



## Technology in Trucking

MARK MURRELL

I hate my phone. It's from a well-known manufacturer and when it was released a couple of years ago it was touted as being "better than Blackberry." It's not. By a long shot.

It crashes a lot. Email is clunky. The web browser is almost completely unusable. And the voice notes function, which I use a lot, plays back the notes at full volume and you can't turn it down. In short, this thing should have stayed in the design phase a little longer.

But despite my frustrations with my current phone, I really love the idea of smart phones. The Blackberry and Treo smart phones have been around for years, and they provide great functionality for staying connected when you're not in the office. Having constant access to email and information offers tremendous advantage and is very addictive – they're called "Crackberries" for a reason!

But that's not where the real innovation is these days. Smart phones are evolving from clunky email readers into full-featured mobile computing devices.

### The promise of a better life

My current phone, with all its limitations, already shows some of that promise. With minimal effort, I can download accessories that improve my quality of life. For instance, satellite maps give me useful information about any place I'm travelling to, so I can find good parking, restaurants, landmarks, etc. while en route. That, plus weather tools and basic banking tools really improve my travel experience. When I'm flying, I can check in and get my boarding pass completely through my phone.

# Smart phones for your future

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Those are simple examples, but they demonstrate a potential that is beginning to be realized. The best place to see that realization is the iPhone. In addition to outstanding design and usability, Apple did a smart thing by making it very easy for developers to write applications for the iPhone. They went even further by letting developers sell those applications through the iTunes store. Anyone going to the iTunes AppStore can search for applications in a variety of different categories, buy them very cheaply, and download them directly to an iPhone.

### Everything you need, at your fingertips

Okay, that's great, but it doesn't help if there's nothing on there to buy, right?

Right, and this is what I find really interesting. Apple announced the program in March of 2008, and opened the AppStore in July 2008 with 500 different applications available. Pretty good for four months' work, but six months later (as I write this), there are over 15,000 applications available.

Many of them are very useful as well. Here's one that I think you can all relate to – Crash Reporter. Crash Reporter uses the iPhone to capture and document all the relevant information from a crash scene. Check out this description:

"...includes vehicle profile and specific report checklist for theft, damage, or accident. Photo Notes and location-based services help you capture and document the details. One-Tap Call can be set for five different services or contacts (i.e. Towing Service, Insurance Agent,

Attorney, 911, etc.) And a distress signal if you need to signal for help or flash an SOS.

Produces a full-colour detailed report you can export as pdf or email."

That's pretty cool, but even better is the price – TWO BUCKS!

How much would that improve the efficiency of crash reporting if every driver in a fleet had that? And it's pretty tough to beat that price!

That's just one example. There are other applications that track expenses, manage vehicle usage stats, provide quick language translation and many more.

True, you still need to have an iPhone to use it. But a year ago, apps like this didn't exist at all. Today, they're available for \$2 for your iPhone.

### Everyone's coming to the party

Apple isn't alone, either, so it won't be long before these options are available on every smart phone. Palm has opened their Software Store with more than 5,000 different applications for both Palm and Windows CE phones, and Google has its Android platform, which will do similar things for a variety of other phones.

Pretty soon, full-featured computing will be available anywhere you can get cell phone service. How long before someone builds a logbook program for smart phones? Or tools for managing shipping documents? And how much will that improve the efficiency of the trucking industry? I love technology.

## Canadian Fleet Maintenance Seminar

MATT RICHARDSON

The Canadian Fleet Maintenance Seminar (CFMS) has enjoyed a successful history in the trucking industry for the past 45 years. Rod Henderson, General Manager of CFMS believes that a lot of the success is because, at their event, CFMS caters to those in the maintenance area of the industry.

"When I attend other shows, I see a large cross section of people from all walks of life and all ages from young to old. CFMS has always put on a good cross section of events to help the fleets in keeping up to date in technologies and maintenance methods," stated Henderson.

The "New Products Panel" assists the delegates so they can hear about what is new in the marketplace. The Outside Truck Display allows everyone to see first hand what new or different equipment is or can be installed on new units, trucks or trailers. The Trade Show is a great opportunity to see what is available in the Market Place. This is better than reading about such products as you can see and touch the products while discussing them with the actual vendors.

This year Wednesday afternoon will be dedicated to promoting the Trade Show vendors. The delegates will enjoy lunch, a training panel and large reception in the show area. In the evenings CFMS will continue to have Manufacturer Information Suites where the atmosphere is more relaxed and delegates can go and discuss the products and problems one on one. "Some people find it is easier to speak to others in a quieter atmosphere than speaking into a microphone among peers," Henderson explained.

Another thing the CFMS has to offer is a great cast of Committee members (all the people you will see at the event who wear the same suits). These are volunteer members who mix with the attendees to assist delegates new and old, in any way they can. The committee members may even be able to assist you to meet peers in your area of expertise so you will find networking easier. "Their mandate is the same as the General Manager's. That is to make the experience of the Canadian Fleet Maintenance Seminar a pleasant and relaxed learning experience. They are all there for the delegates.

This year, Mr. Lou Smyrlis, a very well known name in transportation circles, is coming to CFMS to speak to the delegates at the Wednesday evening banquet.

"As the Editorial Director of the Transportation Media for Business Information Group, he is well versed in what is happening in the industry and we look forward to hearing his point of view," said Henderson.

The Doubletree by Hilton – Toronto Airport is a central location which is accessible to all. They have the most helpful staff that you could come across and, as a bonus, the food is always excellent as well. These folks will go out of their way to make your stay there and at the seminar as comfortable and enjoyable as possible.

Henderson is very proud of the contributions of the committees present and past have been able to do to make a difference in the various aspects of our trucking industry.

Be sure to check out the CFMS website at [www.cfmsonline.com](http://www.cfmsonline.com) and find out more about what is going on for the 2009 event.