

From the JLC Forums

When Can I Throw Away My ...

From a March 2013 discussion about business tools that are becoming obsolete.

Allan Edwards, Houston

I feel we are in somewhat of a technology revolution, more so than the '90s, primarily because of smartphones, apps, and the type of "programs" available. Here are a few items I seem to not use these days:

Business cards. I find myself never giving out business cards. I meet prospects who want to build new homes, and they never ask for them and I don't offer them. It is almost like a qualifying tactic: If you can't find me via Google, then I probably don't want to build your house. Okay, that's a little extreme, but you get my point. Same with subs, if you want to reach me (or vice versa), we can find each other without exchanging business cards. People use vCards, email, Google searches, LinkedIn for contact info. I even search people on Facebook now.

Stapler. Still use it, but since all paper is digital, why? Same for paper clips.

Stamps. If you email everything, wire money, use Bill Pay, why are stamps needed?

Printed stationery and envelopes. Twelve years ago, I paid a ton of money to a graphic artist to design a color logo, so I have this nice stationery and envelopes I rarely use. Same for company brochures.

Plan rack. I keep one hard-copy set of plans, but not 20 sets like we used to keep.

File cabinets. Got rid of them a few years ago.

Office phone. I have one because I have a long-time business line and don't want to change it, but a new company could certainly use a cell #. Dedicated fax #?

Secretary/office manager. I have been without one for nine months and seem to be doing okay.

Website. I feel I still need one, but one could get by with only Facebook.

iPad. I rarely use mine, except to watch Netflix. I can do everything on my smart-phone that I can do on my iPad.

Office. One- to two-person operations can work from home, why couldn't larger, medium-size companies do the same?

TWhite, Va.

Allan, I ditched my office phone about four years ago. You can easily switch your office phone # to your cell phone. No complaints.

Dick Seibert, Martinez, Calif.

Like T. White, as soon as I heard that the FCC made all phone numbers portable, I moved my land line to my cell phone and gave up my cell phone number. Now one number reaches me night or day. Privacy concerns about being out of reach when home or away? We don't have no stinking privacy anymore.

Ted S., Boston

I figure my website will become a portal for all of my customers. A useful tool. I would not get rid of it and especially not replace it with a proprietary service such as Facebook. I would think Facebook will fade away before long.

You forgot one, Allan: Server. I think servers will go away with the new cloud services.

m beezo, St. Louis, Mo.

What about Post-it notes, ink pens, pencils ... I remember when computers were first coming around, all the talk was about how much easier they were going to make things for everyone. That may be true

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until the electric goes out, you run out of ink for the printer, or the thing gets a virus and freezes up with all your information ... unretrievable. All I need to do is keep track of about 1,000 yellow sheets of lined paper, have a pencil and pocket knife, and I can continue to bid and bill.

[Ohiobuilder, Bellbrook, Ohio](#)

I just switched to a Verizon office line at \$20 per month — cut it in half from my AT&T.

Would like to move away from mailing checks and get to some sort of EFT system. Most subs and vendors email their invoices.

I do think a website is necessary; in fact my Web traffic has really picked up this year.

I like Facebook for my business but really can't stand it for personal use.

I have envelopes with my logo that are so old the glue doesn't even work when sealing!

I am surprised you don't use your iPad much, Allan, and use your phone more. I did just get a new phone: a Droid Maxx HD. It's really a good phone with the #1 feature being the battery life. I make calls, text, email, and check my calendar — not a huge app guy. To send an email I prefer the iPad.

[mike maines, Portland, Maine](#)

Allan, I just read your article in *JLC (Business, 3/13)* about going paperless. Some good ideas in there! I like your file-naming convention.

[EZGCServices, San Francisco](#)

My two cents.

iPad. I agree with Allan, except for reading. I read a lot of newspaper articles and a few magazines; almost every online article I stumble across I save to the "Pocket" app, which makes it much easier on my eyes.

Paper and cards. If I need something, such as my medical insurance card, I just take a picture of it and put it in a folder on my phone using Dropbox. Much easier than carrying all that random stuff around, and I'm sure this idea can be applied to many things.

Website. I disagree with Allan here. If you are trying to build any kind of online

presence, having a website will help. Said another way, Google is not going to highly favor a Facebook page; every business should be trying to show as high as possible on Google for their area.

Office phone. I'd suggest you try out Google Voice. It will give you a number that when dialed can ring any number of phones. It also transcribes your voice-mails into an email (not great quality, but usually good enough to understand). This also allows calls to easily be redirected to someone else if the main cell-phone holder is on vacation or something.

Office manager. If there are a few things you can't quite give up, maybe hire someone via Odesk.com. Most things can be done remotely these days.

Logos. Sites like 99designs.com can get you a logo to use much more cheaply than 10 years ago. Whether or not you need it printed on paper is a whole different story.

[Allan Edwards](#)

The reason I prefer my iPhone over my iPad is because my iPhone is always with me, typically in my pocket ... My iPad seems to not always be with me, and I really don't like carrying it around.

Regarding business cards — I had my first appointment today with a prospect, they had already visited my website, there was absolutely no reason to hand out a card. I just find myself rarely giving them out.

Office phone — I do use Google Voice and forward my office phone to my cell phone, that works fine. The transcription is not that great, but okay. I think at some size having an office with someone answering your phone is beneficial.

Ted, I agree that servers are becoming less needed. I am on my last one, I am already 60% to 70% cloud-based.

As smartphones progress in terms of camera quality, will digital cameras become less needed? I think so.

What about desktop computers? How long before we don't need a standalone computer on our desk? Three to five years?