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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 inside and cost much less than the \$500 to \$800 annual capital cost of a new laptop, which could be attractive in this tough economy. **DisplayLink Integrated Monitors** Adding a third or fourth monitor can be kludge if they are different sizes or capacities, which causes most firms to "batch" similar models together for ease of use.

While Matrox's DualHead2Go (www.matrox.com) has been the mainstay for most tax and accounting firms, they are not effective at mixed displays in a vertical

(“portrait”) mode. Last year, DisplayLink (www.displaylink.com) rolled out an easy

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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 immediately, so this signals Microsoft not trying to push Vista much more. While I have been recommending that firms standardize on Windows XP Service Pack 2, I feel it would be worthwhile for your IT personnel to download the Beta and try it on a machine if they have some downtime during the busy season. Netbooks One of the strongest trends at the show was the explosion of mini-notebooks that have limited hard drive and applications built in, but have maximum communications 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

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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. LG Touch Watch Phone Calling all Dick Tracy fans ... oops! Two-thirds of your staff members probably don't know who he is! While a number of phones have been built small enough to go on the wrist, LG (www.lge.com/us) is the first major carrier to bring an actual one out.

For a really upscale appeal, LG has created a Prada Link Bluetooth version. Fully loaded, the watch phone integrates a quad band GSM phone with a 5-megapixel camera, Wi-Fi, a full HTML browser, stereo Bluetooth, FM Radio, Document Viewer, and 60MB storage, all viewable through a 3-inch touchscreen. Probably time to upgrade my eyeglass prescription. 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.3MMPRO.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 H. Kepczyk, CPA.CITP is president of InfoTech Partners North America, Inc. and works exclusively with CPA firms to implement today's leading best practices

and technologies. He can be contacted at roman@cpata.com.

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