



Steve Bergsman is a freelance writer in Arizona and author of several books. His latest book, "Growing Up Levittown: In A Time of Conformity, Controversy and Cultural Crisis," is available on all e-book outlets.

By Steve Bergsman

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Mobilizing the Industry

How SIORs are Taking Advantage of New Smartphone and Tablet Technology

The advances of technology can be daunting in unusual ways.

"I was at a cold storage company in Atlanta," begins **Paul Waters, SIOR, CCIM, CRE, FRICS**, an executive vice president for NAI Global in New York. "Six guys from the client side all came in with iPads. As I'm speaking, they are all looking at their iPads, not concentrating so much on the specifics of what I was saying but checking up on square footage and years remaining on the lease. They did this throughout the meeting, using iPads to be better informed. Technology makes you smart."

There are thousands of new technologies affecting the business of being a commercial real estate broker, but the two that most people in the business talk up today are tablets and smartphones, and the apps, cloud services, social media connectivity, and mobilized websites that come with them.

The reason is obvious, in fact, at the tip of your fingers. Data, information, communication are now more mobile than ever and perhaps more importantly, twice as accessible as ever before.

"What is really helpful to me," says **William Froelich, SIOR, CCIM, JD**, a senior associate

with Colliers International in Honolulu, "is a (Hawaii) Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs website. If I need to make a cold call and I'm sitting in front of that business and I have that website on my iPad or smartphone, I'll type in the business name and the site gives me the names of the principals."

Let's say one of the principals is named Frank; Froelich will then go into the office and ask directly for Frank. The secretary might ask, "Do you have an appointment," and Froelich will respond, "No, but I'm with Colliers and I think he'll want to talk to me."

It might sound like a simple ploy, but Froelich exclaims, "That has been phenomenal for me."

Froelich also uses a mapping app called, "Hawaii Information Service."

"If I'm in a particular area I could pull up the parcel in front of me by its address and a map will pop up allowing me to scroll over to the next parcel and next parcel to get ownership information," says Froelich. "If I'm touring with a client and he says, 'Who owns that property?' I don't have to say, 'Let me go back to my computer to find out.' I can pull up the information in my car."

Continued

Contributing SIORs



Jeff Bender, SIOR, CCIM



William Froelich, SIOR, CCIM, JD



Steve Kapp, SIOR



Gary Joel Schacker, SIOR



Christopher Sheehan, SIOR



Paul Waters, SIOR, CCIM, CRE, FRICS

Another website frequented by Froelich when on the go is LoopNet.

"I use an iPhone 4, iPad, and laptop depending on the context of the situation," adds **Steve Kapp, SIOR**, industrial and office specialist with Cornish and Carey Commercial/Newmark Knight Frank in Hayward, Calif. "I haven't give up my laptop because it has the ability to do much more complex tasks and documents."

However, Kapp adds, "my primary technology is my iPhone because I can access all my e-mail, and with the Microsoft Exchange server, I can get into file folders. I have my entire contact data base synced with the device. I find on my iPad, Google Earth Maps are extremely useful because if I'm touring with a developer-type client, I can drive down a particular street and pull up aerial maps, look at railroad easements and power lines." He adds, "historically, in our business, property management operations have been a necessary evil. All of a sudden, the tail moved around to the front of the dog and became the key for us getting business."

Today, nearly everything is immediately accessible with this new technology.

"From a business perspective," Kapp notes, "I have the Wall Street Journal app which I can use to search for information on a company I'm planning to visit. In addition, I have Google Alerts for certain companies so anytime there is a news story, I can get a copy. I have color-coded traffic apps that allow me to check on traffic flow so I'm not late for meetings, and I use a flight tracker app to see if my flights are on time. I use the torch app to see where the light switches are when I go into a deserted industrial building."

The next step for Kapp is iPad Power Point.

"I'm experimenting with portable projectors for my iPad, so I will be able to project data from my iPad onto a wall," he says. "The new projectors are the size of a deck of cards. If I'm with a group of

five or six people, rather than everyone looking at the iPad, I'll just shoot a projection to the wall. The only issue is, not all software that is on the iPad is video projectable."

Waters says he knows many brokers who use the iPad for power-point presentations.

Another popular app is the relatively new CoStar Go.

"Recently, I switched to the iPhone and also acquired an iPad," notes **Christopher Sheehan, SIOR**, a senior vice president for Colliers International in Torrance, Calif., "and the CoStar Go app is cutting edge, using the GPS technology to pull up everything within whatever parameters you choose, within two miles or two blocks. It's pretty cool to be sitting in front of a client's office, hit a few buttons to show aerials and layouts."

Sheehan tells this story of working with a client: after generating a couple of property reports, he and the client got into his car to look at properties. "Using the CoStar Go app we were able to pull up everything that was on the market in the size property we were looking for," he recalls. "Then based on my knowledge of specific buildings we eliminated certain structures on the spot. We were able to narrow the search to a manageable number of buildings that we could browse through on the iPad prior to doing any heavy lifting."

Although **Gary Joel Schacker, SIOR**, a principal with United Realty Inc. in Jericho, N.Y., has an iPad, he still gets great use out of the iPhone 4.

"If I go to a meeting, I bring my iPhone and take all the notes on it," he says. "I tell people at the meeting I'm not texting or e-mailing, but taking notes. Then I have these notes forever and I can refer back to them."

Schacker adds, "now when I see people who have pens and pads, I wonder where those pieces of paper will be in six months. Once that person brings the paper back to the office, even if he transcribes it to

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the computer, he'll never find it again. You ask me six months from now what happened at that meeting, I can search it on my iPhone and bring up the notes."

Schacker also likes the new QR Codes technology. QR, which stands for Quick Response, is a four-square icon found in advertisements that works similarly to the bar code found on items in the supermarket. You scan the icon with your smartphone and it, for real estate purposes, drives you to a single property website where you can ascertain more information and pictures about the property you might be interested in. "You put that QR code on a sign or an advertisement, so somebody reading it can be directed to where you want the viewer to go to find information," says Schacker.

Another technology that has become popular is cloud computing (storing files on a server far, far away), which is most readily available through programs like the Dropbox. Dropbox makes all your files available to you from any computer or smartphone. Installation of the software creates a special folder on the computer and anything added to this Dropbox folder will automatically save to all your computers and to the Dropbox website.

"I'm not an iPad freak, but things like Dropbox and the on-the-spot research definitely enhance your abilities and portability," says Schacker. "Instead of bringing a flyer, I just bring my iPad and show the client the information about the building and then e-mail the information."

"Our company does not allow us to use Dropbox, but we use cloud service," says **Jeff Bender, SIOR, CCIM**, a principal and senior vice president with Cassidy Turley in Cincinnati. "We tend to do a lot of things that get uploaded to a cloud site. We have this program that allows us to store documents (in the cloud) as big as we want."

In the old days, if you had a 300-page policy or, even worse, an environmental audit that was an inch and a half thick, it's too big to

e-mail so you had to make a copy and stick it in an overnight to the client, says Bender. "Now you can scan, upload and make it instantly available to the client."

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Not only is this a more thorough way to do business, but it saves time, Bender asserts. "As a seller you can assemble all of those documents before you go to market. As soon as the buyer says do you have this or that, you have it all and can immediately pull it up on your smartphone."

The thing about technology is that it can cut both ways—be useful or not. "I made a presentation to a steel company and afterward while speaking to them, they said our competition didn't show the level of technology that we depicted," recalls Waters. "This was a major coup for us. We showed that we were not only using our noodle but leveraging technology. If you don't use technology, it can be a detriment."

On the other hand, Waters points out, there is a broker in his New York office making \$2 million a year. "He does not use the computer or e-mail," Waters observes. "He uses a cellphone. His secretary takes messages on pink papers and puts them on his desk. Why do something differently when your method makes you plenty of money?"

Well, because technology has made the business faster. In deal-making, time kills.

"Technology has allowed for the business to be less confusing and given us more clarity in the transaction, more thoroughness, more detail and makes us quicker," says Bender. "Technology has made us more productive and allows us to accomplish more." 



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