

# The Long and Un-Winding Road: How Mobile Lawyers Survive the Miles

By:

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It's one thing to talk about the liberating advantages of mobile lawyering and all the gadgets and gizmos that can enable any success-driven lawyer to strive to achieve the 7x24 work week. Mobile lawyers, equipped with an army of electronics ranging from laptops to PDAs to RIM pagers, smartphones, pagers, and the inevitable Jabra headset, are increasingly more apparent in courthouses, in airport lounges and at the table next you at Starbucks. While that side of wireless networking with the double-shot, extra foam, skim caramel macchiato might look glamorous, real legal Road Warriors know it's all just a fantasy.

For those who are the perennial earners of their preferred airlines highest elite status levels, it's well understood that life on the road, away from home, family, consistent broadband Net connections and something other than 1/2 bags of airline peanuts is rough. Really rough, actually.

So we felt it was time to expose the truth about the rigors of legal life on the road, from the perspective of two consultants whose travels and client projects have us criss-crossing the continent and the globe, earning more frequent flier miles than any reasonable people could use in a lifetime. This is all about our quest for quality of life on the road - being a Platinum Elite traveler and somehow managing to have a life in the process.

Both of us are "recovering lawyers", turned legal technology consultants. Our practices take us literally weekly, if not sometimes daily to the far corners of North America and sometimes beyond. Collectively, we probably spend more time in airport lounges than we do in our own homes. Our quest is to seek some sense of comfort - a way to have some semblance of a life while on the road. We have learned, through hundreds of thousands of flight miles of experience that there are a collection of gadgets and tips that can really help inject some quality of life back into the wandering life of the legal road warrior.

The following are some of these tools and tips - collectively, these digital versions of Prozac help us keep our sanity, not to mention that "can do" demeanor that makes for a successful legal technology consultant.

## **Tom's Sanity Maintenance Tools and Tips:**

1. Creative Nomad Jukebox ... holds 20 gigabytes of MP3s. I use this to keep annoying people from talking to me on planes. I know that a 43 year old looks kinda goofy with a set of earphones on, but it is a life saver. I must have a sign on my forehead that says, "hi, please tell me all about you and your family because I care." Now, it says, "hey, I'm a RAD 43 year old jamming to the Barry Manilow, leave me alone." Just kidding about the Barry Manilow, kinda. Check out the Nomad in its various iterations at [\[www.americas.creative.com/products/category.asp?category=2&maincategory=2\]](http://www.americas.creative.com/products/category.asp?category=2&maincategory=2)
2. Sony SRS-T77 speakers. The perfect companion for the Jukebox ... I am cranking Angry by Matchbox Twenty as I type in Oklahoma City through this remarkable device. Weighs about 8 ozs, and is the size of two CD jewel cases stacked on top of one another. I can listen to my tunes in my hotel room and not look so goofy. These are a bit tough to find, but a trip to Sony's website at [\[www.sonystyle.com/is-bin/INTERSHOP.enfinity/eCS/Store/-/-/-/SY\\_DisplayProductInformation-Start?ProductSKU=SRST77&CategoryName=acc\\_PersonalSpeakers\]](http://www.sonystyle.com/is-bin/INTERSHOP.enfinity/eCS/Store/-/-/-/SY_DisplayProductInformation-Start?ProductSKU=SRST77&CategoryName=acc_PersonalSpeakers) should turn help you strike sonic gold.
3. I use a portable training lab that has eight Toshiba Portege 2000s. These laptops weigh 2.8 pounds and are about 3/4 of an inch thick. I think I've heard Ross refer to them as "svelte." They sport power-frugal Intel Pentium III 750 mobile processors with built-in WiFi 802.11b wireless Ethernet networking. Very cool and light, especially important when you are lugging eight of them in a portable vault around the country. While I use a heavier Dell Inspiron 4150 for my production laptop, if I don't need the extra horsepower, carrying the Portege 2000 is a dream.
4. Getting data back and forth between the eight laptops in my mobile training lab was all the incentive I needed to look into all the new devices to transfer data quickly, cheaply and above all, easily. Because the Toshiba Porteges didn't have an internal CD-ROM drive I had to look for alternatives. I started with a 5 gigabyte PC Card hard drive that I got for about \$200 (both Toshiba and Kingston Technologies offer these devices). Can you believe that ... 5 gigs on a Type II PC Card crammed into all of about a 1/16 of an inch of thickness... and for just \$200. The PC Card hard drive is great for installs and larger data transfer needs. Then I got a 256 meg USB Flash Drive. This is one of those USB devices that is about the size of a set of nail clippers, and holds 256 megs of RAM. For WinME and above, you simply pop it onto the USB port and it gets registered as a "Drive" in "My Computer" in a couple seconds. Then you can you can copy data to and from it as you would with any hard drive, CD or floppy disk. I had problems with the first two I bought ... I went mail-order and cheap and paid for it. On my third time I took my laptop to

CompUSA and told them I wasn't leaving until they gave me one that I could see worked. Turns out their store brand at about \$70 works great. Finally, the Porteges have an SD (Secure Digital) card slot that can handle up to 512 meg SD Cards. I have one of these chips to exchange data between them if needed. It amazes me to see the large amount of data that you can store on a device that is literally the size of a quarter.

5. For mouse control in tight spaces, I have a wired Atek optical mouse that is about the size of a small cigarette lighter. I tried some wireless mice but I found myself in too many situations where I was getting interference and erratic operation. I do carry a Targus wireless, optical mouse that is great when it works. Being untethered is nice ... I only wish I could always rely on it.
6. On the projector front, I was pleasantly surprised at the quality you can get for such a good price. I decided to go with a BenQ LPD projector that weighs about 3.8 pounds, resolution of 1024 x 768, 1100 lumens, and a crystal clear display image. They had a promotion for a free second lamp (a \$400 value) and I paid about \$2400 for the projector which is about \$1700 today. Just a few years ago, that powerful a projector would have cost thousands more and would have weighed more than double the BenQ's payload. BenQ, I believe is what used to be Acer's projection division, renamed or spun off.
7. When it comes to carrying all this gear around, I insist on wheels. For too long I tilted to the left for a few days after returning from a trip. With the amount of gear that I carry, the shoulder pain was simply too much to not go with wheeled bags. My mainstay over the past few years was a Targus bag that looked much like the ubiquitous wheeled carry-on suitcases so many travelers have these days. The problem was that it didn't fit under an airplane seat. This meant that I had to try to get on the plane as early as possible to make sure I had room for my bag – gate checking your computer because there is no more room in the overhead bin is maddening. Because I like to be the last person on the plane, I recently switched to a couple briefcase sized rolling laptop bags. When I need to carry a laptop and a projector, I use a Samsonite wheeled bag that has room for a laptop, projector, and all the accessories one needs for a days presentation. For some reason you can't find it on the Samsonite web site, but a Google search for "samsonite 931175" will find plenty of vendors who sell this outstanding bag. I have seen more people dragging this bag around airports than any other computer bag. If I am feeling a little stylish, I'm pulling my U.S. Luggage bag. This leather bag comes in a tan leather that takes some of the "geek" out of dragging a laptop around an airport, and can accommodate the amount of gear that most road warriors need. It truly stands out from all the other black, corduroy bags that I see and I have had dozens of people ask me where I got it. Details can be found at [www.usluggage.com/product/D529.htm](http://www.usluggage.com/product/D529.htm).

Now, if only Verizon would release a new Palm-compatible successor to the “once the coolest, now a little clunky” Kyocera 7135 SmartPhone I will have all the toys I need, er, want, for at least the next few weeks.

### **Ross' Mobile Quality of Life Gadgets and Tips:**

I have the same kind of SD card slot in my Hewlett-Packard zd7000 laptop. Note that it is also MMC (MultiMedia Card)-compatible as some SD card slots are. Even better, it reads several other “digital film” types including SmartMedia and Sony Memory Sticks. I use mine constantly - for "spot backup" on one SD card and on another, I keep my photo album - perfect digital alternative to frayed family pics in the wallet. On a third SD card, I keep my MP3 files. I've been around this stuff for almost 25 years now and I still have to say that every time I look at one of the little postage stamp-sized SD cards, I shake my head in amazement of this techno.magic. eCost.com and TigerDirect.com seem to always have the best prices on CompactFlash and SD cards - last I saw they had 256 meg SD cards for about \$50 (major brand name SanDisk cards).

Also, in the USB flash drive arena, I've been mildly obsessed by these, in the quest for the most interesting ones for the gadget programs I do, as well as the best approach to quick transfer of patch files, update software, etc. to and from client systems. Two standouts of late are the ThumbDrive Secure from Trek ([www.thumbdrive.com/secure.htm](http://www.thumbdrive.com/secure.htm)). They also have a model called the ThumbDrive Touch that goes the next level in security, using a biometric thumbprint pad built in - very cool ([www.thumbdrive.com/prd\\_info.htm](http://www.thumbdrive.com/prd_info.htm)). The appeal of these is that anything stored on this automatically encrypted and requires a password for access. Good option for sensitive stuff like employee reviews, etc. Next, and my current favorite, is the Kanguru MicroDrive + from Interactive Media (these are the people who have long made those Kanguru removable hard drive systems you see all the time in the TigerDirect catalog) [www.kanguru.com/microdriveplus.html](http://www.kanguru.com/microdriveplus.html). What's cool about the MicroDrive is that in addition to the built-in memory (either 32, 64, 128 or 256 meg), there's an SD card slot on it so you can plug in up to another 256 meg. I don't really need it since I have an SD card slot built into my laptop but actual objectively-defined “need” has never been a factor that's discouraged me from buying gadgets.

As to MP3s, I listen to them from my laptop generally, since when I'm flying, the laptop is usually open and on anyway. For headphones though, I went dual-purpose with a set of Sony's folding active noise-canceling phones. Normally, they're just a nice pair of great-sounding folding headphones. But flip the little switch and like those high-priced \$300 Bose units, they send an active noise-canceling signal that effectively cancels out that unbelievably irritating and subtly mentally draining drone of airplane engines (and also screaming infants, droning seatmates, etc.). These are under \$80 - info at <http://tinyurl.com/4953> (and if you haven't checked out

www.TinyURL.com, do so - I use it virtually every day to shorten those absurd 900 character long URLs often generated by product vendor web pages – thanks to David Whelan, former Director of the ABA Legal Technology Resource Center for this web tip).

As to MP3 players themselves, I think the Creative Nomad and iPod are cool, but I tend to like my gadgets really small. The one I'm using and utterly enamored with right now is Rio's Nitrus. This is a 3 oz. musical wonder that packs in one of the new ultra-tiny 1" 1.5 GB hard drives (similar to the 4 GB hard drive in Apple's pricier and hard to find iPod Mini. It holds about 500 MP3 songs, has nearly 16 hours of rechargeable battery life and has a "street price" of \$180ish.

My official award for the genuinely weirdest USB device for the bone-weary legal road warrior is the USB Vibe (c'mon – don't laugh . . . at least not yet!). This is a 3" round plastic pad with little plastic "bumps" – a USB cord provides the power that creates a pleasant massaging, vibrating effect. Placement of the USB Vibe is entirely subject to your best judgment and discretion. While you can expect some wink-winks and snickering from your airplane sitmate, the thing actually works – pressed against a tight shoulder, it feels . . . well . . . soothing. From Grandtec.com for about \$10.

Of course my trusty old Kyocera 6035 Smartphone was my digital safety blanket . . . it was the electronic equivalent of comfort food for me - I couldn't imagine going ANYWHERE (even out to the garage) without it. But it got to the point that it was about 14 months old and showing the signs of intensive use. I'd begun to think of its scratches, bruises, little plastic chips missing from multiple drops . . . as sort of a comforting "digital patina." I replaced it 12 months ago the then *de rigeur* and now passé new Kyocera 7135 Smartphone (service through Verizon). After three months of continuous operational problems with the once-trust Kyocera, Verizon has agreed to replace it with Samsung's new i600 phone. This is one of the first wireless phones to run Microsoft's new Windows Smartphone operating systems. More to come about this new über-gadget in a later column.

Other necessary gadgets on the road for me are:

The mobile version of the Paper LESS Office: Visioneer's latest Strobe XP100 scanner - it's their new, superlight USB scanner - about 12 oz and . . . drum roll please . . . no power brick! Instead of a brick, it draws its power directly from the laptop's USB port. The Strobe XP100 comes bundled with the current PaperPort 8 and Textbridge software. This smaller, lighter scanner has replaced the prior slower Antec Attache I had been using in my portable iteration of the Paper LESS Office ([www.visioneer.com](http://www.visioneer.com)). Under \$180.

I'm also now experimenting with Targus MiniUSB Business Card Scanner. This is a purpose-built scanner focused on one role - scanning business cards, recognizing the text

on them and organizing them.. I had a Corex Cardscan Executive 600 at one point but it needed an AC adapter - the road warrior's kiss of death. The Targus is much smaller at about 6 oz. and is USB powered - not color, but I don't think I mind. It's also much cheaper than the Cardscan at under \$130. Sure, I could scan my business cards with the Strobe XP100. So why do I bother with this dedicated business card scanner? WHY NOT? It's really cool.

The next group of gadgets have also become “essential” to me these days:

Kensington's FlyFan - part of Kensington's "Fly" series of USB accessories that started with the FlyLight. A small, virtually silent and surprisingly powerful fan that is at the end of a flexible metal stalk that plugs into the USB port and is powered by it as well. The FlyFan directs a really pleasant flow of air wherever you point it. It achieved lifesaver status during last summer's heat. Under \$25, although I recently purchased another one at an Office Depot for \$5 courtesy of a \$20 instant checkout rebate!

SIIG USB 2.0 4-port USB mini-hub. There are a dizzying array of small USB hubs available that give you extra USB ports. However, this one is the most road warrior-friendly of any I've encountered. Why? Because it's form factor lets it slide into an unused stacked pair of my laptop's Type II PC Card Type slots when not in use. This is bar none, the best way not to ensure that it doesn't get lost in the dark depths of my laptop bag. I love this thing and use it constantly to enable all the various USB gizmos I carry around. I stumbled across it at a Fry's expedition on my last Left Coast trip for about \$20 ([www.siig.com/products/usb/features/USB2\\_MobileHub.html](http://www.siig.com/products/usb/features/USB2_MobileHub.html)).

Maxtor Onetouch 200 GB portable USB hard drive backup system with built-in Retrospect backup software. This is my mobile full-drive data backup system. The drive is lightning fast and couldn't possibly be easier to use. You literally, per the product's name, press one button and it activates the a full hard drive backup process. Through a fast USB 2.0 connection to my laptop, I am able to backup about 45 GB of information in under 2.5 hours – that's really quick. The only drawback is that it weighs only about 3 pounds – meaning it's relegated to my suitcase. Highly recommended for maximum ease of use though. It can also be used as a regular, quick, large capacity additional hard drive. Maxtor makes models ranging from 120 to 300 GB with pricing from about \$160 to \$350 ([www.maxtor.com](http://www.maxtor.com)).

I still carry all the basics including a digital/analog modem line tester from IBM (about \$30 and ensures that I don't inadvertently plug my modem cable into a high-voltage digital phone line, frying my laptop and generally ruining my world in the process), a Belkin 20 foot retractable CAT5 network cable to plug into the increasingly more common high-speed Net access ports in

hotel rooms. A WebSpider 20' retractable modem cables, Swiss Army CyberKnife 34 (luggaged, not laptop bagged, unless you're just spoiling for a full body cavity search at the nearest airport metal detector!), a really little screwdriver set, a small flat roll of duct tape designed just for travelers (actually, I could probably skip everything else and just bring the duct tape), the same Targus cordless optical mouse that Tom uses for when I just don't feel like using my Toshiba's pointing stick (rare, although advice for those with pointing sticks - when you're wolfing down lunch in yet another airport greasy spoon, don't even think of trying to use your pointing stick), all in a nifty padded Travelon bag I found in a San Diego luggage store recently (it's intended to be a toiletry kit but it makes the perfect mobile gear bag - [http://www.ebags.com/products/index.cfm?ModelID=952&bb\\_id=c11262&ProductList\\_20\\_Link=Details&sub\\_site\\_id=20](http://www.ebags.com/products/index.cfm?ModelID=952&bb_id=c11262&ProductList_20_Link=Details&sub_site_id=20))

Laptop cases, of course, are a subject in and of themselves. I obsessively collect them, in an endless quest for the "perfect" bag. I must have a couple dozen on my basement gadget shelves and at present, I've cycled back to my trust Tumi 2640 SafeCase ([www.luggagepros.com/mpb/04007004.shtml](http://www.luggagepros.com/mpb/04007004.shtml) for a pic) - light, really comfortable with near-perfect weight distribution, holds a ton of stuff and built like a tank. About \$350 in better luggage stores and web merchants. Still the best case I've ever bought. My latest Victorinox WebMobilizer Plus comes in a close second for its superb balance between "brief-style" bag and wheeled carry-on, with the really nifty feature that when the handle is pushed back into the case, the roller-blade wheels actually retract back up into little housings in the case. It runs \$425 list but a little bit of haggling at a luggage store actually yielded a much more reasonable \$360 and a free leather luggage tag thrown in. I hate to admit it, but one of the better laptop carrying bags I've ever found was a \$20 wheeled cordura nylon backpack I found at a Target store. With my laptop safely ensconced in an \$80 Victorinox C2 padded suspension system laptop sheath, it doesn't attract the attention of the laptop-bounding thieves I suspect are in every airport.

Cameras travel with me relatively often. I've become accustomed to the practice of taking pictures of clients office and even my clients. These digipics are then stored in our office's Time Matters case management system. My digital choice is a nearly year-old Kodak CX4330. I bought it for a number of reasons, the most important of which were that it has an SD slot for digital film so I can read the cards in my laptop's SD slot, it has the best user interface I've ever seen on a digicam, and finally, the Kodak one-touch docking/hot-syncing function which we use in the office. The fact that it also has a great glass lens, and that it's a 3.1 Megapixel camera for under \$225 that also happens feels good in the hand didn't hurt either. If you're wondering, my plan is to replace it soon with a much smaller Pentax Optio S4 - 4.0 megapixels and only 3 ounces! I also carry Leica's first APS point and shoot model because sometimes I just like real analog pictures (especially black and white now that it's available in the super-convenient APS format). Both pack in the same CaseLogic case.

So the bottom line is that while the road might be a strenuous, stressful and often lonely place for legal road warriors, you can leverage your interests in technology to improve the quality of your life - and turn the road once again into a pleasant adventure. Let us know how you find some peace on the road - we're interested in hearing.

Both Tom and Ross spend as much time on airplanes and in airline lounges as they do at home, perhaps more. Thus, they know from whence they speak!

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Both Ross and Tom are frequent speakers and authors on legal technology topics and both also happen to be recipients of the lifetime achievement award from the Technolawyer Community - the Technolawyer Legal Technology Consultant of the Year (Ross in 1999, Tom in 2000).