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Randy Johnston • Sep. 02, 2010

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Accountants are a special breed of people with above average intelligence, a genuine interest in helping people, and often a lot going on in their lives both professionally and personally. No, I'm not trying to butter you up; it's simply an observation that we are busy people who can learn to use tools fairly quickly to do a job better and faster. This month, I want to suggest a few useful hardware and software tools that you may not have discovered yet.

MIFI CELLULAR BROADBAND – SPRINT, AT&T OR VERIZON

We have recommended cellular broadband modems for some time, but a key development

over the last few years is a small, transportable unit that allows a single cellular connection to be shared by up to five devices. Think how often you and an associate, an audit team or a family member are out with computers, cell phones, iPads, etc., and you're in need of Internet access. These devices conveniently give secure access to a small group of people.

- [Sprint Devices](#)
- [AT&T Coverage Map](#)
- [AT&T Devices](#)
- [CradlePoint](#)
- [Verizon](#)

PERSONAL SCANNER WITH FUJITSU SCANSNAP S1500

Personal scanners are not new news, but this model is good for your home, and possibly your own office for light-duty scanning. If you need the convenience

of converting paper to PDF or a paper document into Word, this is probably your

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POGOPLUG

This appliance allows you to share a hard drive from home or office securely over the Internet. There are no ongoing fees, and this device is priced at \$129. Pogoplug allows files or folders to be transferred securely, and even has an interface for your iPhone if you'd like to pick up a file that you've left behind. Setup time is only a few minutes, and almost no technical expertise is required.

- www.pogoplug.com/home-en.html?

BARCODE WITH WASP BARCODE

Wasp Barcode has so many useful, practical and inexpensive products that the company deserves a column by itself. For those who need to manage fixed assets, count inventory easily, use payroll time clocks, need hardware for Point-of-Sale, this provider is the place to look (with even more solutions, as well). They create simple hardware and software packages to solve small business issues and are robust enough to be used in medium to large organizations.

- www.waspbarcode.com
- www.waspbarcode.com/online_store
(summary of products)

BACKUP OVER THE WEB WITH GILLWARE

"As long as we have your data, we can recover you," has served as a pretty good mantra for me over the last 40+ years. What happens if your home or office is destroyed? What happens if your computer's hard drive fails? What happens if your client or family member has a hard drive failure? Gillware offers a backup program that will backup Outlook PST and QuickBooks files at

no charge, and can be branded by your firm if you desire. Yes, they want you

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They brand to fit your firm and can easily move very large files. A newly added feature to this product is Optical Character Recognition (OCR) for full text search of all the documents in the portal.

- www.sharefile.com

CRM WITH RESULTS CRM, OFFICE TOOLS PROFESSIONAL OR SAGECRM

Business development works better with a tool that organizes your efforts. If you'd like to handle client requests better, have a better understanding of what has been said to who and when, and if you want to track referring relationships

like attorneys, other clients and other firms, then CRM (Customer Relationship Management) should be in your future. There are 300+ products in this class, but two that have many useful features for tax and accounting professionals are Results CRM and Office Tools Professional. Results CRM uniquely goes beyond basic CRM to deliver a full Business & Information Management system so complete it can also be offered to your clients to help them run, manage and grow their businesses.

- www.Results-Software.com
- www.officetoolspro.com/products/overview.html
- www.sagecrmsolutions.com/sagecrm

FINANCIAL REPORTING WITH BIZNET INSIGHT

We still see way too many Excel spreadsheets for reporting that are not tied properly to the numbers from accounting software. The BizNet Insight used with BizBroadcast is an example of a reporting tool that is tied in real time to the supporting accounting numbers underneath. This tool is sophisticated enough to handle millions of transactions and simple enough to use that if you know

how to run Excel, you can connect to all kinds of accounting data and create

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receiving payments easy. And creating financials from the data is a service that you can then perform for your clients. This is much easier and less expensive than having the clients use QuickBooks if they only need invoicing capabilities. Besides, all of the pertinent data can be accessed from an iPhone if needed. Some businesses need nothing more than these products and their cell phone to run their entire operation.

- www.freshbooks.com
- www.billingboss.com

ONLINE ACCOUNTING WITH ACCOUNTANTSWORLD OR INTACCT

If you are ready to step up your service level with collaborative accounting software, both AccountantsWorld PowerPractice or Accounting Relief and Intacct provide more capabilities for accounting in a web browser. Some of you have looked at or are using QuickBooks online, which is another product that has this collaborative capability. Why look at these products? They have more of the right capabilities, ease of use and potentially lower cost to the business or client.

- [AccountantsWorld – Accounting Relief](#)
 - [AccountantsWorld – PowerPractice](#)
 - <http://us.intacct.com>
- (See a review of SaaS-based accounting products at www.CPATechAdvisor.com/go/2784.)

ENCRYPTION WITH PGP OR WINDOWS 7 BITLOCKER

With the security breach laws that are in force and with more coming, we recommend

using disk encryption on all desktops and laptops. PGP has been our traditional recommendation for around \$170, and this product was recently acquired by

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WINDOWS DEPLOYMENT SERVICES & WINDOWS SYNC CENTER

A surprisingly large number of IT teams don't know about the new desktop and laptop image capture and deployment system that is part of Windows Server 2008 R2. When used in conjunction with the Sync Center feature of Windows Vista & 7, you can copy software, user settings and data from an old machine to a new one in less than 20 minutes. If a machine fails, rebuilding a new one with all the settings is pretty trivial. To keep yourself legal on software licensing, you do need to be on an Open License agreement.

- [Microsoft Windows Deployment Getting Started Guide](#)
- [Microsoft Sync Center FAQs](#)

When I attend live CPE events, webinars or webcasts, I hope to pick up about one idea every two hours, so if I get three to four good ideas from a day, that isn't bad. My rule of thumb is if I read an article and pick up one good idea, it was worth the time, but I normally have to read quite a few articles to get that one good idea. Hopefully, until now, you had not heard about at least one of the twelve ideas presented here. I use every one of these either personally or with my clients, and if I had to short list technologies that are worth looking at, all of these would be on that list. I hope you choose one or more and save time, money or do a better job because of finding that tool.

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