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a few that might show up in professional practices soon.

Roman Kepczyk • Apr. 15, 2009

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You know the New Year is kicking into gear with the sight of new gadgets being touted at the annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES; www.cesweb.org) where a cadre of *The CPA Technology Advisor*'s contributors converged to see and experience the latest and greatest digital products. While many of these products are targeted to the consumer rather than business user, there are opportunities for use in accounting firms when you look at them with the right perspective. Here is my 2009 line up of the coolest new tools and technologies and how they may show up in your firm some day!

Lenovo W700 Dual Screen Laptop

The most practical application of technology I witnessed came from Lenovo (www.lenovo.com), integrating a 10.6" screen into the lid of a 17" laptop. This screen slips out in a vertical format for easy viewing of secondary documents. While there have been dual and even triple monitor laptops, Lenovo is the first major vendor to release a product that tax and accounting professionals would actually use.

Solid State Disks Become Mainstream

A number of laptop and camera manufacturers rolled out versions of Solid State Disks (SSD) to replace traditional disk drives, bringing faster performance and lower battery consumption. One opportunity for firms with laptops that are in their third year of use but running slow by comparative standards is to give them an "extension" of another year by replacing their existing hard drive with an SSD. SanDisk (www.SanDisk.com)

touted 60GB replacement SSDs for \$149 that are five times faster than the drives

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(www.displaylink.com)

rolled out an easy adapter to work around this issue, and this year they built their adapter directly into a number of screens from vendors such as Samsung

(www.samsung.com), Lenovo

(www.lenovo.com) and Toshiba (www.toshiba.com) so they are as easy as plug and play. The great thing about DisplayLink is that they can connect up to six different screen sizes and formats simultaneously.

Easier USB Backups

SanDisk (www.SanDisk.com)

rolled out their latest “Ultra Backup” USB fobs with capacities of up to 64GB of storage. The twist this year is that these devices are being touted as backup storage devices with integrated backup software to make it easier to backup your critical files. For larger capacity backup needs, ClickFree (www.goclickfree.com)

has a series of drives with “easy” integrated software. Or you can use their USB Transformer cable to connect a computer to any other kind of external hard drive, giving the user the benefit of the automated ClickFree system. The USB Transformer was rated as one of the Top Ten Last Gadgets Standing. The beauty of this device is that it can be used with your existing USB Hard Drive, which may have already come with software but been difficult to use. This was the case with our home family computer so I bought one on the spot (\$60) to see if it can streamline those backups!

Microsoft Windows Plan

I attended Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer's first CES keynote, and the strongest message sent was regarding Windows 7 (www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-7),

which Ballmer stated would be the most secure and stable version of Windows.

The main announcement was that they were allowing people to download the Beta

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capabilities to access web-based information and applications. These devices are usually in a smaller format with screens in the 8- to 11-inch range but are super light and have long battery life. As the accounting industry vendors roll out their entire accounting suite of applications and document storage on the web, we can expect tax and accounting firms to pilot the use of Netbooks as a low cost and convenient alternative to the traditional laptop. To see what we are talking about, take a look at the Dell Mini (www.dell.com/mini) or the ASUS Eee PC (<http://eeepc.asus.com>).

Sony Vaio Lifestyle PC

Sony takes the evolution of the portable computer another step with its VAIO Lifestyle PC (www.sonystyle.com/vaio), which won CNET's Best of CES award (www.cnet.com).

This mini-laptop has an 8-inch screen and a very functional keyboard even in such a small package. The only thing I didn't like was that it uses a "track nub" rather than a touchpad, so I would have to opt for an external optical mouse.

LiveScribe Pulse Pen

This product (www.livescribe.com/smartpen) was touted at the annual CES Last Gadget Standing press event and integrates note taking with audio in a format that can be captured and replayed digitally. Imagine taking notes with a client and making recommendations that can all be saved in a client file on your network. These notes and conversations are all recorded and queued to the specific event to be accessed whenever you want. The Livescribe allows the user to click on specific points within their notes and listen to a recording of exactly what was said at the time the notes were made. One cool feature is that you can draw a calculator and then actually use it, but the catch is that you must do this all on their special paper.

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Micro Projectors

Prototypes for micro projectors have been around for a few years, but you can finally buy one that will fit in the palm of your hand. Devices such as the Nextar Z10 (www.nextar.com), MicroVision PicoP (www.microvision.com/pico_projector_displays) and 3M Mpro (www.3MPro.com) are available and will eventually be built into cell phones. Financial reports and tax returns could be easily reviewed with clients by projecting the information on a small screen or wall.

Roman's TOP CES Gadget Picks

- Lenovo W700 Dual Screen Laptop
- Solid State Disks
- DisplayLink Integrated Monitors
- USB Backups
- Microsoft Windows
- Netbooks
- Sony VAIO LifeStyle PC
- LiveScribe Pulse Pen
- LG Touch Watch Phone
- Micro Projectors
- Digital Paper
- 3D Opportunities
- Personal GPS
- EmWave Personal Stress Reliever
- iClubby Workstation

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