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A SmartPhone - Getting Down to Busy-ness

My schedule is getting busier. I recently got a phone that is able to help me stay organized. I would like to share my thoughts about what I chose so others may draw upon my experience.

As a business owner and attorney I belong to several professional groups: **Whatcom Young Professionals**, which meets weekly and then has a monthly event. **Northwest Estate Planning Council**, which meets bi-monthly and then I attend the board meetings bi-monthly also. The **Whatcom County Bar Association (WCBA)**, which meets monthly and has various other events. I am a member of the **Young Lawyer Division; Real Property, Probate, and Trust Section**; and the **Family Law Section** of the **Washington State Bar Association (WSBA)**. I volunteer and am part of the **Mediation Certification Program** through the **Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center (WDRC)**. I volunteer for the **Law Advocates Eviction Clinic** and **Street Law** programs.

Also through my hobbies I often get involved with various groups. I am a member of the **Greater Bellingham Running Club (GBRC)** and run the **Chuckanut 50k** trail run along with several other 50k runs each year. I am a member of the **Bellingham Yacht Club (BYC)** where I compete in **Tuesday night Laser races** and **Wednesday Night Etchell races** during the Spring, Summer, and Fall. Also, there are many social and volunteer events at the BYC such as **Pitch Regatta, Fridays@Five**, and **Club Scrub**. During the winter I often attend **Improv Theatre** classes taught by Sheila Goldsmith. I play **basketball and Volleyball at the YMCA**. I take **Salsa, East Coast Swing, and Fox Trot** dance classes from **U and Me Dance** at the **Majestic Ball Room**. In the winter, I attend the **Square Dances on the last Sunday of the month** at the **YWCA building**.

I am also increasingly meeting with colleagues for **lunch** and **coffee** several times each week. I meet with professionals in **banking, insurance, financial planning, professional guardians, and other attorneys**.

So as I say above, I recently got a phone that will help me keep track of all these appointments. I had not done so earlier because: I prefer not to have a two-year contract; I prefer to know deeply why I need something before I make a purchase; and, I do not want to pay \$70-\$100 per month for a service plan or \$200 for a phone. So below I want to describe the process I explored to get a phone.

First, I checked the Verizon website to find the phones that were compatible with my plan. I wanted a phone with a USB cord that would allow me to sync my work calendar and contacts to my phone. When I saw a Blackberry Curve for sale for \$80 on Craigslist I decided to try it.

I want to offer a few words of caution about buying a phone from craigslist. First, make sure the phone has not been locked due to a previously delinquent payment associated with the phone. Second, check carefully to make sure the phone has not been dropped (i.e. that the casing is secure).

After purchasing the phone, I called Verizon and was disappointed to find out that email and internet is a mandatory "feature" when using this phone. To activate the phone I would need to pay \$70.00 per month. I find Verizon's policy here to be manipulative and its literature warning consumers on this subject to be misleading. I was able to sell the phone easily enough and in my conversations with Verizon I learned that the XV6900 is a smart phone that does not require getting the Internet.

This phone required me to get a two-year contract, which is not ideal but will probably not be a burden. Also, it cost \$50, which I think is reasonable. I would have preferred to use the Blackberry at my \$40/mo service rate and with no new contract.

I use Mozilla Thunderbird for my desktop calendar and email – it is free and supports the open source software movement. I sync this calendar with my Google calendar, which I publish without details on my website to help people schedule appointments. Then my phone can Sync with this Google calendar and contacts. The phone uses Microsoft Mobile Device software, which is inclined toward syncing with Outlook and seems adverse to Thunderbird (as a competitor). The set up through Google is free. I was looking at a \$25 program to do this, which I now know is unnecessary.

Now, at the end of a busy day, while eating dinner or getting ready for bed, I can glance at my phone and see what I have schedule for the next day. Also, if I want to schedule something while I am away from my desk I can make the appointment and then sync it with my other calendars. I am aware this may seem less than novel to other professionals. I hope, however, some of you will find this a useful discussion for using a SmartPhone with a more basic service plan.