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The Only Tech These Geeks Lack Is a Cart to Haul Their Gadgets

The Rest—iPads, Bodybuggs—They Stuff in Pockets and Pillows; That 'Naked' Feeling

By YUKARI IWATANI KANE



Phil Libin

Mr. Libin's haul includes a Seiko watch, iPad, Motorola Droid X, Samsung Galaxy Tab, HyperMac external battery, electronic pedometer, international AC charger, SD card reader, Eye-Fi memory card, Shure in-ear headset.

SAN FRANCISCO—Phil Libin owns Apple Inc.'s latest phone, which enables him to surf the Web, fire off emails, tweet, use GPS to avoid getting lost in Japan, and play a videogame he likes called "Age of Zombies."

It's not enough, he says.

Which is why Mr. Libin, chief executive of Evernote Corp., a start-up that

makes list-keeping software, carries around a backpack that weighs 26.2 pounds. Speaking of lists, the backpack contains: a 17-inch notebook computer, an iPad tablet, a Samsung tablet, two phones, an SLR camera, two lenses for the SLR, a headset for making Skype calls, an in-ear phone headset, a wi-fi router, a docking station for the router, a second wi-fi router, a wireless card, an SD card reader, two memory sticks, an external battery, a few other things, and the cords.

He's going to ditch one of the tablets, he says. But he's ordered another gadget to replace it: a Bodybugg calorie-management device.



Want to know which new gadgets the Silicon Valley digerati can't live without? Turns out there are a whole lot of them. WSJ's Clare Major reports from Mountain View, Calif.

"Ten years ago, I probably carried three things and now I carry more than 30," says the 38-year-old. "That's the sensible load," he says, and he's serious: He used to carry a fatter laptop and a Kindle.

Even as the world's frankengadgets take a cue from Swiss Army knives—giving us TV-streaming cellphones and photo-emailing cameras—some people still can't leave the redundant doodads back home. "Each one of these gadgets does one thing slightly better than the other," says Richard Wong, 41, a partner at venture-capital firm Accel Partners. His load: Two phones, one PC, an iPad.

Journal Community

How many gadgets do you carry around most days?

- 5 or more
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1
- 0

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Mr. Wong uses his iPhone to read the news, update Facebook or tweet. But he lugs around a Blackberry or a Droid phone, too, because for emails he prefers using a physical keyboard, not the iPhone's on-screen keyboard. The iPad? That's for Web surfing. The PC is there for "intensive work."

It's wise to carry lots of phones, phone-lovers say. For one thing, there's less worrying about getting a signal. "I literally have one phone for every major network out there," says Gilman Louie, a San Francisco venture capitalist. He's got a Palm Pre, two iPhones (one for overseas), a Nexus One and a Droid.

Some digerati concede the gear is partly for appearances. Brian Wong, a 19-year-old Canadian entrepreneur in San Francisco, admits it's overkill to carry around an iPad and a laptop. But he says it creates a better impression during presentations if he can "swing out" an iPad as opposed to his laptop, with its screen cluttered with files and junk. "It feels a lot more professional," he says.

Some boast of using two gizmos at once. "In the 10 seconds that you're waiting for one device to do one thing, you can use the other to do something else," says Joel Simkhai, CEO of Los Angeles-based Nearby Buddy Finder LLC, which develops dating apps for mobile phones. He multitasks by surfing on an iPhone and talking on a Blackberry.

Grammy winning rapper Hakeem Seriki, also known as Chamillionaire, keeps four phones in his pockets. He uses a Blackberry for calls, an iPhone 4 for email and apps, his older iPhone 3GS to store music and a T-Mobile Sidekick for writing lyrics.

"I could probably live with one, but there's always something I don't like about each," Mr. Seriki says. Sometimes he sleeps with an iPhone under his pillow, he notes, for quick access.

Those who successfully wean themselves roll their eyes at their gear-burdened brethren. Richard Bullwinkle, 40, whose job title is chief evangelist at a San Francisco digital-entertainment company, says he used to be "the guy who had way too many gadgets, and traveled with a suitcase just for them."

Then, last summer, he got the newest iPhone. Because it features an improved camera, video chat and the ability to run more than just one piece of software at a time, it "changed everything for me as a gadget nut," he says.



Sam Furukawa

Phil Libin

Two months ago, he took a big step. He went to Santa Monica, Calif., for three days with just the phone. "I felt naked" without his old bag of things, he says, but got by.

Today, Mr. Bullwinkle feels liberated. "I smile a little on the inside," he says, when he spots other people at airport security dumping several phones and laptops into the screening bins—only to get busted for having still more gadgets in their bags.

Mr. Libin of Evernote acknowledges there are "a couple of redundancies" in his 26.2-pound backpack, such as not one, but two, headsets. But other than that, he says, "I use everything all the time. There's no dead weight."

His colleagues say they appreciate his comprehensive stash. "It's cool to have a person near you that's like your own personal Best Buy," says Andrew Sinkov, Evernote's marketing chief.

On a recent vacation to Hawaii with his wife, Sharmila Birbal, Mr. Libin took along his gadgets. Ms. Birbal says she long ago gave up on the idea of holidays with her husband minus the backpack. "I was just grateful Phil was with me," she says.

Though the couple stayed at a resort known as a low-tech getaway destination, Mr. Libin spent most of his time on a hammock with five devices. "That was an ideal vacation," he says.

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