

## 4 ways Tablet PCs can boost your productivity

On a recent stopover at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, I flipped open my laptop PC, hoping to chip away at the 7,000-some e-mail messages that had accumulated since leaving Anchorage, Alaska, four hours earlier.

Switching to Tablet PCs can be full of "a-ha!" moments — little technological epiphanies that can have an impact on your company's bottom line.

Ask Charles Hagstrand, chief information officer for CapitalCare Medical Group in Albany, NY. For him and CapitalCare's doctors, who use Tablet PCs at the point of care, the "a-ha" moment came when they discovered the flexibility of the flip screen and its ability to take, organize and mark up handwritten notes. "It's great during meetings," Hagstrand says.

A 2003 survey by the Microsoft Operations and Technology Group found that when it comes to boosting productivity, Tablet PCs often exceed expectations, making employees almost 20% more productive.

But any Tablet PC user will also tell you that even though the computer is similar to a desktop or laptop PC, it isn't the same thing. Sometimes, it takes days, weeks — even months — before you've discovered all of the useful features in a Tablet PC.

Isn't there a shortcut? Sure. Here are four frequently overlooked features in a Tablet PC.

**1. The pen is mightier than the 'board.** One of the most common Tablet PC mistakes is that users default to the keyboard when, in fact, the handwriting recognition is a far more efficient way of entering information. That's the experience of Arthur Lavin, an associate clinical professor of pediatrics at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, who also runs a pediatric practice. "Our doctors walk from desk to exam room to lab with the Tablet in hand," he says. Using a stylus to enter data also allows doctors to stay in close contact with the patient without having to turn away and use a keyboard. Windows XP Tablet PC Edition 2005 contains several new enhancements that make it even easier to enter text with a stylus. They include real-time recognition and in-place correction. This upgrade is available as a free download for new and existing Tablet PC users.

**2. Listen up!** Yes, you can talk to your Tablet PC. And it understands what you're saying. If you tried speech-recognition software a few years ago, you probably weren't too impressed (I wasn't). But after only a few minutes spent practicing talking to a Tablet, the machine understood me well enough to actually write a letter. "In my opinion, what most people who have not actually used a Tablet PC for any period of time fail to grasp is the inherent flexibility the platform offers," says Marc Orchant, a software developer for VanDyke Software, Inc., in Albuquerque, N.M. "The platform's unique combination of multiple inputs — including voice — allows it to be used in situations and environments where using a conventional laptop is either inappropriate or physically impossible." The speech-recognition features aren't limited to the Tablet PC (see this related article), but they really come into their own when used with the platform.

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**3. Turn the Tablet.** Don't try this with a regular PC, but your Tablet can actually adjust as you rotate it. "The ability to rotate the screen from portrait to landscape mode is extremely useful," says Patrick Greene, a consultant with Intellinet, an information-technology consulting firm. "We have built applications for physicians who can rotate the screen to take notes in the portrait mode, just like on a pad of paper. Then if they want to show another doctor, nurse, or the patient their information, they can rotate the screen to landscape mode, making it easier for the other person to see without disrupting their work." The Tablet PC supports instant screen rotation so that you can switch from portrait to landscape mode without restarting your computer. Here's an overview of how it works.

**4. Look Ma, no wires.** First-time Tablet PC users tend to fixate on wires and using the device within the confines of a docking station. If they go "wireless," it's just to check e-mail. But for a small business, the Tablet PC offers a number of powerful wireless networking features, according to David Smith, president of Silex Technology America, a Murray, Utah, print connectivity company. "There are so many more possibilities," he says. For example, Smith's company develops applications to help make better use of wireless functionality, so that users can access printers, scanners and storage devices from their Tablet PCs. Tablet PCs have built-in "zero-configuration" wireless connectivity offers options for using wireless networks so you can stay connected no matter where you are. Here's how people are putting these features to use.

If you use Tablet PCs or are thinking of using them for your business, then all this adds up to good news and better news.

The good news is, it takes almost no time to actually learn how to use a Tablet PC well, according to Jim Rice, chief information officer of ECRM, a Cleveland-based conference management company. "If you're already familiar with Windows XP, then the learning curve is very small," he says. "And the price-point on Tablets is pretty much the same as notebooks so it's not much of a risk to purchase a Tablet instead of purchasing a notebook to start getting your feet wet."

The better news is that if you spend a little time with the Tablet, you'll discover some tricks that will make it a more efficient tool — from the way it networks to the way you input information.

Leaving just one question, really: Which Tablet is right for your company?

It depends on your company's needs - some have detachable keyboards, some having docking stations, some have small screens. Some have small keyboards, some have built-in RF [Radio Frequency] cards. Contact your RMM Solutions Account Executive so they can help you select the best model for your needs.