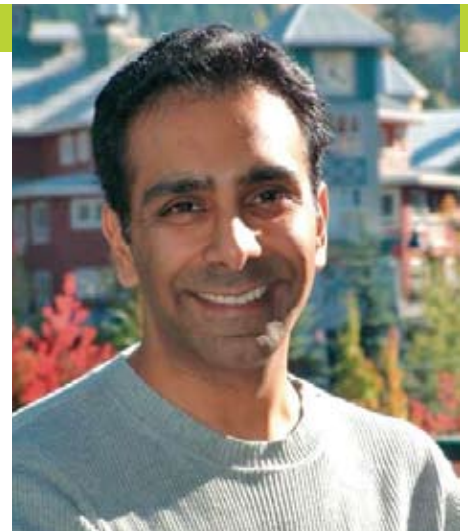


Akash Sablok

Productivity Tech



Here are some products that can help you be as efficient as possible—outside and inside your office—and one to help you relax when you get home.

HTC Touch: Good To Go

On my way to work today, stuck in a traffic jam, I decided to crank the music—played from a portable music player—and to check my email, my stocks, and the weather.

As cars crept along, I saw a billboard for a new gadget I liked. Instead of writing down the Website of the product, I took a picture of the billboard. Then I called work to say I would be 10 minutes late.

In 5 minutes, I had used an mp3 player, a camera, a Web device, and made a call—all from my phone.

That phone is the HTC Touch (on the Bell network). One of the smallest Windows Mobile devices, the Touch includes Wi-Fi, a 2.8" touchscreen TFT display, 2 megapixel camera, and rich

business applications. The form-factor is amazing; it fits in the hand perfectly and is small enough to fit in a pocket comfortably.

The HTC Touch brings together communication, entertainment, and business capabilities enabling mobile phone users to balance work and fun. Apple introduced us to the iPhone; the HTC Touch gives us interactive TouchFLO technology with fingersweep control.

In 5 minutes, I had used an mp3 player, a camera, a Web device, and made a call—all from my phone.

Swipe your finger from the bottom of the display to the top to bring up a spinnable cube and various slides that contain applications such as email, photos, SMS, Internet Explorer, and so on.

You can also swipe from right to left (or left to right) to move through these slides. This feature makes you want to use the phone a lot more often. The 3D cube can be launched from within any application or menu location. Exiting the 3D cube will restore the last accessed application.

The HTC Touch offers several time-management features—all

easily syncable with MS Outlook. The Calendar offers a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly view; to-do list; notes; and voice recorder. There is support for viewing and editing Word, Excel, and PowerPoint office files.

The Outlook Mobile email client supports POP3 and IMAP accounts. You can have multiple accounts and set the client to automatically check mail at regular time intervals. It has full support for sending and receiving attachments. The Bell network worked flawlessly while using the Mobile Client module; it was fast and consistent.

The user interface of the camera is easy and if you have ever used a digital camera, you know where you are the moment you see the camera screen. But like most camera phones, these pictures are not for special moments that you want to treasure forever.

The battery life is rather outstanding. With average use, you might be able to go 2 days without a charge. But if you intend to watch video which, by the way, is of excellent quality, you might need to charge every night.

There are a few drawbacks. It does tend to get a little slow, the 128 MB built-in memory is insufficient, there is a learning curve, and it has a hard-to-clean casing. But even with those minor faults, the HTC Touch is value for money.

Pricing: \$99 and up, depending on the plan you purchase



Microsoft Office 2008 for Mac

A few years ago, I had a conversation with a Notary about her switching from her Apple Mac computer to a PC. Her main concern was that her Mac would be incompatible with conveyancing software and the Land Title Office's electronic filing system (EFS). While she was right to be aware of a potential challenge, the folks at Apple have made sure they maintain their position in the computing world and increase their piece of the pie.



Now Office 2008 is available for Mac users. The conversion from PC to Mac is a perfect blend of the PC version's features and the Mac-style interface.

Microsoft Office 2008 is the industry standard for word processing, number-crunching, spreadsheets, and presentation tools. There is a sharp learning curve for this latest version—as compared to Office 2007—but it is worth the work because the 2008 version is faster, more intuitive, and frankly just better looking.

It is easy to create professional, compatible documents for co-workers and friends on Macs and PCs. In addition to Office 2008, the Mac BU Website, Mactopia, features a dramatic transformation to provide an even more resourceful hub for all things Mac BU.

Office 2008 for Mac shares core technologies with the 2007 Office system such as Open XML File Formats and the graphics engine OfficeArt, to ensure consistency in graphics rendering when they are shared. Office 2008 for Mac is also compatible with earlier file formats so that users can continue to use the older DOC, XLS, and PPT binary formats. The updated suite is universal and runs natively on Intel-based and Power PC-based Macs.

The updated suite keeps the traditional drop-down menus, but adds the new Elements Gallery row of tools in Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. With the Elements Gallery, key features and functions are more discoverable and accessible so users can efficiently tackle their work—with the tools they need right at their fingertips.

Throughout the suite, users will find a revamped Toolbox that also features the contextual Formatting Palette, which adjusts its content for each application to truly make it more intuitive in creating great-looking documents.

In addition, the new stand-alone My Day application allows users to track professional and personal priorities to stay on top of daily activities regardless of the application in which they are working. This great feature will help you keep track of important date-dependent tasks for files.

Publishing Layout View in Word 2008 is a new specialized workspace where users can simply create and edit layout-rich documents. This feature allows you to create newsletters, flyers, and brochures for your business.

Pricing (MSRP): Office 2008 for Mac \$539.95, full retail version \$319.95, upgrade version www.microsoft.com/mac



Adobe Creative Suite 3 for Windows

I took a few videos a long time ago with what now seems like an ancient digital camera, the Fuji FinePix 6900. It was a good camera in its time (circa 2001), but the included software was lacking any kind of creativity.

The joy of digital imaging is that you can keep your original video file, then edit, modify, and spice it up almost any way you want.

With Adobe's Creative Suite 3 (CS3) Production Premium software, not only can you create stunning movies, you can incorporate images into the mix. Very cool stuff.

It will not, however, improve the sounds of your screeching co-worker at Saturday night's karaoke session.

To start, you can use almost any source for your footage—a digital camera, digital or analogue camcorders, DVDs, and even footage shot on a cell phone camera. Don't worry if what you shot is low quality. CS3 has tools to correct the visuals. The SoundBooth module will even correct defective audio tracks. It will not, however, improve the sounds of your screeching co-worker at Saturday night's karaoke session.

The modules include full versions of After Effects (for special effects); Premiere Pro (for video editing); Photoshop Extended (for editing of images); Flash Professional (for Web-based animation); Illustrator (for drawing); Soundbooth (for sound editing); Encore (for DVD and Blu-Ray creation); OnLocation (for on-the-fly DVD recording); and my favourite module, Ultra.

Adobe's Ultra CS3 allows you to add virtual backgrounds with drag-and-drop simplicity. These Virtual Sets Libraries go beyond typical static shots and include flying camera shots, moving stages, and boom and dolly moves. Sets include multiple camera angles in tight, medium, and wide views.

You will save time moving from task to task because the modules are so tightly integrated.

Once your project is done, you can output it to DVD, Blu-Ray DVD, your cell phone, and even the Web. If you want to use your video for promotional purposes, most production studios can take your completed file and produce distribution materials on your behalf.

Now CS3 probably will be overkill for most consumers, in fact, it's probably overkill for most professionals, but if you create that one special presentation for your business, that one amazing vacation video, or that one movie of your kid's first birthday, it's worth the time and expense.

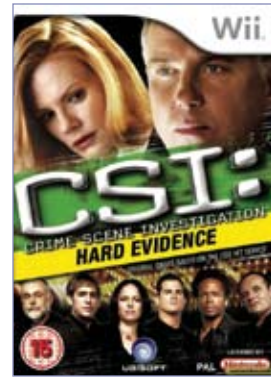
And yes, it is expensive. The whole set is over \$1300, but if you were to purchase the modules individually, the total would be almost double.

www.adobe.ca

Ubisoft *CSI: Hard Evidence*

After a long, hard day at the office, you want to relax and unwind. As strange as it may sound, I prefer to watch mystery and crime dramas on TV to relax. I love the twists and turns in the plots and how they use forensics and just plain old good thinking to solve crimes.

If you can't get your *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* fix—and it's hard not to because it's on so many times



a day—you can load the latest *CSI* game from Ubisoft, *CSI: Hard Evidence*, in your Nintendo Wii and become part of Grissom's team.

The *CSI* team in Miami has the cool vehicles, the cool clothes, and the hot climate, but the gang in Vegas does it with such a calmness that it's cool. In *CSI: Hard Evidence*, you are required to break down the evidence and bring suspects to justice in five all-new bizarre crimes.

Compared to older versions of the game, this one has longer cases, bigger crime scenes, and unique locations. With the new Garage Lab, you examine large pieces of evidence like cars and trucks; recreate gunfights with ballistic lasers; uncover shocking secrets with video analysis; and much more.

The game is an experience in realism as real *CSI* actors take part in the interrogations, create grisly crime re-enactments and explore atmospheric crime scenes inspired by the show. If you are like me and think *I could have figured that out* while watching the show, this is your chance.

Nintendo's Wii Remote is utilized to navigate through a crime scene. The user interface has been completely redone with a console audience in mind so it's user-friendlier and more like the show than ever.

Pricing: \$59.99

Platform: Nintendo Wii

www.ubisoft.com ▲

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