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Accountants who have ever lost a computer, smartphone, or tablet know how frustrating it is to try to locate it, especially if the item was lost during business travel. There are a number of tracking applications which, if installed and activated, will let you locate where your device last connected to the internet and automatically contacted the monitoring service. These applications will also let you

lock the device and erase all data from a remote web console, and are part of a

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devices, as they could be used by unsavory characters to know your location without your consent. The use of these types of services should be addressed in a firm's internal technology policies, and it should be known by both firms and employees when tracking is enabled, and how it is used.

Find My iPhone/iPad

Apple's Find my iPhone service is built into its iCloud offering, and despite its name this tool allows users to track the location of any Apple device linked to an iCloud account. The service is include with iCloud, and once activated, users can locate, lock, and erase devices the next time they are turned on and connect to Apple's servers to update the content stored in iCloud. Users can learn more about Find my iPhone at www.apple.com/icloud/features/find-my-iphone.html.

Windows Phone Device Tracking

While Windows Phone is still hovering at 2-3% of the smartphone market, Microsoft has continued to build out useful features, including a free tool for tracking, locking, and erasing a lost phone from a web console. I wrote a blog post about recovering my phone from a Las Vegas taxi within 30 minutes using this service earlier this year at bit.ly/16rz8v4, so I can vouch for how well this tool worked for me in my hour of need.

Users can learn more about this free tracking service at www.WindowsPhone.com.

The Prey Project

Unlike iOS and Windows Phone 8, Android users do not have a native service from Google which will locate, lock and erase their devices. One open source anti-theft solution which accomplishes this on a wide range of platforms, including Android

devices, is The Prey Project. This installable application will allow users to locate the

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A commercially supported tool for tracking laptops is Absolute Software's LoJack for Laptops. This tool is sold under a number of brand names and packages, and allows users and/or administrators to locate, lock, delete, and recover lost hardware. The software is very comprehensive, and uses a device's GPS chip as well as the internet addresses where it connects to determine its location. Some business grade laptops actually build this tool into the hardware BIOS so that devices can be tracked even if the device's internal hard drive is reformatted or replaced.

If a laptop is stolen, the Company will take the police report information on your device's theft and will contact the local police if the device comes online at a later time during its subscription period. While there is not a free version of this application, there are a number of reasonably priced subscription plans. More information is available at www.lojackforlaptops.com.

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