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## TECHNOLOGY

# A Dozen Specialized Hardware Products You Should Know About

If you plan to set up an office at home or in the company facility, you'll most likely find yourself having to work within certain space parameters. And as much as you would like more equipment and resources (who wouldn't?), the fact remains that, given the space limitations, you are rarely able to obtain all that you'd like

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On the other hand, technology is a valuable component of any business operation. You'll always have a need to upgrade equipment, software and resources to make things better, easier, more secure and more effective. The following group of products can absolutely help you, depending on what products you already own. These products cover a wide range of functionality and have prices that range from a few hundred dollars to a few thousand. The bottom line is that these products can enhance your business computing resources.

## **\$500**

The SOHO (small office, home office) world has multiple computers that have a growing need for sharing of files and resources. While it is easy to implement a peer-to-peer network or move files around, the capability of setting and maintaining

a true computer network has substantial office and home office benefits. The Chili Box has the appearance of a tower computer, but the red side panels suggest something different inside. The Chili Box comes ready to be set up to manage a network of up to 15 machines. It can handle e-mail traffic and manage Internet access to employees with a high level of Internet intrusion firewalls and security. It is capable of connecting both PCs and Macs and, with 80GB of storage space, can hold common data files and backups. The Linux-based operating system can also provide the necessary resources to manage your own domain and web sites. Yes, you can host your own website.

## **2 – Seagate — External Hard Drive Storage/backup — \$1/GB**

Storage requirements are increasing for data, images, e-mails, documents, mp3 audio files, video files, and more to come. While computers (both desktops and laptops) have increased the capacities of the hard drives to over 100GB, the capacity for active files and backup facilities is expanding. Certainly backing up files requires a resource away from your computer. Seagate's hard drives come in a range of capacities from 100GB to 500GB. These drives are compact and terrific for use as prime storage or backups or both. The drives have a one-touch button to activate immediate backup. In addition, they come bundled with BounceBack Express software from CMS to establish scheduled procedures for backing up any computer.

The drives are hot-swappable, which means that they can be connected and disconnected

without turning off the computer. Cable connections can be done through USB 2.0 or FireWire. Moreover, you can daisy chain the drives so that you can connect multiple drives depending upon your storage needs.

## **3 – Pocket Hard Drive Portable data transfer — \$99**

These palm-sized drives can fit anywhere from your key chain to your pocket. The pocket drive resembles an Oreo cookie. With a 5GB or 6GB capacity, they can store large business files, music, images, videos and more. The connection

is through a hot-pluggable USB 2.0 interface with a retractable cable that transfers data at speeds up to 480Mbps. In addition, the files can be password protected.

#### **4 – Printers**

We do not exist in a paperless society. Printers are an essential component of any office — big or small. We need a continuing ability to print tax returns, financial reports, labels, management letters, audit reports, and such. For the office, several printers fit the basic specifications for what is required. The ability to have multiple functions is also a major plus and fits within any computer budget. Printing features necessary in today's office include the following: fast printing in black and white, printing in color, printing photos, scanning of existing documents, and the ability to send/receive faxes. Here are two all-in-one printers that fit.

##### **HP OfficeJet 7410 — \$500**

The 7410 is at the high end for an ink jet-based printer, but within an office environment it provides superior value. Printing is quick with very good print

quality along with all of those extra features. The device has a built-in fax modem and functions as a stand-alone copier and fax machine. The memory

card slots and PictBridge connector provides for direct printing from cameras

and memory cards without a computer link. The 7410 has a large footprint —

13.9 x 21.6 x 17.2 inches. Connection choices include USB 2.0, 802.11g wireless

and Ethernet. Ink cartridges installed include both black and tricolor cartridges.

The black cartridge can be replaced by a photo cartridge for six-color printing

or a photo gray cartridge for monochrome photos. The graphics output is the

printer's strong point and should be a serious consideration for your one-stop printing needs.

##### **Lexmark 8350 — \$200**

The X8350 is an all-in-one printer that has all the photo card slots and a 2.4-inch color LCD for full photo capabilities along with the necessary

device

features to print, scan, copy and fax. This equipment is compact measuring just 10 x 17.6 x 14.9 inches. The X8350 is bundled with Productivity Suite Software that provides for electronic document management. Users can print

directly from memory cards and digital cameras using PictBridge or from a USB flash drive. In addition, photos can be edited directly from the color LCD screen using crop, rotate, color fix and red-eye removal features, along with popular photo effects such as sepia and antique gray. The Lexmark X8350

is network capable, with optional Ethernet and wireless network adapters.

#### **5 – Magnavox Multi-use LCD monitor/TV — \$350 to \$650**

LCD monitors make a lot of sense for installation as a primary or secondary monitor. The Magnavox line is an excellent example of a multi-function unit that can serve as both a PC monitor and cable-ready television monitor. The 17-inch unit comes with a built-in DVD/CD player and recorder. Both monitors have a small footprint and are light enough to be easily mounted on a wall. At these prices, the Magnavox line provides good value for any SOHO environment.

#### **6 – Newpoint Uninterruptible Power Systems (UPS) — \$170**

All electric utilities have power fluctuations and intermittent service interruptions. No matter what electrical connection is used, protection for power dips and surges is absolutely essential. Lightning, overloads from your neighbors, hurricanes, and all sorts of events can cause an interrupt to your electrical service. When the power goes, all devices other than battery-enabled laptops will cease to operate. The UPS system from Newpoint provides 75 minutes of backup power along with 10 receptacles for various computer components. This unit should be required for every SOHO installation. The device takes up just a little more space than the standard multi-plug power strip. Its value is huge. While you may not experience a total blackout, the inconsistency of power systems can create dips and surges that can damage any electrical component, including computers, printers, telephones, televisions, stereo, etc.

#### **7 – Computer Laptop Dell E1705 — \$2,000 to \$2,500**

Dell is a quality computer manufacturer. When you have a need for a computer, Dell should be one of the vendors to consider. Most accountants have both a desk-bound and mobile requirement for their computer resources. It is not a

good idea to use multiple computers due to the problems surrounding file synchronization.

Dell's E1705 is one answer. The Inspiron E1705 is a large laptop with a bright, 17-inch wide screen that has a superfine WUXGA 1,900 x 1,200 native resolution. Included are multiple ports, jacks and media slots, providing the following: FireWire; S-Video-out; VGA; six USB 2.0 ports; 56Kbps modem; 10/100 Ethernet; headphone and microphone jacks; one each of Type II PC Card and Secure Digital slots; and a DVI port that can connect the laptop to an even bigger digital LCD. The installed equipment also includes a multi-format, double-layer DVD drive. Dell's MediaDirect software, which plays CDs and DVDs, enables access to photos and other media files stored on the hard drive without booting up Windows first. Audio comes through two internal speakers and a subwoofer that delivers crisp and rich sound.

Like all of Dell's laptops, the Inspiron E1705 is extremely configurable, which, of course, increases the price. With a new Intel Core Duo T2500 (2.0GHz) processor; 1GB of DDR2 667MHz SDRAM; an 80GB, 5,400rpm hard drive; NVIDIA's high-end GeForce Go 7800 GPU with 256MB of dedicated video memory; and a nine-cell battery, the price can travel north of \$2,500. One other note: The weight of all this capability is a little over eight pounds. Dell's Inspiron E1705 is an incredibly powerful laptop that can speed through virtually any application or multimedia task, from accounting to video editing to gaming.

### **8 – Trust Eli Security device to protect entire network — \$200; \$10/month**

Eli is smaller than “a breadbox” and is installed between your Internet connection and your network. The Eli appliance combines a full-featured firewall, DSL modem, wireless connectivity and a 4-port Ethernet switch with anti-virus, anti-spam, anti-spyware, anti-malware, anti-phishing, content filtering and parental controls in a single, affordable, fully managed appliance.

Set up is easy as there are no security patches or software updates to install. Eli automatically uploads new virus definitions, known spammer blacklists and objectionable websites at least 30 times per day through your direct Internet connection. Filtering and blocking can be easily customized according to individual preferences via a Web browser. Preferences are set through an easy-to-use web style interface. The user profile determines what ports the firewall will allow traffic on and does not require a network administrator to set up. The device

will block access to objectionable websites. Additional content filtering for programs and downloads needs improvement. For a SOHO environment, this accessory works for your entire network and does not require individual software installations.

### **9 – Digital Camera Supacam — \$350**

The DV6 is a solid-state camera that includes MPEG-4 video at a resolution of 640 x 480, or 320 x 240 pixels at a rate of 30 frames per second with 8X digital zoom. It is also a still camera with a built-in flash and resolutions up to 6.6 megapixels; an MP3 player; and a voice recorder. Its battery life is listed at six hours. The DV6 has a two-inch swiveling LCD screen and a USB 2.0 port for transferring files and images. It uses exchangeable LI-ION batteries and an optional remote control, outputs a PAL or NTSC TV signal, measures 3.94 x 2.76 x 1.18 inches, and weighs just over 6.2 ounces including battery and memory card. The DV6 comes with drivers for Windows and includes imaging software for video and stills as well as a panorama creation tool. The pictures are good through panning, but low light conditions may not produce the best quality. This is not a perfect camera, but it should be considered when you need the capacity to take pictures, video and stills, as it fits easily in your briefcase and budget.

### **10 – Cellular Gateway (Mobile router) Kyocera KR1 Mobile Router powered by D-Link — \$300**

Imagine that you're away from the office and the team needs to share information, data and documents. There are complicated ways to set up a sharing network, including transferring files on USB flash cards. One of the better alternatives to create a local network is through a cellular gateway router. This enables a wireless broadband network to be installed virtually anywhere. The KR1 Mobile Router is useful when you're traveling to areas where fixed broadband connection is unavailable.

This box serves as a cellular router, allowing for Ethernet or Wi-Fi access to a group of people anywhere a consistent 3G cellular signal is available. In addition to the Kyocera router, each computer will need an EVDO card and a 3G data network account available from service providers such as Verizon. Simply plug in a compatible phone or the network card, configure your security and firewall settings, and a local Wi-Fi hot spot for both wireless and wired devices is open for business. The router can support four 10/100BaseT Ethernet ports and supports both 802.11b and 802.11g wireless clients. The router also

has the capacity to function as a standard dial-up modem. When the audit or consulting team travels, the Kyocera router can support the work team.

### **11 – SlingBox Cable TV Transmitter — \$250**

Your home cable system has a lot of channels, spanning news, movies, sports and any form of entertainment you like. When you are away from home, the cable box can either send a selected signal to a recording device (DVR, TIVO, etc.) or sit idle and unused. The SlingBox links the cable box with your broadband connection to enable the cable signal to be rebroadcast to a web address that can be transmitted directly to your computer anywhere in the world. If you are thousands of miles from your home and want to see CNN, CNBC, ESPN or the local news and sports stations, you can control your cable signal to transmit the signal to you. Thus, anything that shows on your cable box can be seen on your computer screen. You do not have to have a separate tuner or other video card installed. The good news for the accountant is that you can keep up with the local news and other local broadcasts that would be viewed by your clients.

### **12 – Fujitsu “ScanSnap” Scanner \$430**

In one step, the ScanSnap can digitize both sides of a page in a single pass, in color and at an acceptable speed of 15 pages per minute. ScanSnap will automatically recognize and eliminate blank pages so that jobs run faster even when scanning combinations of one-sided and two-sided documents. The scanner has a USB 2.0 interface and a small footprint so it fits nicely within any SOHO. ScanSnap automatically separates color documents from black and white ones and saves this information in highly compressed files, thus saving storage space.

Images are automatically straightened so that text and images are displayed in a correct orientation. Paper sizes are also automatically detected. The storage facility can display images in thumbnail format. Acrobat \*.PDF files can be displayed without starting the Acrobat software. When you have scanning needs that exceed one page per day, this small unit from Fujitsu demands a look. □

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