

## Traveling With Your Gadgets



By Michelle V. Rafter

Craig Cohen flies to China and Europe a half dozen times a year in his job as a vice president at a Portland, Ore., boot manufacturer. His secret to a successful trip: a little satchel that never, ever leaves his computer bag. Inside the satchel are power cords, adapters and flash drives -- everything Cohen needs to keep his Dell laptop and Blackberry 8800 charged and going while he's on the road.

Whether work takes you around the globe like Cohen or just across town, chances are, you haul around more electronic gadgets than road warriors of yesterday. Between laptops, cell phones, Bluetooth earpieces, digital cameras, iPods and the like, it's a lot to keep organized, charged up and safe from being lost or stolen.

Managing all those gadgets can be overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. Besides keeping all his supplies in one place, Cohen saves himself time and trouble by leaving headphones and external CD or DVD drives back at the office. "They're added weight and space in my pack," he says.

In addition to ditching nonessentials, here are some other suggestions for keeping mobile gadgets juiced, close by and safe:

### Charged

If you juggle multiple electronic gadgets, an all-in-one charger is a good way to recharge them all simultaneously, says **Clyde Lerner**, owner of In the Moment Computing, a Sunnyvale, Calif., computer services and organization company. An all-in-one charger is a power strip with a plug that goes into a wall socket and connectors for recharging multiple PDAs, MP3 and other electronics. Some chargers can juice two or three devices, others up to eight. Sold at computer or home electronics retailers, plain-Jane models start at \$20. Fancier models that hide power cords inside a wooden or acrylic box cost more. KangaRoom Storage's Bamboo 3-Pod charging station runs for \$45. KangaRoom also makes all-in-one charger travel pouches priced at \$12 to \$35.

In the car, use an "octopus" charger with one end that plugs into the power adapter and multiple adapters for recharging hand-held devices. One example: Callpod's Chargepod, a star-shaped charger with six ports, that the company claims works with more than 1,000 mobile devices. The charger costs \$40. Individual adapters are \$10 to \$30 each and ordered à la carte, so you only buy the ones you need. Purchase a spare cell phone battery and keep it charged and in your car, briefcase or purse at all times. That way, if your phone battery dies, you can pop in the spare, says **Lerner**.

Need your laptop for a long flight? You could carry a spare battery. Or compromise and get one high-voltage laptop battery, which lasts six hours or more, **Lerner** suggests. "The extra weight is worth it," he says.

### Organized

**Lerner's** No. 1 organizing tip for anyone who works out of their car or schleps between desks at work and home: Get a wheeled briefcase bag. "It looks a little geeky, but it saves your back," he says. Plus, bags

have lots of compartments for stowing gear, so you're less apt to let things roll around in the car and get lost, he says.

Another **Lerner** tip: Don't stick thumb drives in your wallet. The drives are great for swapping files between computers or taking work files on the road, but they're easy to lose or damage. Instead, use a thumb-drive wallet. Computer media storage companies, such as Case Logic and USB, sell wallets that hold two to six thumb drives and cost \$3 to \$6.

### **Safe**

If you depend on a laptop, you need to protect it. Newer models from Toshiba, Lenovo, HP Compaq and others have built-in biometric scanners that "read" prints from one or more of your fingers a couple times, then use them to lock and unlock the machine. Or use the password protection that comes on most laptops, so if yours is lost or stolen, would-be intruders can't get to your data, **Lerner** says. The Internet Education Foundation and other security experts suggest using encryption software to scramble email containing sensitive company information and protect files stored on a laptop's hard drive. Such software is built into some versions of Microsoft's Windows Vista operating system and sold by companies such as PGP Corp. or PKWare.

Thanks to Apple's iPhone and its smartphone rivals, more people use their phones like mini computers -- a handy but dangerous practice if you don't back up the data. "My friend lost a Treo and she lost all of her data," **Lerner** says. "She had nothing backed up." He suggests using software such as DataPilot's Universal PRO, which retails for about \$80, to sync information between a Smartphone and a computer.

According to Cohen, the Portland executive, the most important thing to remember when keeping gadgets organized is simplicity. "I'm not about the latest and greatest unless it truly adds value to my work," he says.

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