

New Toys for Technocrats

Latest Must-Haves Revealed at the Annual Consumer Electronics Show

EVERY YEAR, technocrats around the United States gather for the annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas where one can wander miles and see nothing but gadgetry. It is a spectacle unmatched in the world, even if some snooty technopundits in the media have criticized CES for being too large (more people attended than voted in the Republican caucuses in Iowa) and for lacking in major technology announcement breakthroughs. But have these folks really spent time wandering the miles of halls at CES bearing dozens of fabulous products? I was lucky enough to attend this show, and below are some products that are sure to interest the high-tech immigration lawyer.

Energy Efficient

Perhaps the most exciting news from CES is not the debut of any particular new product, but the advancement of new kinds of technology that will dramatically improve a wide range of products in the years to come. One trend is the production of smaller, more energy-efficient processors that are giving much more processing power for many types of devices and longer battery life.

Intel (www.intel.com) was promoting its new 45 nanometer processors for laptops. A company representative said the chips are 10 times more power-efficient and five times faster than the previous chips. This efficiency also means that devices can do without a fan, making it possible to have thinner, lighter products with much longer battery life. Intel already is including the new technology in several new products that would make for a more powerful laptop that can run more than eight hours on a single battery charge.

Another technology that affects the way computers run is the new solid state drive (SSD) showing up in laptop computers of all price ranges. The SSD does essentially the same thing as a hard drive except that there are no moving parts. So it is much lighter and stays cool. That means a laptop with an SSD doesn't get as hot, boots up much faster, its memory

is not lost during a sudden power outage, applications run faster, and battery life on the computer is much longer. Capacity is the main issue right now, but Samsung was showing off a new 64 gigabyte (GB) drive at CES. Some manufacturers are taking a hybrid approach, using an SSD to store the computer's operating system and a second conventional hard drive to provide much more memory.



A device that nicely incorporates both these technologies is the new Sony VAIO TZ laptops (www.sony.com). The new TZs have a 64 GB SSD and a 250 GB hard drive. It also has one of the new Intel processors noted above and a carbon fiber chassis. The result is a fast boot-up and quick application launches (even with the resource-intensive Windows Vista) and a battery life of nearly nine hours. It weighs 2.65 pounds, includes a built-in webcam, and a fingerprint scanner for extra security. The VAIO TZ is not cheap, however. Expect to shell out about \$3,500.

There were a number of interesting products that extend the battery life of cell phones, PDAs, Blackberries, iPods, and notebook computers. The Lenmar PPU1619 (\$169; www.lenmar.com) is a one-pound external battery that can power up nearly any kind of laptop and add several



hours of additional battery life. The unit is compact and has the advantage of allowing a user to use the same power cord to charge either the PPU1619 or the laptop. So there's no need to carry an extra power brick around. Plus the unit can simultaneously be connected to the laptop and plugged into the wall to allow for both the laptop and the external battery to charge at the same time with just one power cord.

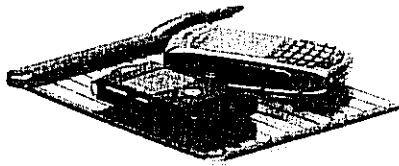
Lenmar's PPU2100B retails for \$39 and can recharge the phone or iPod five times before the portable battery needs to be recharged. Lenmar and Solio each market a small solar-powered battery that can store energy to charge a drained phone or PDA.

Productivity Boost



Toshiba was showing its new dynadock USB Docking Station (www.dynadock.com). The \$149 dynadock is a universal docking station for Windows laptop computers that connects to the computer via the USB port. Because it sits upright, it takes up little desktop space. With the video port on the back of the dynadock, you can have three monitors on your desktop and view different applications on each individual display. I started working on dual monitors in my office about a year ago and have found it has made me a lot more productive. Adding a third monitor may be overkill, but the temptation is there. Another dynadock feature is the inclusion of six USB ports.

Wildcharger (www.wildcharge.com) recently introduced a new pad in the marketplace. Just put your WildCharge-ready



gadgets on the pad and it will charge up as if you plugged it into a wall. You'll need to have an adapter that replaces the gadget's back cover. This provides the contact points needed to touch the pad and charge the device, including Blackberries, iPhones, and Motorola RAZRs. The pad is \$59.99. Add \$30 to get it bundled with an adapter.



Portable hard drives were all over the show and they're getting smaller and cheaper. The Data Locker (www.lockerdrive.com) is a great product for lawyers. The drives have a digital

display built into the side that requires one to type in a pin code in order to access data. No need to worry about sensitive data if the device is lost or stolen. Prices range from \$99 to \$299 depending on the amount of storage memory.

Safety First

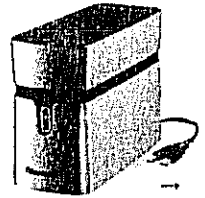
A surge protector that caught people's attention is the Powramid E-900H (www.powramid.com). It has a round shape that allows for large boxy plugs to fit more easily onto a single device. The E-900H retails between \$17 and \$25.

The Sentry Group (www.sentrysafe.com) offered two products that also will appeal to the security conscious. Would your comput-



er data be in trouble if there was a fire or a flood in your office? The Sentry Fire-Safe (\$519) is a fire- and water-resistant safe that allows people to store critical items. This device adds a USB port that allows the safe's owner to automatically back up data nightly to a portable hard drive stored in the safe itself. If there's a fire or flood, the data is saved along with everything else the owner stores.

Another Sentry product that will give peace of mind is the Fire-Safe waterproof hard drive. This product retails for \$259 and claims to be the first and only fire resistant and waterproof hard drive, and can store up to 160 GBs of data.



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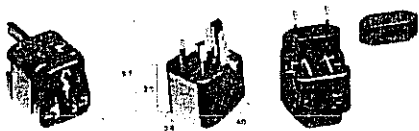


Finally in the security department, I was impressed with a clever little gadget from a company called Yoggie (www.yoggie.com). The Yoggie Personal Security Server looks like a USB thumb drive, but it is much more. It actually is a Linux-based computer that runs 13 built-in applications to offload various security functions from the personal computer (PC).

The Yoggie is bundled with a firewall, anti-spam, antivirus, and other security products. The device blocks Internet threats before they reach the PC, and since the products are running off of one's PC, the device also can boost performance of one's computer. The Yoggie comes with the software and all updates for a three-year period for \$179.

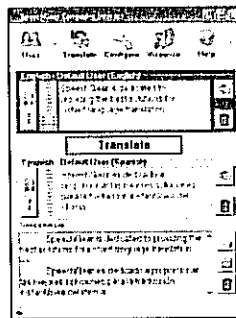
Travel Friendly

A number of products are great for lawyers who travel overseas. Taiwanese manufacturer Wonpro (www.eunplugs.com) was showing off the Nano WAT, an unbelievably small univer-



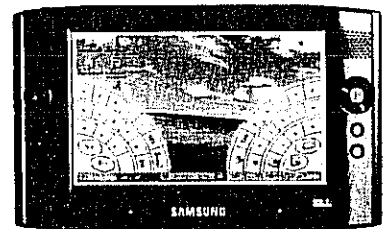
sal plug adapter that folds down to about the size of child's alphabet block. The device weighs almost nothing and retails for just \$17.99. I also was impressed by the company's mix-and-match power strips. Suppose you're going to work abroad and need to plug in four or five gadgets and have just one free outlet in your hotel room. The Wonpro power strip allows for mixing and matching the strip and the cords so that you can safely run your gadgets anywhere in the world without blowing out from too much voltage.

Another impressive product is the Compadre suite of translation products (www.speedgear.com). Compadre's Interact (\$995) is the most astonishing. Speak into your computer's microphone and the computer repeats what you said in a different language and generates a transcript. Compadre Camera takes your photos and scans of signs, menus, documents, etc., and translates what it sees to 200 different languages. Also, Compadre Document provides instant translations of Microsoft Office files such as Word documents and PowerPoints.



Power in All Sizes

This was the year of small and big at CES. Panasonic showed off a 150-inch plasma television, beating last year's record 108-inch screen. But companies also were showing off a number of ultramobile personal computers (UMPCs). Samsung's new Q1 UMPC (\$1,000) is a full-blown Windows computer that is a beauty (www.samsung.com). It is about halfway in size between a small laptop and a smart phone—or a paperback book—and has a keyboard split between both sides of the device along with a built-in mouse and dial key. Two cameras are built-in (one can be used for a webcam), two USB ports, two SD card slots, a network jack,



and a monitor port. For communications, it is loaded with Bluetooth, WiFi, and high-speed cellular capability. With its docking station, the device can easily serve as a desktop computer with an external keyboard, monitor, and DVD player. The device functions like a tablet computer where one can write on the keyboard with the Q1's stylus.

The Fujitsu Lifebook (\$1,599) is the world's smallest tablet computer and measures about six inches by six inches by one inch (store.shop.fujitsu.com). It only weighs about a pound and a half and runs Windows Vista. There's a full keyboard (though typing is going to be a challenge for those with large fingers) but users might find flipping the screen and using the tablet screen more useful. With built-in Bluetooth, WiFi, and the ability to receive AT&T's 3G broadband wireless, the Lifebook can help you stay in touch without lugging around a heavy laptop.



A clever alternative to the laptop is the \$499 Redfly Mobile Companion (www.redflycorp.com). It looks like a very small, ultrathin laptop with an eight-inch display and a full-function keyboard and touchpad mouse. But it really is a dummy device that provides an easy way to get the maximum value out of the Smartphone or PDA. Through a Bluetooth



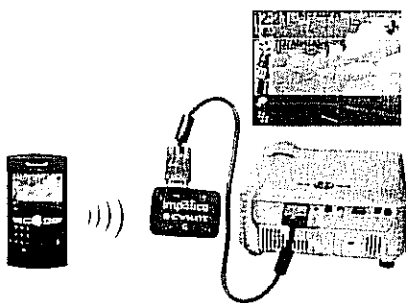


wireless or USB-wired connection to a Smartphone or PDA, one can work on any applications on a

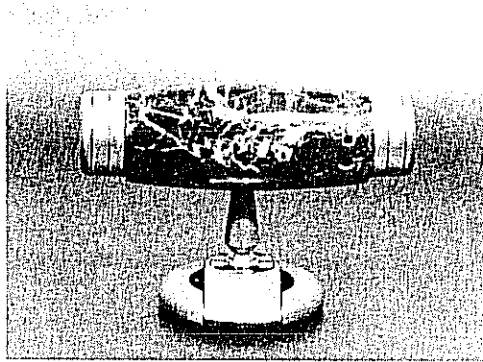
small gadget on a decent-sized screen and keyboard. Like the PDA, this has the advantage of instantly booting up—plug in USB flash drives and use the Redfly's VGA port to connect to an LCD projector. Charge up the phone or PDA through the USB connection to the Redfly, and with an eight-hour battery life, an attorney can get a lot done between charges.

Presentation Perks

If you're running a PowerPoint presentation away from the office and don't want to lug around your laptop or mess with complicated video settings, an alternative is the Impactica ShowMate (\$249; www.impactica.com). The ShowMate is a little square piece of hardware that is about the size of an iPad. It has a VGA video port like the back of the laptop and can connect to a projector. You can then transmit your presentation via Bluetooth from your BlackBerry, Palm, Sony Ericsson or Windows Mobile smartphone, or PDA. In addition to transmitting a PowerPoint to the ShowMate, those using a BlackBerry also can project whatever is on the BlackBerry screen directly to the projector screen. The ShowMate also comes with software to convert presentations to run on a PDA or phone.



Webcams are hardly exciting products anymore, so it was a surprise to wander by the booth of Computer Expressions (www.computerexpressions.com), a new company that launched its products at CES. Its ExecCams are amazingly cool designer webcams made of wood, marble, cork, leather, sculpted metal—even hemp. They'll even carve a corporate logo into their wood webcams. The prices are pretty comparable to




the bland webcams offered at the big box stores, so I expect this company to have a hit on its hand.

If you're into podcasting, one new gadget that makes the process easier is the ION U CAST microphone and software bundle (www.ion-audio.com). What makes this unique is the fact that the U Cast is a professional-grade USB broadcasting microphone that plugs directly into a USB port rather than an expensive audio controller board.



Outside the Business Box

Of course, there were many products that have no business use, but were definitely memorable. Aside from the Panasonic movie-screen-size plasma television, there was a Project Kuro 42-inch television that was just about a centimeter thick. Think about watching a beautiful television picture on a piece of glass slightly thicker than a window pane! The Looj from iRobot does for gutter cleaning what the Roomba did for vacuuming. And the \$99 Liquid Image diver's mask comes with a built-in camera that takes video and still shots. Just press a button and the LED lights in the mask's viewing area tell you when the camera has started and stopped.

With all these new (and even some affordable) toys for technocrats available, the only thing left to do is to convince colleagues to make room in the budget to buy some of these goodies. 

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