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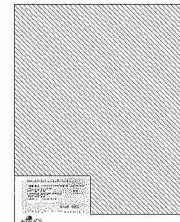


How to hang on to virtualization savings **39**

BEST GADGETS FOR IT PROS



eWEEK LABS recommends the products that provide lots of bang for very few bucks **32**



BEST GADGETS FOR IT PROS



Sometimes it's the products that cost next to nothing that make all the difference. eWEEK Labs analysts put together a list of the gadgetry that is making their IT lives easier.

Stick it to them

One of my favorite attributes of Linux is its way of fitting onto practically any device. For a while now, it's been possible to boot up any computer with a Linux LiveCD distribution and compute away without modifying the hard drive of the

machine you're using. The trouble with this mostly handy arrangement is that CD drives tend to run slowly, and the read-only nature of the discs means that nothing of your session persists into any future session. The Fedora Project has addressed both the speed and persistence issues with **liveusb-creator** (fedorahosted.

org/liveusb-creator). You can use the app, which runs on both Windows and Linux, to create a portable Linux installation on a USB stick, a method that is faster than using a CD and allows for data to persist between sessions. —Jason Brooks

Turning a simple USB stick into a full-fledged gadget, **Jungle Disk** (jungledisk.com/index.aspx) offers up a portable version of its front end to Amazon's Simple Storage Service. Extract the Jungle Disk Portable package onto

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one of your friendly neighborhood USB sticks, and you can access your saved Amazon S3 data from any Windows, Linux or Mac OS X computer with a free USB port. Jungle Disk Desktop (which includes access to the portable edition) costs \$20. —J.B.

If you're always running out of USB ports, pick up a matchbook-sized, four-port **GigaWare USB 2.0 hub** (www.gigaware.co.uk) for about \$12. Throw it in your laptop bag or carry it in your pocket, and you'll never run out of ports again. —Matt Sarrel



The **ATEN CS661 Laptop USB KVM Switch** provides USB-to-USB KVM switch functionality for two USB-enabled PCs or laptops running Windows. The tiny switch—hardly bigger than a pack of chewing gum—also now provides file transfer capabilities. The \$100 CS661 (www.aten.com/data/event/CS661/) is a very handy gadget. I often need to move files from my laptop to one of my test systems, and before the CS661 I either copied the data onto a USB drive or burned it to a DVD. Now, I just plug in the CS661's USB cables and use the included file transfer software. In addition to providing KVM control over the remote system, the CS661 is a single-port USB 2.0 hub. It's easy to attach a scanner or printer to the hub for use by the connected computers. The product isn't quite "plug and play," but it's



close enough. —Cameron Sturdevant

File under ...

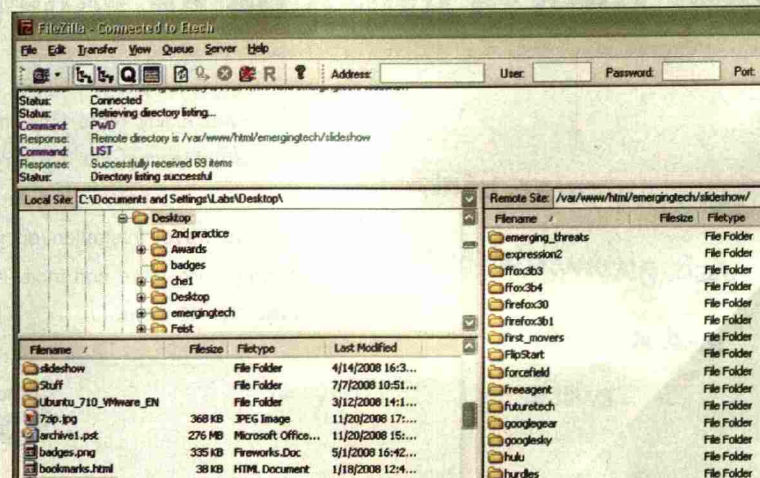
Dealing with compressed files is a fact of life for IT workers. Linux and Unix users typically have little trouble unpacking any compressed file, but, on Windows systems, dealing with a wide variety of file types has usually meant dealing with a wide variety of installed programs. This was how I operated until I found **7-Zip** (www.7-zip.org), a free, open-source Windows program that can uncompress pretty much any file. In addition, 7-Zip's intuitive interface is as good as any commercial program's. —Jim Rapoza

There have been plenty of attempts to come up with new ways to upload and download files from Internet servers, but FTP still reigns as the main method for handling files over

the Internet. But if you run a Web site or work in a collaborative environment, simple FTP downloads won't cut it. You'll need something that can reliably upload large files and can connect to secured FTP sites. The free, open-source and nicely polished **FileZilla** (filezilla-project.org) fits the bill. —J.R.

IT video vanguard

There was a time when video was the last thing IT workers had to worry about. But things have definitely changed in recent years: Businesses want to use online video to train their scattered workers on the latest systems and applications; consultants and partners aren't satisfied with written descriptions of server rooms, network closets and office layouts; and bosses don't just want help posting to a com-



pany blog—they want to upload videos of their latest inspirational speeches and stunning wins over competitors. What's a video-unsure IT person to do? Get a **Flip digital camcorder** from Pure Digital Technologies. Just about the size of an iPhone, the Flip is a simple point-and-shoot video camera



that can record as much as an hour of video (in HD quality, with the latest Mino version). And uploading that video is as simple as popping out the switchblade USB connector and plugging the Flip into any

PC or Mac system. And, best of all, the inexpensive (about \$100) Flip fits perfectly into your cargo pants. —J.R.

Phoning it in

The holy grail of the smartphone enthusiast is to squeeze enough productivity out of your miniature thumb-keyboard-studded machine to leave your laptop computer at home. In truth, this is a pretty tall order, no matter how fantastic your mobile device (and your texting skills) may be. Enter the \$229 **Celio Redfly Smartphone Terminal** (www.celiocorp.com/product), a Windows Mobile smartphone companion that trades processor, memory and storage—all of which it leaves to the smartphone—for light weight (about a pound and a half) and long battery life (about 5 hours). —J.B.

As quickly as portable technology progresses, there is one area of gadgetry that never seems to advance quickly enough: battery life. Until portable fuel cells become a reality, or corporate green IT mandates trickle down into more power-

miserly devices, we all have to find a place to recharge. What better place to pull down that juice than from the sun? **Solio's Universal "Hybrid" Charger** (www.solio.com/charger/index.htm), so called because it can top off its internal battery both from the sun and from a wall socket, offers a portable unit for keeping mobile devices topped off, as well as a means for soaking in energy from the sky. The Solio charger costs between \$80 and \$170. —J.B.

For a guy who doesn't like to talk on the phone that much, I get a lot of mileage out of a pair of speakerphones.

At home, I frequently use the USB-connected **Polycom Communicator 100** (\$139) with Skype or VOIP softphones connected to whatever IP PBX I may be trying out at the time. The device is handy, sounds good and does a nice job filtering out ambient sounds (www.polycom.com).

On the road, California law has forced me to go hands-free. A bald guy wearing a Bluetooth device is a little too Bepin (www.theforce.net/humor/captioning/cap4.asp) for me, so I went with a speakerphone instead—the **BlueAnt Supertooth 3** (about \$82



on Amazon.com, with more info available at www.myblueant.com). The phone provides a bunch of features I don't really take advantage of—text to speech of the CallerID or incoming number, voice-activated dialing and voice-controlled answering, to name a few. What I do like is the excellent battery life and that the device works with what I need it to work with—specifically, my iPhone and my girlfriend's Palm Treo. —Andrew Garcia

Typing made easier

The **Think Outside Stowaway Universal Bluetooth device** (www.igo.com) is a fantastic portable keyboard for those of us who actually want to work in comfort on the go. The durable [CONTINUED ON PAGE 36]



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keyboard folds in half to be less than half an inch thick and is encased in an aluminum shell. iGo packs a full-size keyboard in a small space by adding more function keys and then doubling or tripling the characters that each key can type. Batteries last a long time, and pairing is very easy. —M.S.

I'm a fast but sometimes inaccurate touch typist. Whenever I'm browsing through the latest crop



of laptops and desktop systems at my local electronics store, I always check out the keyboard. I look for an intuitive, easy-to-hit backspace key, a well-placed Enter key and easy-to-feel reference bumps on the "F" and "J" keys. The **Das Keyboard Professional** (www.daskeyboard.com) is a great upgrade for just about any computer. It has a great feel, has easy key press action, is weighted to stay in one place, and has a slim profile and a handy two-port USB 2.0 hub built in the right-hand side. The key-



board is also loud—woodpecker loud. I would not recommend this keyboard if you need to type notes while on the phone, but I do recommend it for anyone who wants a comfortable, sure keyboarding experience. —C.S.

Wi-Fi wonders

I make no secret of my love for all things Wi-Fi, and although I haven't actually tried either of the following yet, their form factors and feature sets make both worth a look.

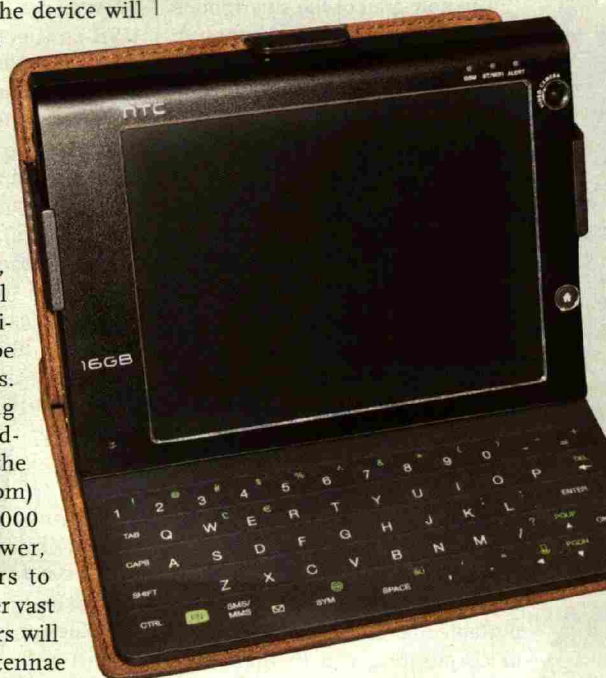
First, Meraki just released the **Meraki Wall Plug**, an 802.11b/g wireless repeater and access point in wall-wart form factor that can be quickly installed to fill indoor coverage gaps in a Meraki network. When plugged in, the device will automatically join the network over the air, and the device can be managed using Meraki's hosted management services (www.meraki.com).

Ubiquiti's Bullet, meanwhile, is a small yet high-powered Wi-Fi device that could be quite useful outdoors. With prices starting at just \$39, depending on the model, the Bullet (www.ubnt.com) generates up to 1,000 mW of output power, allowing customers to provide coverage over vast distances. Customers will need to provide antennae for use with the Bullet's N-

type connector; this provides a lot of flexibility in terms of how to use the Bullet, be it covering a wide area with a good omnidirectional antenna or going long distance with a directional unit such as a yagi. The Bullet will be available in four models: two in the 2.4GHz band and two in the 5GHz band. —A.G.

Taking control

When you're on the go and need to administer systems, advances in portable computing can work to your advantage—or, should I say, you can work on your **HTC Advantage** (<http://> [CONTINUED ON PAGE 38])



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www.htc.com/www/product/advantage/overview.html). The X7510 is essentially a really beefy Windows Mobile device with 16GB of storage and a 5-inch VGA screen. Connectivity via AT&T and Wi-Fi allow you to

Interactive graphs help you conduct site surveys and security audits, and troubleshoot interference from other wireless devices. —M.S.

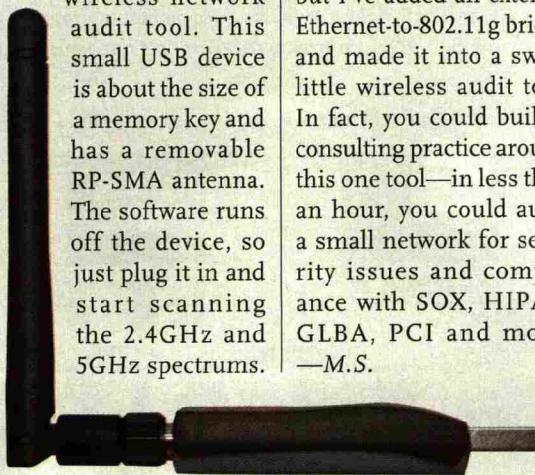
The **Retina Security Management Appliance 651** is a shoebox-sized vulnerability



VPN and RDP into your network from almost anywhere. Similarly, the **Nokia N800** (www.nseries.com/n800) allows Linux administrators to custom-build a remote management dream tool for VPN, SSH, SFTP and more. —M.S.

The **MetaGeek Wi-Spy + Chanalyzer DBx** (www.metageek.net) is a helpful and powerful

wireless network audit tool. This small USB device is about the size of a memory key and has a removable RP-SMA antenna. The software runs off the device, so just plug it in and start scanning the 2.4GHz and 5GHz spectrums.



assessment tool available from eEye Digital Security (www.eeye.com). Anyone who needs to conduct vulnerability assessment and audit network traffic on the road will appreciate the small form factor and ease of use of this device. Pop it in a backpack and carry it with you, or pop it on a branch office network and have it report up to your central REM management console. Don't tell eEye this, but I've added an external Ethernet-to-802.11g bridge and made it into a sweet little wireless audit tool. In fact, you could build a consulting practice around this one tool—in less than an hour, you could audit a small network for security issues and compliance with SOX, HIPAA, GLBA, PCI and more. —M.S.