

## Tech Talk: Summertime Technology

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With summer comes some long-awaited outdoor activities, including vacation for many.

While you may not want to equate vacation with technology, the reality is that many of us, myself included, work while on vacation or mix vacation with work. Personally, I try to be better about this each year, and I'm making good progress on that, but the reality is that one rarely unplugs these days.

Now the philosophy and psychology aside, if you do mix vacation with work, technology can certainly make the endeavor a whole lot less intrusive on your time and your family or friends.

A smartphone can be a great tool to keep in touch while you're away or just enjoying some outdoor time. Many people use smartphone for e-mail, but they can also be used to review documents, spreadsheets and more. I've talked with several people over the last year who no longer take a notebook computer with them on their trips. They find that their smartphones are more than ample for their needs to communicate verbally and electronically as well as review files while they are away from the office. I even know people who use their smartphone and more recently the iPad, to make remote connections back to their office and work on their business software while traveling.

So if the thought of carrying around a notebook computer is not appealing, you have options. I still carry my tablet computer with me on trips, but I don't use it nearly as often as I used to. The day may come when I no longer need to take it with me, but the jury is still out. I am able to use my smartphone for e-mail, files and even our main business application, but there is still a lot I do on a traditional PC. Having the flexibility is key and it allows me to work around my family's schedule when we are traveling together and I have work to do.

One thing to keep in mind, especially this time of year, is that many electronic screens do not do very well in bright sunlight. So if you think you will be sitting on the beach working away on your smartphone or your notebook computer, you better be certain your screen will cooperate.

Many screens wash out in bright sunlight, so it's important that you find out if your screen is rated for use in direct sunlight. Some are and some are not. You don't want to buy a new piece of gear only to be disappointed by this. Many companies also make screen overlays or filters, that make them more readable in bright sunlight. If you just want to read a book or a few PDFs, the Amazon Kindle or Barnes & Noble Nook are great single-purpose devices designed for ease of reading on an electronic screen, whether in room light or direct sunlight.

Another benefit of these devices is that if you're trying to actually relax and have a vacation this summer, you will hopefully do more pleasure reading than business reading on them, and that will encourage you to make the most of your leisure time.

I thoroughly enjoy reading on my Kindle and have done so in direct sunlight many times and the experience is great. I'm told the iPad is equally enjoyable for reading books, but I have not used one for that purpose myself, so I can't comment directly.

The one definite plus with the iPad is that if you want to have several other applications for the device, that's your tool. The Kindle is just for books, as is the Nook, for the most part, but there are applications coming out for the Nook that will allow it to go online and do more than just read books.

Finally, given the heat wave we've just come through, remember to keep your computer infrastructure cool and clean. A week like we've just had can put some heavy stress on your critical infrastructure, and you do not want it to suffer a failure that could be easily prevented.

Enjoy our New England summer. I hope you will be able to enjoy some relaxing vacation time with family and friends and that these tips will help you do so. Thanks for reading.

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