

# Get Converged



*It wasn't that long ago each of us had a paper calendar, a rolodex or address book, a watch on our wrist, and a phone on our desk. Sometimes I long for those simpler days, but they are gone.*

Each meeting I attend I notice more and more golf course superintendents are using the latest technology to communicate. Remember the first cell phone you had? I do. It was pretty thick and bulky, and the reception was questionable. However, it got me out of the office. I was taking care of the general contracting on a construction project on the golf course and the cell phone saved me from an endless game of phone tag by allowing me to be on the golf course.

Now present day – we have converged. It is hard to find a cell phone that doesn't keep track of your contacts, has a basic calendaring program, camera, games, ability to text, surf the web, and even record video. If you are replacing your cell phone soon (most do it every two years) I would urge you to take a look at a smartphone BlackBerry, iPhone, etc). Don't take the attitude – I'm just using it for a phone when you can carry your office with you on the course.

In terms of features, most smartphones support full-featured email capabilities with the functionality of a complete personal organizer. Other functionality might include an additional interface such as a miniature QWERTY keyboard, a touch screen, a built-in camera, contact management, an accelerometer, built-in navigation hardware and software, the ability to read business documents in a variety of formats such as PDF and Microsoft Office, media software for playing music, browsing photos and viewing video clips, internet browsers, or even just secure access to company mail. One common feature associated with many smartphones is the ability to store as many contacts as the available memory permits, in contrast to regular phones that have limits to the maximum number of contacts that can be stored.

In a time when we are looking to increase our efficiencies and be more productive, there may be no better and helpful tool than a smartphone.

## Synchronize with Your Computer

Perhaps the greatest key to a smartphone is its ability to "sync" (short for synchronize) with your computer. This keeps the data on your phone the same as on your computer. One added benefit of syncing your phone with your computer is that it backs up both systems. I'm not partial to someone who is

redundant, especially at a meeting, but I like to set up my data into redundant systems. Using a smartphone and a computer backs up of all of your important data for both systems.

Most smartphones will ship with software that allows you to sync with your computer. Once the computer software is loaded, you are able to

connect your smartphone into your computer with a cable that allows each to exchange data. By syncing, the computer and smartphone take a look at all your information and update each other. For instance, if I add a contact on my smartphone while on the golf course, the next time I sync with my computer that new contact will be added to my computer. Or, if I add an item to my calendar on my computer, it will add that item to my calendar on my smartphone.

Another added benefit of having a smartphone is that the first time you hook up your smart phone to your computer, it will transfer all of your contacts to your smartphone. Even if you don't have your contacts or other data on your computer, you

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*The smartphone market has gone past the BlackBerry as many companies now offer these little wonders.*

can still use your computer to enter the information. No more using a small, little keypad to enter each of your contacts into a new cell phone. You can use your keyboard attached to your computer to enter your data.

Oh, another place I like redundant systems are on airplanes when I'm flying.

## Contacts

My son found an old address book/keeper thing the other day at my parents' house and was amazed by it. It was one of those spring loaded things where you slid the pointer to the letter of the person's last name, pressed a button, and it opened to all the contacts in that category. (I noticed there was only room for one phone number, and certainly no email address in the contraption). Of course, you may still keep a little black book like Fonzie with all your key contacts in it, but if you are like most of us, your contacts are on your phone and the only time you ever really think about them is when you get a new one because you dread the thought of having to transfer all those numbers over to your new phone.

A smartphone will store all your contacts (for the most part, unlimited) with all their pertinent data and some data you can't even think of keeping. Smartphones offer you many different fields to keep track of, not only work and home phones, but fax numbers, email addresses, home and work addresses, birthdays (good for spouses), anniversaries (also good for spouses), children's names, and even a place to store their name spelled phonetically. Though some of this might be overkill, how nice would it be to have your new green chairman's wife's name at a moments notice?

## Calendar

I can keep track of several calendars on my smartphone. You might ask why I would need several calendars instead of just one. Of course I have a work calendar. This is really my main one and gets the most entries. No need to splain this one Lucy.

I also keep a calendar for my employees with their hours worked, the hours they plan to work, and any vacation time requested. There is also a summer baseball game and practice calendar for both of my sons. I also keep a separate calendar

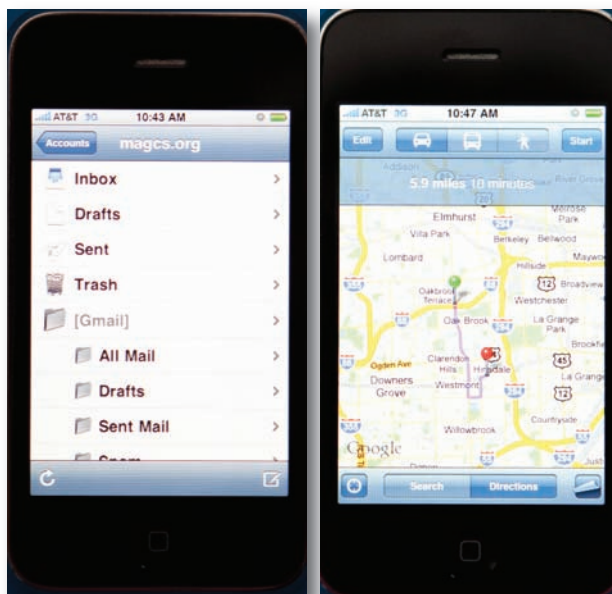
for home that includes doctor appointments, events for the kids, vacations, etc. Oh yea, I also have a calendar that has all the Cubs games on it (I downloaded and imported it onto my phone). I even just started a new calendar that I use to keep track of my "exercise," but it's pretty empty at this point. Golf is an exercise, right? I've played a few times this year, I can record the course, and the score I shot. Yes, these calendars are all on my phone. I can also turn them on and off so I don't have to view them all at once, in fact, during the last Cub's skid, I turned off their calendar for a few days.

No matter how many calendars you keep, the greatest part of having it on your phone is it is always with you. When you get that call from your friend that invites you to a Cubs game, you can check your schedule right away and figure out if you can make it.

Electronic calendars are very easy to set up and are great for reoccurring events. Green committee every third Tuesday of the month? No problem, create the one event and set it to reoccur monthly. Conference call at 1:00 pm next Monday? Add it to your calendar and have your phone send a reminder 10 minutes before the call with a note that contains the phone number for you to call.



*One of the keys to a smartphone is its ability to store practically unlimited contact information.*



*Smartphones keep you in touch through e-mail and can even bring up a weather radar.*

## Email

Some like to have their email sent directly to their phone, others don't care for it. I can understand the inclination not to use a phone in this manner, but no one has to know that you have your email on your phone.

I have my email sent to my phone, and I use it to keep track of what I have to deal with when I return to my office. I typically will respond to an email on my phone when I know I won't have the opportunity to sit in front of my computer and/or when a message needs my immediate attention. We all know who those people are that expect an immediate response and sometimes a phone with email helps us to live up to their standards. And actually, sometimes an email can be more

effective means of communication, especially if you don't really want to talk to the person.

Some might fear that they will mess up their email on their computer if they have it sent to their phone. Fear not, for there is an option for your smartphone to only download a copy

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of your emails, so when you power up your computer, all your emails are safe and sound and waiting for you there too.

## Text Messaging

Most cell phone are able to text message. Text messaging, or texting, is an informal term referring to the exchange of brief written messages between mobile phones. While the term most often refers to messages sent using the Short Message Service (SMS), it has been extended to include messages containing image, video, and sound content, such as MMS messages. Individual messages are referred to as "text messages" or "texts". Most smartphones can text via SMS and MMS at present.

## Tasks and Notes

Superintendents are a group of list-makers, there is no doubt about it. As you travel the course, there are always things popping up that need to be done by your staff. Part of the reason Supers like to make lists is the great satisfaction in crossing completed items off your list each day. A smartphone is a great place to keep and sort your lists. You can apply priorities, completion dates, assign staff, and even set reminders for all your tasks.

One of the greatest tools I used to make lists when I made my morning and afternoon loops was a voice recorder. I never had to stop my golf car to scribble something down—I just talked to myself as I went. Many smartphones today have voice recorders built into them and make it very easy to record a voice memo.

## The difference is in the operating system (OS)

A smartphone differs from a cell phone in that it has its own operating system. For instance, the iPhone operates on the iPhone OS, basically a pared down version of their Mac OS. Other operating systems include: Symbian OS, RIM's BlackBerry, Windows Mobile, Linux, Palm Web OS, and Android.

How important is it to know about these? For the most part, not all that much; however, it might be important to know which ones are the most popular, Symbian, iPhone, and RIM's (Research in Motion) are the big three at present, because they usually have the most support and are time tested. Because these devices have their own operating system, they have the ability to add applications (e.g. for enhanced data processing, connectivity, or entertainment) - in contrast to regular phones which only support sandboxed applications (like Java games). Since the operating system is open, these smartphone applications may be developed by the manufacturer of the device, by the network operator, or by any other third-party software developer. The popular iPhone phrase, "We've got an app for that" refers to programs developed by third party developers that allow you to use your smartphone in many other ways. At present there are over 50,000 applications that you can purchase or download for free for an iPhone that

can just about turn your iPhone into anything you need it to be.

## Other Functions

### Camera

Most smartphones are being released with a built in camera and some actually take pretty decent pictures. Some of the newer models can even take video. You may think there is no need for a camera, but remember a picture is worth a thousand words and it might be nice to have a camera on your hip if needed.

### Music Player

By now most of us know what an iPod or MP3 player is and most smartphones have the ability to play music. I'll be honest here, though my phone will play music, I have never used it to do this, I've always defaulted to my iPod to take care of this task.

### Web Browsing

As cell phone carriers continue to increase the amount of data that can be transferred over their networks (currently 3G or 3rd Generation), more complex and varied applications can be used. This includes web browsing or "surfing the web". Screens on most smartphones are small and most people prefer to use their computer for this task; however, there are instances where having the access to the Internet in your pocket is a value. Checking the radar is a popular task and can be done from your smartphone's browser—handy on the course if a storm is coming and you want to know where it is.

Many other things a smartphone can do for you:

- Bookreaders (remember those things, you can download books and read them on your phone)
- Calculators (nice to have around, especially ones that will convert different measures)
- Games (there isn't much time to waste during the day, but games can be good mind clearers)
- GPS enabled – directions and

maps, marking locations, geotagging photographs (imbeds data into your picture taken with your phone to let you know the GPS coordinates)

So if you are in the market for a new phone, consider a smartphone. It was only a few years ago smartphones were big and clunky when compared to regular cell phones. For most, this was the deal breaker when choosing an item that would be a part of your wardrobe for the next few years. Let's face it, cell phones are like cars, they say something about you and when you chose one, design is just as important as functionality. New smartphones are as sleek and perhaps, a little larger than their cell phone brethren, but nonetheless still fashionable. The key is in their functionality. There are more and more things that keep you in your office and off the course, try and reverse that trend with a smartphone. **-OC**



*Apple's iPhone has many applications, some productive as the voice recorder and fun like the bird field guide that not only has pictures of the little buggers but recording to help you identify their voice.*