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There's an App for That: The Power of Smartphones

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What the iPad 2 can do for business

Until last week, I was the proud owner of an iPad.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not abandoning the only device that Steve Jobs called "magical."



Jesse Bushkar

I just sold my first generation to partially pay for the second generation that was recently launched, aptly named with a

creative stroke of genius — The iPad 2.

To recap the recent announcement, Apple has upgraded their year-old iPad to a newer version that launched on March 11. Major feature additions include a faster processor, a thinner/sleeker case and front- and rear-facing cameras that allow for live video chatting.

Overall, it's evolution, not revolution, but the faster processor is good enough for me to pull the trigger on an upgrade.

Detractors of the iPad accuse it of not really serving a purpose or fitting a need. It's too big to carry around like a phone, and it's not quite

as functional as a laptop if you need to do heavy duty computing.

But Apple has sold more than three million of these things, so there has to be something to it, right?

I bought my first iPad on launch day, and I haven't put it down since. The need that it fills is there, even if it wasn't one I was aware of beforehand. As a small business owner, I wear many hats, and the iPad wears these hats, too. Here is just a sample of how I use mine.

- **Bookkeeping** — We use an invoicing system that is Web-based called Freshbooks. It's a great service, but the iPad makes it even better. With two or three finger touches, I can check my accounts-receivable report, resend an invoice to a client, create a new recurring invoice profile or any number of things.

In five minutes, I can see the entire picture from anywhere I am.

- **Email** — Yes, I have a smartphone that can send and receive email, but the iPad is better. I really have come to despise typing more than



Jeff Chiu/The Associated Press

The iPad 2 with a smart cover.

a few words at a time on my phone. The iPad, however, has a much bigger keyboard so longer messages aren't so painful.

- **Facebook** — I use Facebook personally and for business, and I can manage all of it right from my iPad. Again, this feels forced on my phone, but on the bigger screen of the iPad everything is readable and manageable.

Here's a tip, too. Use the "Friendly" app instead of the official Facebook app. Facebook's app is just a stretched version of their iPhone offer-

ing, so Friendly gets the job done better for a whopping \$2 or so.

- **Web browsing** — Websites just don't look good on a phone, or at least most of them don't. The iPad makes browsing full-sized websites a breeze in most cases. I have mixed feelings about the lack of Adobe Flash support, but that really hasn't hurt my experience so far.

- **Note taking/organization** — I attend a lot of meetings, whether they're job, networking, or charity related. My desk used to be scattered with scraps of paper with random notes on them.

Now my desk is only half-scattered with paper! The iPad comes with a quick and easy note taking app that works like a charm. And if you're looking for an even better service, it integrates with the Web service Evernote.com for sharing notes across multiple devices/computers.

These are only a few of the areas of productivity where I have benefited from my iPad.

Of course I'm addicted to Angry Birds (a popular game on phones and tablets; I'm in the top 2,000 in the world!)

so maybe it's hurt my productivity just a little bit, too. Overall, though, as with many technology innovations, it would be tough to go back to a world without it. Yes, my iPad has truly been an upgrade for my day-to-day life over the past year.

Unfortunately, I underestimated the demand for the iPad 2 and wasn't able to get one on launch day this year. I have been test driving the only real competitor to the iPad for the past week and am impressed.

It's called the Motorola Xoom and has the Google Android operating system (an upgraded version from the software that powers Droids and other phones). I'm impressed so far, but I don't see it unseating the iPad from its tablet throne just yet.

The Xoom is more for nerds, while the iPad is for people who want it to "just work." For business or for pleasure, that's what the iPad does. It just works.

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There's an app for that: The power of smartphones

We have all seen the commercial that beckons us to jump into a "smartphone centric" world in which the



Susan Williams

newest generation of mobile phone devices become an integral part of our information and entertainment supply chain.

If you are a gadget junkie

or have a teenager in your home, you may already know what a smartphone can do for you. But if you are still clinging mightily to a mobile device that is "just a cell phone", read on.

Simply put, a smartphone is a handheld computer with a built-in mobile phone. As such, smartphones are capable of running advanced applications (or apps) similar to those on your desktop or laptop computer. It is these apps that make smartphones both powerful and appealing. The market for smart-

phone apps is huge and growing exponentially.

One industry research firm estimates that the number of mobile application downloads in the first half of 2010 topped 3.8 billion and projects that the market for smartphone applications (not the devices themselves) will reach \$15 billion worldwide by 2013.

That is astonishing when you consider that many of the most useful apps can be downloaded for free and tens of thousands of others cost less than a dollar.

So why are these apps so popular? The answer is simple.

They improve productivity, provide amusement and allow us to tap into a virtually unlimited amount of information, all while keeping us connected to people and activities that are important to us.

Like the Internet, this is a transformative technology — seamlessly merging communication, computing and entertainment in the palms of our hands.

If you still have doubts as to how apps are changing the way we live, work, and communicate, consider the many ways I have used my phone in recent days:

Wake up to an alarm I set on my phone's clock the night before. Use the Weather Channel app to check the local temperature and get the forecast for Springfield, Mo., where I'm headed later in the week. Instantaneously check my e-mail account and calendar at work (without booting up my desktop, waiting for the browser, and logging in).

Use the Facebook app to catch up on what's going on with friends and family. Listen to Pandora (an Internet radio app) on the drive to work.

Later that evening, download a movie (or book) that I can watch (or read) on my upcoming trip. Use a fitness app to track my daily calorie consumption and exercise (an app that can look up hundreds of thousands of foods

or utilize the barcode scanner app to read in nutritional information directly from a food package).

Turn on the night light and white noise apps before drifting off to sleep.

During my trip, use the built-in GPS navigation app to hear turn-by-turn directions that guide me to my destination. Use the voice recognition app to dictate an e-mail to my boss.

If travelling by air, use the browser to check my flight status. Check in at the gate with an electronic boarding pass sent directly to my phone. If headed to a foreign country, use the translator app to teach myself words and phrases I will need to know upon arrival.

While waiting at the airport, catch up on news and sports, then amuse myself by playing Sudoku, Solitaire, Angry Birds or any one of thousands of games.

And, oh yeah, call home! And this only scratches the

surface of the variety of apps that are available.

In an informal poll of my colleagues, other "favorites" include personal safety apps (such as a flashlight app that uses the camera flash to light the way), apps that monitor home security cameras and/or turn lights and security systems on and off, educational apps for children, online dictionaries, online phone books, Google Sky (an app that uses the phone's GPS to identify the stars, planets and constellations above you) and even a simple "bubble level" app that turns your phone into a leveling device.

If you would like to contribute to my informal poll or would like more information, please e-mail me at rebstock@georgiasouthern.edu.

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