

TECH REVIEW: DOING BUSINESS

Business gadgets are designed to make doing business easier and more efficient. As we move towards year-end, consider investing in some of these gadgets to help you make the most of your business activities in 2010.

Smarter phones



Smart phones are getting smarter – and more intuitive. Following in the footsteps of the much-hyped iPhone is Nokia's N97 and Sony Ericsson's Xperia X2, both designed with the business user in mind.

The Nokia N97 combines the popular touch screen interface with a full QWERTY keyboard. Its stylish looks are complemented by solid functionality. Despite a few niggles – such as occasional crashes – the touch screen works well once you adapt to it and the QWERTY keyboard is easy to use. The home menu allows you to customise your most used applications into the home screen menu making for one-click access. From up-to-date weather information to e-mail, web browsing and GPS maps, the Nokia N97 offers everything the business user needs. It's also fully optimised for video, music and photos.



The Sony Ericsson Xperia X2 combines touch with QWERTY key board with its eye-catching Panel interface. It runs Windows Mobile 6.5 OS and offers an 8.1 megapixel camera with video tagging, geo tagging, touch focus, auto focus, flash and image stabiliser. Connectivity encompasses Bluetooth and Wi-Fi as well as GPS-support with Google Maps.



Aesthetically functional



Along with gadgets come wires and the sight is not always a pretty one, whether in your home or office. The answer could be Ode's Winkbox, a stylish floating draw housing a wire management system. The wires of all

your gadgets are held in place by a tidy row of slots within the drawer and they charge sitting atop the sleek shelf that comes in a variety of finishes and colours to match your décor. Whilst closed, the drawer top doubles up as a smart contemporary piece of furniture where you can display more than just your gadgetry. The drawer opens easily to provide access to the chargers inside.

The Winkbox retails at R965 (incl. VAT, excl. delivery) and can be purchased at www.thewinkbox.com.

Lend an ear



Choosing the right headset for your office environment is important as it impacts on the efficiency of the office. The Jabra BIZ 2400 is optimised for the particular requirements encountered with specific types of phone systems, including traditional desk phones, softphones and wideband hardphones, with frequency response rates and noise cancelling systems appropriate to the kind of work they will be used for.

There are narrowband models for use with conventional desk phones (300–3,400 Hz), wideband models for IP hardphones (150–6 800 Hz), and USB models for softphones and multimedia use (80-16 000 Hz) including a special USB version optimised for use with Microsoft Office Communicator. Jabra BIZ 2400 is available in both mono- and duo-speaker configurations with a wide selection of high quality microphone types and noise-cancelling systems to match the acoustic profiles in particular kinds of work surroundings.

The more versatile Jabra M5390 Multiuse headset is a Bluetooth headset that connects simultaneously to mobile phones and desk phones or to mobile phones and PC softphones (via the enclosed PC dongle). According to Jabra, the headset combines the sound and range performance known from office headsets with the convenience of a mobile headset.

Keeping an eye on things



The extended wireless range allows users to answer calls up to 70 metres from their desks. The design and wearing style is optimised for office staff, managers and specialists who spend most of their time in the office – and less on the go. For optimum call clarity in loud office environments, the microphone is placed close to the user's mouth and features noise cancelling technology. When out of the office, the Jabra M5390 seamlessly connects to the user's mobile phone or PC based softphone.

As the holidays near, safety and security of your business or home property are added concerns when considering where to go for your annual vacations. Through IP video solutions, it is possible to remotely access a camera over the Internet and view the footage it is capturing from anywhere in the world where there is Internet connectivity; something that is not possible with analogue systems. Whether you are at work or on holiday, you will always have peace of mind knowing what's happening in and around your home or office.

The benefit of IP video solutions is the lower total cost of ownership that they offer over similarly sized analogue-based surveillance systems. A recent study showed that if a complete IP infrastructure is

in place, the IP-based video surveillance system will always cost less. Even though the initial purchase may seem higher, the total cost of ownership places IP surveillance well within reach for private users.

Storage is also simpler, cutting out the need for video tapes. Instead of cassette tapes, footage from IP surveillance cameras can be stored on PCs, making it easier to manage and upgrade the system if necessary. Furthermore, new compression standards such as H.264, which is available in IP cameras, have taken the storage benefits of IP systems to the next level by enabling the transmission and storage of high quality images at significantly reduced bandwidth, fulfilling the need for storage efficiency.

Tampering with the camera can be detected through the Active Tampering Alarm, which automatically alerts the user when a camera is re-directed, blocked or manipulated. Axis Communications provides a variety of IP surveillance systems, with a starting price of R2 266 including VAT. Top of the range is the AXIS M7001 Covert Surveillance Kit, which comprises the AXIS M7001 Video Encoder that feeds power to the small covert camera. The suggested retail price is R5 050 incl. VAT.



Perfectly suited for securing small businesses, boutiques, restaurants, hotels or residences is the AXIS M1011 Network Camera, which offers superior video quality in its class at 30 frames per second in VGA resolution. The suggested retail price is R2 266 incl. VAT. The AXIS M1031-W network camera features a passive infrared (PIR) sensor for detecting movement, even in the dark, and a white LED light for illuminating the scene automatically at an event or when requested by the user. Other features include two-way audio support with an integrated microphone and speaker, allowing remote listening in on an area as well as communication with individuals directly or using uploaded or recorded audio clips. The suggested retail price is R 3 531 incl. VAT.



Veritable video conferencing



Eyeris, a new product from independent telecommunications group Vox Telecom, promises crystal-clear high definition video conferencing at a fraction of the cost of currently available solutions.

"Video conferencing hasn't made economic sense until now because of the high capital cost of the equipment, which could run into millions," said Jacques du Toit, managing director of Vox Orion. "Both Vox Orion and Vox Datapro are now making bridging facilities available as a hosted solution, while at the same time offering the equipment as an operational rather than a capital expense." Eyeris offers both standard-definition and high-definition options. The benefits of high-definition are significant in that the images are so crystal clear that it really does feel as if people are in the room with you. According to Vox Datapro's managing director Gary Sweidan, "Video conferencing is now a real alternative to business travel, and it's as easy as making a telephone call."

Vox is able to offer high-definition video conferencing thanks to its Fishbone line-bonding technology, which combines multiple ADSL and/or Diginet lines into a single high-bandwidth channel, allowing it to meet the 1 Mbps required by high-definition. With three or more ADSL lines, it is possible to enjoy high-definition video conferencing at a fraction of the cost of standard definition products already on the market.

Vox Telecom's bridge, available on an hourly rental basis, will also enable multi-way video conferencing. The equipment can handle 28 simultaneous high definition or 60 simultaneous standard definition video conferences, as well as voice conferencing. According to Du Toit, Eyeris can translate into significant cost-savings for businesses. Instead of buying two or three return air tickets a month, video conferences can replace the need to travel. You are furthermore able to increase productivity by cutting down on travel time and allowing more people to participate in the same discussion.

More information is available from either Vox Orion or Vox Datapro at www.voxorion.co.za and www.voxdatapro.co.za.