

Affordable SMB Productivity Tools, Part 2

Posted by [Daniel Dern](#) Jul 1, 2010 02:46 PM

Phones, headsets, mobile apps, power meters and more were all on display at recent New York City events, offering SMBs and consumers alike affordable ways to increase productivity (and enjoyment).

In [Part 1](#) of my report from the CEA (Consumer Electronics Association's [CEA Line Shows](#) held in New York City June 22 and 23, and the "[Digital Experience](#)" multi-vendor press event held by Pepcom the evening of June 23, I reported on some of the peripheral, storage, mobile power, and accessory products I saw among the 140+ vendors at the two events. Here's some more of what I saw.

Phones, Headphones, Headsets

Andrea Electronics' [PureAudio Live Recorder](#) offers iPhone and iPod Touch users full-function digital voice and audio recording.

If your netbook, notebook or desktop's sound isn't as good as you'd like, e.g., for voice headsets (or music), Andrea Electronics' [Pure-Audio USB-SA External Digital Sound Card](#) (MSRP \$49.99) can give you an affordable improvement; and their [NC-185VM High Fidelity Stereo PC Headset With Noise Canceling Microphone](#) (MSRP \$54.95) offers a done-in-one USB sound card and high-quality headset combo (along with their PureAudio Voice Solutions Software Suite -- according to Andrea, this is what Nuance bundles in with the professional versions of its Dragon Naturally Speaking software.

Understand the value of virtualization so you can begin discussion and planning

Virtualization: Cost Reduction Tips Revealed

Want to put a professional-quality microphone on your iPhone or your iPod Touch? Blue Microphone's newest [Mikey](#) (MSRP \$79) will do stereo recording, has a line-input and USB pass through, and a 230-degree rotating design. (Should be available late August.)

Looking for a new Bluetooth headset for your cellphone? Here's two to consider:

- Etymotic's new [etyBLU2](#) (MSRP \$129 uses a short boom for the microphone; the company claims 30dB of noise isolation in both the earpiece and microphone.
- Sound ID's [Sound ID 510 Bluetooth headset](#) (MSRP for \$129.99, available now) includes an iPhone app with a "Find Me" feature that starts the headset beeping.

Tired of getting in your car and forgetting your phone? If your phone is Bluetooth-enabled, a [Bringrr](#) (MSRP \$34.99) left in the car's power port (a.k.a. cigarette lighter slot) will give you a audio and visual alert.

Sirius XM Radio, in addition to showing a bunch of iPhone/iPod Touch doohickeys, announced an app that lets you listen via mobile devices including iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad, six Blackberry models, and Android devices... if your Sirius account is already Internet-enabled, you can add the mobile access to your satellite service for \$2.99/month. The mobile apps are free, and you can try the service free for seven days.

Want to watch fresh TV episodes on your smartphone? For \$9.95/month, there's [BitBop](#) -- try three shows over a week, for free. (Or, for the same price, there's [Hulu Plus](#), and, no doubt, other offerings. Or you could read a book.

[Poynt](#) offers iPhone and Blackberry (and next, also Android) users a free local-search app with not just search'n'maps, but also, in many case, the ability to buy movie tickets, make restaurant reservations, etc.

Magellan's new [ToughCase](#) 1) protects your iPhone or iPod Touch, including from a half-hour dunking in a meter of water, 2) doubles the battery life, 3) includes a GPS, improving the iPhone's own GPS service, and 3) lets you still use your iPod/iTouch while in the case.

Can't get enough cellphone bars inside? Wi-Ex's zBoost cell phone signal extenders amplify cell signals indoors and in vehicles -- for multiple carriers, FYI. Wi-Ex's new dual-band [zBoost-METRO](#) (MSRP \$299, shipping now) is for single-story living areas, and doesn't require external access (i.e., to outside) for its antenna. Take that, carrier femto-cells and your monthly charges!

Measuring The Power Cost For Whatever You've Plugged In

Power plug meters, which let you measure how much power a plugged-in device (or power strip) is using, aren't new -- but prices are coming down, features going up (and, hopefully, the user interfaces are getting less user-cryptic). New players at CEALine and Pepcom include:

- Belkin's [Conserve Insight](#) (MSRP \$29)
- Tenrehte Technologies' web/WiFi-enabled [PICOWatt](#) (estimated MSRP \$100, not yet available)
- ThinkEco's [modlet](#) (MSRP around \$40, slated to be available 2011Q1), which does wireless outlet monitoring and control.

Slide Show In A Greeting Card

Lastly: One thing that veteran computer columnist and science fiction writer [Jerry Pournelle](#) taught me, a decade ago when I [was editor of Byte.com](#), to look for at trade shows and events like these, was that almost every multi-product event has a "The dangdest (or darndest) thing I saw."

Likely candidates include the new generation of turtle-like robot floor cleaners and vacuums, the four-blade hovering toys you can remote control with an iPhone.

My selection from these events -- the next step beyond five-dollar greeting cards that play audio when you open them: Pandigital's [Digital Photo Greeting Cards](#), which, for ten bucks, include a 1.44" LCD digital photo display that can hold up to fifty images, which you upload via its mini-USB port. I mean, I know technology is getting cheap, but for some reason, I find this staggering.

And I can see buying at least one of these cards... not to mention a number of the other products I saw at these events.