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Isaac M. O'Bannon • Dec. 01, 2009

From the December 2009 Issue, [Plus Bonus Online Content](#)

Regardless

of how you celebrate the holidays, there's a good chance that gift giving is a part of this time of year. From children, relatives and other loved ones, to friends, coworkers and clients, the list can sometimes get long, and there are always a few people who have you stumped.

As part of my annual gift column, I've sacrificed my time by playing with a bunch of gadgets that might just fit somebody on your list, or even yourself. There's a little bit of everything, including professional devices such as printers and scanners, that can help make work flow more efficiently.

There are also mobile devices that help keep you connected and empowered while you're on the go. And, of course, there are some gadgets meant just for fun and personal entertainment. December is already here and you're running out of time, so take a look at a few of the cool things below, then get online and get shopping.

Happy Holidays from *The CPA Technology Advisor*! ([Click here](#) to jump directly to the [bonus gadgets content](#) not included in the print issue.)

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Bye-Bye

Wimpy Wi-Fi

Whether at the office, home or on your mobile laptop, distance and buildings can sometimes make picking a wireless signal a challenge. No need to worry, though, if you've got the powerful Wi-Fi adapter on your side. It can give a boost of up to 1,000 feet to your computer's wireless range, making it easier to stay on the network, with faster and more reliable connectivity. It's also compact, making it a great addition to any laptop bag, and can be plugged into a USB port and turned on in just seconds. \$59.99 (www.hfield.com)

Peace

of Mind Made Easy

When you're on the go, other people probably know. So who's watching your office or your home? The new Logitech Video Security System is simple to set up and sends encrypted video to your computer through your home's electrical lines using HomePlug. So there are no wires or networks to worry about, and no service contracts, either. So wherever you may go, you'll be able to login to the system through the Internet or your smartphone. The system also has optional outdoor cameras. \$299 (www.logitech.com)

Pocketable

Portability

When travelling between work and the office, or heading out on a client call, there are some files that just can't be emailed, whether because of size or sensitivity. But fortunately this riddle can be solved in only a few seconds, using a Lexar TwistTurn JumpDrive. Don't

let its Mini Me size fool you. The keychain attachable devices can

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some websites might let you view prior episodes later, the thumb-sized Volar MAX TV tuner lets you enjoy live broadcasts of high-definition shows on a PC, Mac or Netbook. The tuner simply plugs into a USB port and also offers recording and iPod transfer capabilities that let you watch shows at your own convenience. \$69 (www.avermedia-usa.com)

No
Commitments
Mobility isn't cheap these days, with many cell providers tying up users with two-year contracts. With budgets tightening, many people are switching to pre-paid mobile devices, and the options from Boost Mobile are amping up the capabilities. Take the new Motorola Debut i856, which includes Stereo Bluetooth capabilities, a full slide-out QWERTY keyboard, nationwide walkie talkie functions, GPS and speakerphone.
Boost Mobile offers a no-contract unlimited talk/text/web plan for only \$50 per month and no more surprise phone bills.
(www.boostmobile.com)

IN-OFFICE PRODUCTIVITY

It's
A Snap
Scanners are quickly becoming one of the most important tools in the drive toward the "less paper" office, and the Fujitsu ScanSnap S1500 is right on target for tax and accounting firms. The sheet-fed system offers dual-sided scanning, plus one-button creation

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up losing some of their context when they end up being just notes.

But not any longer: With Papershow, a Bluetooth-enabled pen and interactive paper let users write and draw electronically, with the notes shown live if using a projector and also automatically saved to the user's computer. Definitely a cool tool for meetings and presentations. \$199 (www.papershow.com)

Git 'er Done

With ever-increasing technology needs in the office, more and more gadgets end up on the desktop. Fortunately, the HP Officejet 6000 Printer offers multi-taskers high productivity options thanks to fast printing, embedded wireless networking and automatic two-sided printing. Even though it's one of HP's more affordable business inkjets, it delivers documents with high quality and durability for 40 percent less cost per page and energy use than lasers. The printer also offers a multitude of features including embedded wired and wireless networking to enhance productivity in a small or home office. \$89 – \$119 (www.hp.com)

Professional

Penny-Pinching Printers

Even “paperless” offices use paper; the key is in doing it strategically. Which is why Epson's line of WorkForce printers are geared for optimizing the printing process. The Energy Star-rated WorkForce 1100 Wide Format Printer, which can print up to 13”x19”, uses 70 percent less power than other models, has two-sided printing and high-capacity functions, and can generate laser-quality output. Available for \$199 (www.epson.com)

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immediate power backup. \$70 (www.zapworld.com)

I

Dream of Genix

There's no doubt that batteries are a workhorse during the holiday season. Unfortunately, they usually go unnoticed until their power runs out, bringing time with new gadget gifts to a screeching halt. While re-chargeable options have been around awhile, the new PowerGenix NiZn AAs and other sizes are the first to truly offer the power and charge time of disposables, but with the added advantages of saved money and recyclability. \$14.99+ (www.greenbatteries.com)

Greener

Gadgets

You know you're not supposed to throw traditional batteries out in the trash because of the potential harm they can cause the environment, but a lot of people do it anyway. With its line of EnviroMAX batteries, Fuji has an alternative to those toxic options. EnviroMAX batteries are landfill-safe because they don't have cadmium, mercury, PVC or other harmful components, plus they have recyclable casings and are packaged in recycled materials. So they offer all of the power of traditional batteries, but in a more eco-respectful way. \$9+ (www.greenfuji.com)

ENTERTAINMENT

Small

Speakers, Mini Mike

Whether sharing your iPod or MP3 tunes with your friends

or just listening out loud, the new Chill Pill mini speaker system

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a good book. With the new Sony eReader, users can read their favorite works or newly published works of fiction, non-fiction, philosophy and virtually everything else that exists on printed pages. Better yet, they can easily take a whole library of books in the pocket-sized gadget ... and can even buy new ebooks wirelessly, from anywhere. \$199 – \$299 (www.staples.com)

Luxurious Audio

For those with an ear for the finest quality headphones, Bang and Olufsen offers the EarSet 3, one of the most advanced mobile device headsets, with the ability to work on music and phone devices. EarSet 3 includes dynamic full-tone speakers and a built-in microphone that allows wearers to determine how much of the sound surrounding them to let in. \$199 (www.bang-olufsen.com)

Lending a Hand

How many times have you asked somebody to take a picture of you with your special someone? Or perhaps you've missed out on pictures because you were behind the lens. The new xShot telescopic camera extender can give you a break (and maybe prevent your camera from walking away). It securely fastens to any camera's tripod mount, allowing users to take their own pics, with themselves included. It's great for solo shots, too. \$19.95 (www.xshotpix.com)

Tunes with Attitude

Speakers are rarely interesting, but the new Headphonies

are anything but dull. Bringing art, music and attitude together,

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not the pet rock; that was the 70s (and not so much of a gadget). It was the Rubik's Cube, and guess what? It's back, but in a new millennium techie kinda way. The Rubik's Touch Cube looks like its predecessor, but features touch sensor technology on all six sides and a motion-detecting system that means no more twisting ... just swipe a finger across a row or column and the lights will follow, "turning" that part of the cube. It also includes a built-in solver and hints. \$150 (www.rubikstouchcube.com)

For iPhone Audiophiles

If you're an iPhone person and a music lover, the Image S4i headset is destined to be ears' best friend. The Klipsch in-ear headset was designed with Apple to work seamlessly with the iPhone 3GS, providing award-winning sound performance with strong bass, and an advanced 3-button microphone and remote system that gives users total control over their iPhone and iPod music and video content. \$99 (www.klipsch.com)

Bonus Online Content – More Gadgets

Fashion Friendly Bluetooth

Designed along the philosophy that wireless products should be stylish and also convenient to use, Novero has introduced **TheFirstOne** Bluetooth earpiece. Wherever you go, a suite of in-box accessories

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It was perfect and clean and shiny and brilliant when you first took it out of the box, but put your \$200 to \$300+ mobile “everything” device into your pocket or your purse, and scratches appear instantly. Protect your cherished devices with **BodyGuardz**, the strongest clear gadget protection film on the market. Even better, the material includes antibacterial protection, mold inhibitors and an anti-corrosion compound to protect your device and you. Custom fits are available for most phones, including iPhone and BlackBerry, plus media players, MacBooks, gaming devices and other gadgets; free lifetime replacements, too! \$25 (www.bodyguardz.com)

Bluetooth

Genius

So many options are available for wireless headsets, but few offer simple and functional designs with an elegant flair. The Plantronics **Discovery 975** is an exception, providing a striking, yet minimalist design with one-touch controls and advanced features like dual-mic AudioIQ and WindSmart to keep conversations clear, even in loud environments or harsh conditions. \$129 (www.plantronics.com)

One-Stop Charging

In the office, at home, on the road or even in the air, today's tech users are constantly faced with the need to recharge their mobile devices, and lugging around 10 different chargers is a drag. Enter the **mCube90** from Innergie, the world's smallest universal adapter (about two-thirds the size of a business card). The mCube can repower notebooks, laptops, cell phones, iPods, iPhones and most other USB devices, all at the same time. The sleek device

even includes a detachable Auto/Airplane adapter. \$99

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plugs in the USB on a computer and instantly offers a five-step guided process for creating slideshows, with easy upload tools for sharing on YouTube, Facebook and other sites. \$79.99 (www.honestech.com)

Your

Smartphone on Steroids

Smartphones are great for many things, but trying to actually work on one for more than a quick task can be a chore. The **REDFLY** can change that. While it looks and acts like a Netbook, the portable computer-ish device is actually an extension of the Smartphone, using the operating system, memory and processing capabilities in the phone, but offering a full-size QWERTY keyboard and up to an 8-inch monitor. So it turns your BlackBerry or Windows Mobile Smartphone into a Netbook. \$199 (www.celiocorp.com)

Who

Is It?

No need to ask that question anymore, with the **LCD PeepHole Viewer** from Brinno. This easy-to-install gadget uses two AA batteries to power a 2.5-inch LCD screen on the inside of your door, showing you what/who is on the outside. But instead of looking through a fisheye lens, you get a large and bright, full-color image, and the person on the other side can't see "the shadow" move that lets them know you're looking. \$99.99 (www.brinno.com)

Iron

Clad Portable Data

Taking personal, business and client data on the road with you is a great productivity benefit, but it also requires prudent

security precautions. That's why **IronKey** offers

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benefits for users for several years. **The Mole** is the latest in high-tech consumer-level video, offering much more advanced features, including motion detection, night vision, two-way audio and a built-in DVR. The system is easy to set up and allows users to easily view live or recorded video from any web browser or mobile device, and even share on YouTube and other sites. \$299 (www.molecamera.com)

Upstanding

Upright

Can a vacuum cleaner be cool? Maybe, but what's more important is how well it does the job, and the new **WindTunnel T-Series** vacuums from Hoover offer superior cleaning power along with a sleek and lightweight design that makes it easy to use, even on stairs. The bagless upright models include options for filtration, headlights and even pet hair cleaning accessories. Yes, the WindTunnel T-Series sucks, but for vacuums, that's a good thing. \$99-\$159 (www.hoover.com)

Job

Hunting? Get Organized

Helping another person with their career search, or yourself, may sound like a peculiar gift, but what other gift can reap the rewards of a more promising career? **Job Hunt Express** is a program that takes the concepts of CRM and contact management and focuses them on the tasks associated with marketing yourself, automating many functions and helping keep track of deadlines and meetings. \$29.95 (www.jobhuntexpress.com)

Medical

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Stow-n-Go

What do you do with your phone, music device, ID, keys and even your money when you realize you have no pockets? When running, at the gym or when a woman doesn't want the hassle of keeping up with a handbag, the **PortaPocket** gives an alternative storage option that goes right along with you. The lightweight pouch can be easily strapped to a thigh, calf, ankle, arm or waist, allowing users to keep their hands free while on the go. \$10 to \$25 (www.portapocket.com)

Powerful

Padlock

When working with large client files, portability options can be limited to unsecure thumb drives or portable hard drives that have complicated security programs. The **Aegis Padlock** from Apricorn can solve both of these issues, with wallet-sized mobile hard drives that plug right into a USB port, require no additional power source, and even include a keypad on the outside of the drive that offers secure PIN access. The system uses 256-bit encryption and has no software to install. Models are available from 250GB to 500GB. \$99+ (www.apricorn.com)

Clear

the Clutter

Even in the "paperless office" it seems like there is still a ton of paper to process. From receipts to business cards and other documents, the mountain still grows on many desks. When the key is getting the information from those documents into

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runs a series of diagnostics to check for not only viruses and malicious software, but also to clean and repair the system registry, boost Internet speed, eliminate program remnants and dozens of other performance-boosting actions. The SM9 professional version is also available for business users. It has won awards from PC Magazine, LAPTOP Magazine, PC Plus and CNET. \$40 to \$50 (www.iolo.com)

Relax...

Beanbag chairs are back, but they aren't the boring old round ones from the 70s. At least the stylish options in the **Sumo Lounge Urban Lounge Gear** collection aren't. The new bags are ideal for home entertainment centers, game and rumpus rooms, college dorms, kids' rooms and even around the patio and pool. And maintenance is a breeze: Sumo Lounge beanbags are made from rip-proof nylon that's water and stain repellent, easy to clean and lightweight enough to be moved from room to room. \$75+ (www.sumolounge.com)

...

& Chill

Another great holiday or anytime tool for enthusiasts is the **Ravi Instant Wine Refresher**, which instantly chills wine as it passes through the Ravi's spout. The result: Even wine that hasn't been cooled can be enjoyed at the perfect serving temperature, with the system instantly cooling your vino or other beverage by 12 degrees. The secret: Chill the wine, not the bottle. Genius. \$39.95 (www.WineEnthusiast.com)

I'm

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See,

Touch ... Feel

Grandparents; parents; kids. You either are one or you have one (or more)... and everybody wants to see the latest pictures.

The new **Vizit** system is a wireless digital photo frame that is also mobile network powered so you can upload images to Vizit frames from anywhere. So that priceless picture you took just a few seconds ago, or last year, can be instantly shared with friends and family, without them having to download them. They appear automatically on the 10.4-inch touch-screen display. Viewers can also reply to the sender from the Vizit frame. \$279 (www.vizitme.com)

Beam

Me Up Maestro

Yes, Star Trek's Scotty was the chief engineer, but with the **Beamz Musical Instrument**, even he could have been a musical genius. The laser-based device connects to your PC via USB and allows you to begin making music without having to know how to read music. Simply pass your hand through each laser beam to hear streams of harmonious instruments and musical sounds. You can't play a bad note. \$199 (www.thebeamz.com)

Have

You Been Framed?

Digital photo frames have been around for a few years, allowing people the convenience of displaying their family shots and other pictures in the somewhat traditional format of a wall frame, but with the ability to store multiple shots and cycle through

them. With its 8-inch LCD screen, the **iMO FotoPrinter**

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a gift to think you cared the very least. Whether as a total joke, or perhaps to throw off that expert gift guesser who always knows what he or she got, the **PrankPack** is a gift box that include professionally designed, yet totally fake packaging. In addition to the "Motorized Rolling Pin" box (at left), other options include "Coffee Talkies," the "Wake-n-Bake Dream Griddle" and the "Beer Beard." Whatever "real gift" you place inside, the recipient is sure to have a priceless look on their face! "Gee, thanks for the rolling pin." \$8 (www.prankpack.com)

Keep

Mom's Recipes Safe

Just in time for the holidays, a great gift for an aspiring or accomplished cook is **LetsGetCookin**, a program that helps users free themselves from their index cards and manage their recipes more efficiently, with the ability to search and filter the lists based on key ingredients or words. The system also makes it easy to print (even to index cards), as well as manage cooking videos, scale recipes up or down and generate grocery lists. \$19.95 (www.letsgetcookinssoftware.com)

Gotta

MacBook? Get A Green Sleeve

MacBooks are cool and easy to take with you, but you still need a protective case for them. Unfortunately, most tech gear cases look, well, like tech gear cases. Not so with **ColcaSac MacBooks Sleeves**, hand-made bags made of environmentally friendly fabrics, and with a natural, earthy feel. The bags include heavily

padded protection from drops, dents and scratches and, since they

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lives, but even though there are apps for many functions, sometimes there is no replacement for working with the programs and data that are actually on your computer. Well, now there's even an app for that. **LogMeIn Ignition** gives iPhone, BlackBerry and other smartphone users direct remote access to their desktop computers, where they can securely work with all of their work programs and data, without having to lug around a laptop. \$40/yr. (www.logmein.com)

What's the ETA?

On the way to the airport to catch a flight or pick up a traveler? **FlightView.com** offers the ability to track upcoming and in-air flights, with map graphics that show approximate locations, arrival times and other real-time data. Users can also customize the system and add flights to personal lists for future reference, and even receive alerts when the status of flights change. The basic web-based system is free and can be used on laptops, desktops or mobile devices, including iPhones, BlackBerrys, Palms and Windows OS phones. Optional customizable apps are available for the iPhone and Palm. Free+ (www.flightview.com)

Wine

Lover? There's an app for that!

Whether for yourself or the oenophile (wine lover) in your life, the **Wine Ratings Guide** iPhone app is an easy to use tool that gives users access to more than 1 million wine ratings right from their phone. The handy pocket sommelier also includes a food pairings guide that tells you what goes best with

specific wines, and Quick Picks that feature top ten wines for under

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and details for more than 5,000 tasting rooms and events across the country, from California to Maine, and Washington to Texas. \$2.99 (www.mywinetrailguide.com)

What is LOL in Spanish?

Text messages are increasingly becoming a business tool, but in addition to the unique language of SMS chatting, many professionals find themselves challenged with the barriers of various human languages. The **SpeakLike** instant message service can help, using a combination of software technology and human speakers of multiple languages to give users a cheap way to quickly translate text messages and email using any text-enabled mobile phone. iPhone users have an additional option for taking photos of signs or other items and uploading them for translation. \$0.10 per message (www.speaklike.com)

Here's wishing you a prosperous 2010!

Technology

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