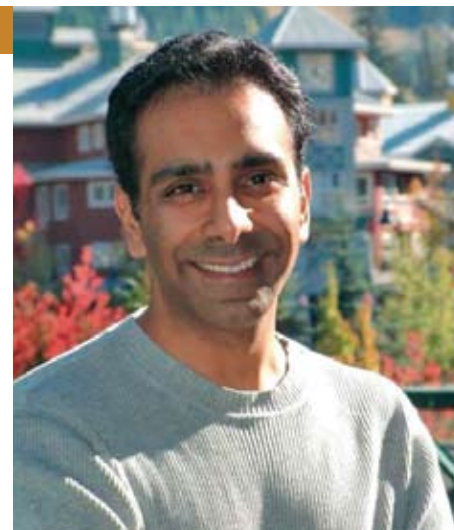


Akash Sablok



Springtime Fun/Work Tech

The Winter blues this year have never been more blue and grey and black.

It's time to have some fun as the weather—and hopefully the economy—turn brighter. Here are some “chillaxation” tools for your office and yourself.

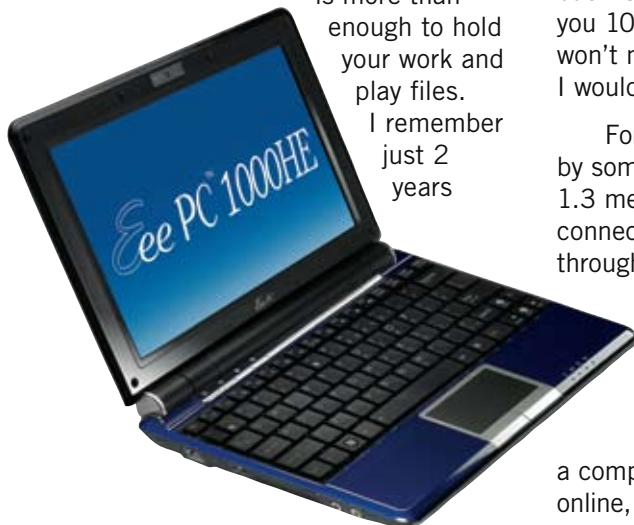
ASUS 1000HE: \$449

www.asus.com

The latest trend, and showing no signs of abating, is Netbook computers. Smaller than a Notebook, but larger than a smartphone, these tiny PCs are just the right size—according to humans and Goldilocks.

The ASUS 1000HE takes all that's good in the Netbook world and improves on it. Its 160 GB hard drive is more than enough to hold your work and play files.

I remember just 2 years



ago, 80 GB was considered large for a laptop. With every 1000HE, ASUS offers an additional 10 GB of online storage.

The 1000HE comes with Windows XP preloaded, running on an Intel Atom 280 Processor (1.66 GHz). This processor has been specifically designed for life in a Netbook, so it's smaller than a penny, lightweight, and has very low power consumption. You give up some speed for these benefits, but most users won't notice.

ASUS's Super Hybrid Engine and six-cell high density battery pack allow for longer battery life—they claim up to 9.5 hours. During my testing, I was able to squeeze 8.5 hours of battery life, perfect for that long flight or nonstop road trip.

The 10" WSVGA+ LED backlit “flawless” display gives you 1024 x 600 resolution. You won't need a magnifying glass, but I wouldn't watch the Stanley Cup on it.

For those who want to be watched by someone else, there's a built-in 1.3 megapixel camera. You can also connect an external camera and more through the three USB ports. Other connection options onboard include a VGA-out, 4-in-1 Media Card Reader, and built-in Wi-Fi.

The biggest advantage of a computer this size is you can surf online, edit and sign digital documents,

and not have to lug around a beast. The 1.45 kg (3.2 lbs.) unit comes with a 1-year warranty and carrying bag.



iLANE: \$600

\$7.99 per month

www.ilane.com

New regulations for driving while talking on your cellular phone are coming our way. Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and Quebec have already banned the use of cell phones behind the wheel—with more provinces to follow.

A lot of us now use them for emailing and texting. Because some people do it while driving, we have a mix of the dangerous and the downright stupid! I enjoy driving, and don't want to worry about social-media-obsessed drivers typing on little keys while trying to negotiate busy intersections.

The iLane system is designed to reduce, if not eliminate, the time your eyes are off the road. The unit allows you to control your smartphone using simple voice commands. You can open,

listen and respond to email, listen to SMS text messages, and review your calendar—entirely hands-free.

The unit even notifies you when new emails arrive. “Good morning, Lisa. You have 18 new emails.”

Pairing is possible with most Bluetooth-compatible smartphones, including Blackberries and iPhones. The \$7.99 monthly fee covers updates and speaks popular news, sports, and weather services out loud and on demand.

Viewsonic VX2260vm LCD Monitor: \$249

www.viewsonic.com

If you think the 10" Netbook screen is too tiny for you, or you are looking for an upgrade to your current monitor, Viewsonic's new 21.5" HD LCD is a great choice.

The 10,000:1 contrast ratio provides strong contrasts between light and dark images, allowing you to enjoy the view in light or dark room conditions.

The unit itself, with the high neck and floating-head design, is stylish enough to look good even when off. The slim-bezel takes up minimum space, yet provides a screen image large enough to view several programs opened at once without too much clutter.

You get a widescreen aspect ratio with full HD 1920 x 1080p resolution. The dots do get tiny on a 21.5", but the images are sharp. You can watch a Blu-Ray movie on the monitor; it will easily rival TV sets that run double the price.



Connections are made through the HDMI or DVI and/or analog (RGB – VGA) inputs. No need for external speakers; the VX2260vm comes with built-in SRS WOW HD sound

As I have done at my desk, you can mount this monitor on a wall or with a desktop stand using a standard VESA mount (100 mm x 100 mm).

The VX2260vm is not a perfect monitor; the controls on the front panel are not user-friendly and there's a lot of plastic, but it shines where it matters most—the picture quality.

Logitech WiLife: \$379

Indoor Master System
www.logitech.com



Logitech's new WiLife Indoor Security system is a security camera solution that's easy to set up and use. No drilling required. It's all plug and

play with Logitech's HomePlug technology. The system uses standard electrical plugs to transmit video signals to the base unit. For setup, you install the Command Center PC software, connect the USB receiver, and plug in the camera anywhere around your home or office—and Logitech's your uncle.

Using the hard drive on your PC or Mac, the unit records video and sound for playback or archiving.

The unit has its own Web address and login ID. You can stream the camera's video through the Internet to see what's going on in your office from anywhere in the world. You can view those images from some cell phones.

No need to sit and stare at the monitor, à la Homer Simpson. Once it detects movement, the motion-activated feature alerts you on your cell phone or via email.

For larger offices, you can affix up to five additional Logitech Indoor, Outdoor, or Spy Add-On Cameras, in any combination.

Wowwee Rovio: \$299

www.wowwee.com

Now for a completely different type of viewing. The latest robot from Wowwee will definitely make you say “wow-wee!” The Rovio looks like a cross between a moonlander and a tank, but with cool blue lights and an even cooler purpose.

You charge the unit with the included base charger, then hook it up just once to your computer with the included USB cable and software. The Rovio works on any WEP Wi-Fi network—pretty easy to set up if you follow the onscreen instructions. The software is Web-based, meaning you can login to the Rovio from anywhere in the world and control it.

Yes, control it. You can move it forward, backward, spin it around, and even push a button for it to return to its charging base automatically.



Its coolest feature is one that'll have you trying to pass this robot off as part of your security system—you might convince your friends, but not CRA. With the built-in Webcam, the little Rovio can capture audio and high-resolution video (at 640 x 480) MPEG4 format, and take still pictures and email them to you. Want to talk with the person/pet/object/CRA agent? WOWWEE's two-way microphone and speaker enable real-time interaction with subjects.

The 5 lb. unit is supported by three large wheels, providing 360° of nimble movement; its camera boom extends to a wide field of view for surveying its surroundings. Expect a signal range of about 100 feet.



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Users can preset up to 10 routes for Rovio to follow, making him your own personal security guard. With no coffee breaks or sick days.

Brookstone Vuzix iWear AV230 XL Video Glasses: \$199

www.brookstone.com



To truly “chillax,” there is nothing better than sitting on the couch to catch up on your movie watching. To make sure no one bothers you, don a pair of Vuzix Video Glasses from Brookstone.com.

They are just a bit bigger and heavier than regular glasses, but they do a lot more. There is a high-contrast OLED colour display in front of each eye. Look into them and you will see a 44" virtual theatre. Now would be a good time to put some popcorn in the microwave.

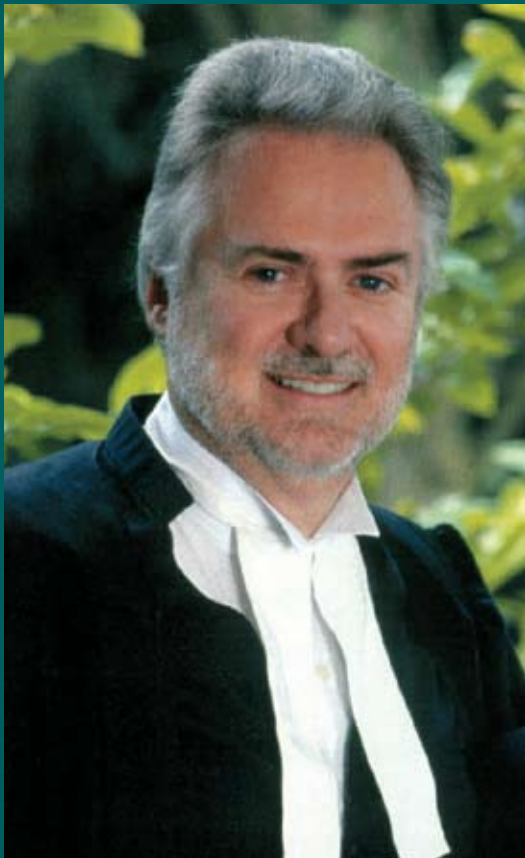
The AV230 XL has adjustable focus wheels so you can use it without your prescription glasses—very convenient. Sound is important for any movie, unless you're watching a classic Charlie Chaplin. The Vuzix comes with removable, high-quality ear buds or you can detach those and use your own.

For video sources, you can connect most portable DVD players and video devices, even an iPod or iPhone (cable included). The single AA battery will last a lot longer than most movies—up to 7 hours. The unit does start to get uncomfortable after about 3 hours of viewing. ▲

Vancouver Notary **Akash Sablok**, AJAC (Automobile Journalists Association of Canada), practises with his father **Tarlok Sablok**. Akash writes regular technology and automotive columns for several publications across Canada and appears as a guest technology reviewer on TV programs, including CityTV's *Breakfast Television* and *Lunch Television*; Omni's *10 PM News*, and *The Jenn & Joe Show* on Talk1410.

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