

# Desktop, Laptop, or Tablet?

TECHNOLOGY IS RAPIDLY CHANGING AND SIORS ARE ALONG WITH IT

By Steve Lewis

Five years may not seem like a long time when compared to the length of an entire real estate career, but in terms of the evolution of technology and related devices it feels like a lifetime. In fact, when asked what devices SIORS used five years ago, several noted that they were limited to the basics.

“Five years ago it was strictly a laptop,” recalls **Bill Langhoff, SIOR, CCIM**, senior vice president of Industrial Properties Group, Colliers International, Milwaukee, Wis. “I am thoroughly slow to change technology – part of that is my age; I’m almost 50 and my generation is a little slower to pick up the newest shiny moving objects.”

**Terry Coyne, SIOR, CCIM**, executive managing director, Newmark Grubb Knight Frank in Cleveland, Ohio, felt equally as limited. “I had a desktop five years ago. Even one year ago,” he shares.

Five years ago **Sandy G. Shindleman, SIOR, CCIM, FRICS**, president of Shindico Realty, Inc., in Winnipeg, Canada, was just starting to think small scale portability. “I also had a laptop or notebook I used for teaching to take my PowerPoint presentation with me, and not much else.”

The keyboard on the laptop was smaller, he notes, so he didn’t use it that much. “Then it got to be a hassle because I traveled a lot; if it had a dead battery I’d look to plug it in and I’d miss a flight,” he shares. “If I wasn’t going to teach I really didn’t want to use it at all.”

However, he adds, he has been using a Blackberry for email since around 2000. “I got a Blackberry 957, which was the large model,” he says. “It kept me up-to-date with emails and allowed me to easily forward information to the appropriate person.”

## HOW THINGS HAVE CHANGED

Five years ago, **Mark Fowler, SIOR**, managing director of Newmark Grubb Knight Frank in East Brunswick, N.J., had a laptop and a Blackberry; today, things have changed quite a bit for him.

“Now, I personally am all about Apple – iPad and Macs,” says Fowler. “In the past six months I’ve changed companies. At my old company I was able to do everything on my Mac because there were not the security requirements I now have, which require that I have a desktop in my office. I should be able to access my desktop when at home through my Apple, but I had an issue connecting and getting the system up and running – a corporate thing. I would prefer using everything on my Apple; I eventually found it easy for using Costar, the Act database, and so on. Everything syncs with the phone and the iPad. I’ve still got it to a certain extent but not with quite the flexibility, since I’m still learning the company system.”

Langhoff now uses a 13-inch Dell convertible laptop that turns into a tablet. “I also use an iPad; for me the iPad is my primary vehicle for Costar – I can use it remotely, which is very beneficial,” he adds. “With the convertible laptop I use the standard Outlook, Word, and Excel; I do not use Costar on my laptop.”

Today Shindleman still uses a blackberry. “Through the years I’ve updated that Blackberry to the point where there is a Blackberry Passport – the shape and size of a passport with a keyboard with a better browser and the ability to open attachments and see them,” says Shindleman. “I’m hearing the word ‘phablet’ – and maybe that’s what it is.”

Five years ago, while he had a desktop in the office, Shindleman had a laptop at home. “We got secure WiFi in the building as well as guest WiFi, so it was easy for other people to come and make presentations in the board room,” he recalls.

However, everything started to change when the iPad came out. “I’m fond of saying I bought the iPad One,” says Shindleman. However, he is still not entirely in a Mac environment because he uses the Blackberry for security. “It’s the best we can find in Canada,” he explains.

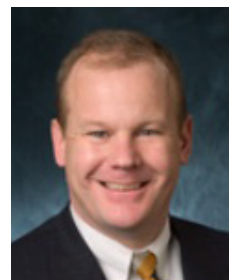
However, Shindleman adds, shortly after getting the iPad One an IT advisor suggested he get the next generation, which “I enjoyed because of the size of the screen,” Shindleman says. “It allowed me to open attachments; we deal with a lot of site plans and offers. I enjoyed that and going through security



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for some reason I do not have to take it out of the carry-on, so I travelled with that and sometimes with a laptop backup. Then I took my ‘training wheels’ off and traveled with only a tablet. Right now on a month-long trip I have only an iPad 3 or 4 and my Blackberry phablet, which is big and secure. I conduct business, and within an hour I’m always in touch; I’m current with emails, and I can see site plans and offer suggestions on the spot. With a PDF reader app I’m able to draw on site plans, make changes, and actually get back to clients more quickly when I’m away from the office than when I’m in the office.”

Another thing Shindelman’s Blackberry does (and that Apple may do soon) is the following: If the device is on, and his computer is on, and he is in a WiFi area, “all your inboxes come up,” says Shindelman. “A text will come up; often people would text me and I would not get back to them for hours. Also, personal email addresses all come up together in this Blackberry Blend when I’m sitting in the office.”

He says he added a second screen to his PC, and will be adding a third this month. “One is dedicated to contact management, one to my email, and soon I will have one screen from financial data and my Blend – and personal

email and texts,” he shares. “I am now much more efficient, and I do not view it as an intrusion to my life. I used to travel, then come back to the office and find hundreds of emails waiting. Now I only see what appeared while in my car during a five-minute drive to work.”

Coyne has also made significant changes. “Now all I have is an iPad and an iPhone,” he says. “My iPad is only WiFi enabled – no cellular. I had a cellular connection on my iPad mini, but I now have the new iPad Air. WiFi is almost ubiquitous and I have been able to cut costs. I have tried a Surface, but so far I am not sold on it. It is a great device but it is bigger than my iPad.”

### WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

No one has a crystal ball for what the next five years will bring when it comes to new or more evolved devices, but SIORs are confident that significant changes will continue.

“I think for me it’s going to continue to be some form of convertible laptop,” says Langhoff. “It will be a little more nimble.” He says he talks to people who tell him they can use their book of business on a tablet, “but in the world I live in I do not see myself able to do that,” he says. “I will always

have some form of laptop computer.” He keeps using his iPad Costar, but he says, “if Costar could come to me and say I could do it on a laptop, I would probably lose the iPad.”

“I think portability and weight of the device will come down and the cost of devices will come way down,” Shindleman predicts. “For example, we use phablets for all of our property managers; it works with software provided through the Android OS. You go to a site, pictures are taken, they go right to the software, and you can create work orders right on the spot. Others can go in to ensure the work is done, and so on. We will be more hands on, and more able to shorten the paper trail. For people in management and brokerage areas, they will be able to be more collaborative – sharing what each of them saw in the system.”

Today, people who don’t think they have a need for portability will be using portable devices as they get more powerful and offer more shortcuts, Shindleman continues. “For example,” he notes, “our blog started after we got the phablet; it’s now easy to do.”

“The one thing that is certainly happening is that they are going over to a CRM, which they do not have at the moment; I don’t know if it will effect devices, but it’s being rolled in right now,” Fowler shares. “Some people in New Jersey are in process – kind-of like test dummies. Once they’re happy everyone else is going to have to roll in with it.”

Fowler adds that from what he sees and reads, “it looks as though tablets will be the way everybody goes.” In fact, he posits, “I wonder if the laptop finally goes away. Obviously there are a lot of things that you can only do on a laptop and not on the iPad, but that’s beginning to change. I think for example that spreadsheets work on Excel; you couldn’t do that easily to start with. Now I suddenly discovered by chance that Microsoft is finally creating Excel apps to go on the iPad. It’s not quite as smooth as working on a laptop, but you can do it.”

Fowler notes that he now can use Dropbox and “I love it; it’s tremendous. It gives me access to a lot of files, I track deals, commissions, and so on. That’s where I suspect things may go when tablets become a little bigger.” ■

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