed voice) in the GPS will do the work for me.

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The best technology is easy to use and works well. My favorite things are neither fancy nor expensive. But combined, they save me lots of time and make my life easier. If only everything worked as well. ■

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### FIND THESE ITEMS

Find Dan Siegel's favorite things through these Web sites:

[scanalizer.com](http://scanalizer.com)

[garmin.com](http://garmin.com)

Thumb drives and flash drives are available at most office supply retailers.

## Tech BRIEFS

### Popular Legal Wikis

Following in the footsteps of online reference giant Wikipedia, innovative legal minds have launched several online legal dictionaries and reference resources.



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Registered users can contribute to entries, which are moderated by administrators, and the general public can search on a variety of topics. Some of the most popular legal wikis include generalist wikis Codev2.com and Wex ([law.cornell.edu/wex](http://law.cornell.edu/wex)); death penalty-focused [deathpenalty.schtuff.com](http://deathpenalty.schtuff.com); the Civil Law Dictionary at [civillawdictionary.pbwiki.com](http://civillawdictionary.pbwiki.com); and IP-focused WikiPatents.com.

### PowerPoint 2007 Upgrade

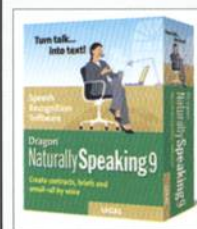
The longstanding presentation software



got a much-needed update in 2006 for Microsoft XP or later operating systems. Interface changes include the new "ribbon" design, which keeps frequently used functions more accessible. New document designs and charting functions make professional presentations easier to make — and follow. The program also allows for shared access and makes previous work easily accessible with slide libraries. Download a free trial of the 2007 software at [office.microsoft.com](http://office.microsoft.com).

### Voice Recognition Software

Dragon Naturally Speaking sets the industry standard for voice recognition programs. The Legal Solutions 9 update features improved accuracy, formatting options,



and text and graphic shortcuts. Users also can dictate to a digital recorder for later transcription and automate frequent tasks with voice commands. Legal Solutions 9 hosts a dictionary of more than 30,000 legal terms, making briefs, contracts, forms and e-mails a breeze to create and edit.

Watch a demo and a *New York Times* video review at the Naturally Speaking Web site, [naturallyspeaking.com](http://naturallyspeaking.com).