TOP 10
smart phone
applications

every real estate agent needs to have

SMART PHONES HAVE CHANGED OUR LIVES, AND FOR BETTER OR WORSE THEY ARE HERE TO STAY. AS A BUSY REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONAL, IT IS CRITICAL THAT YOU GET THE BEST USE OUT OF THE TECHNOLOGY IN YOUR POSSESSION. *JON PAIOR* REPORTS.

Smart phones represent the convergence of many devices. In today's world it is not enough for a phone to merely make and receive phone calls. It now needs to be a diary, a messaging centre, a sat nav, a web browser, source of entertainment and so much more. If you are not getting the most out of your phone you may well just get left behind.

I have compiled the top 10 must have applications that you as a real estate professional need to install and use on your smart phone.

Email and calendar

It seems obvious to include this, but we just haven't had this convenience on our phones for all that long. It was only around 1998 that a small, little known Canadian pager company called Research in Motion, released the Blackberry, a small mobile computer that used the mobile phone network to send and receive emails. This revolutionised the way we would receive information. Since the Blackberry many, many other competitors have all integrated emails and calendar into their products and we now see email and calendars as an integral part of what we call a smart phone. It seems now that everyone has an iPhone or an Android phone of some kind.

Today, however, it is more about the back end of your emails and calendars. For example, when you send an email from your phone, does that email appear in the sent items on your desktop email program (Outlook) and vice versa? Does your calendar synchronise automatically over phone networks when changes are made? Microsoft's Office 365 hosted email solutions now enable enterprise grade solution, previously only economical for the large corporates, is now available to even the smallest agencies on a per user and per month basis all for less than a cup of coffee a week. Using schedules you can actually schedule when you want to receive emails on your phone, meaning that the days of the phone beeping like crazy overnight are a thing of the past.

Navigation and GPS

Today almost all smart phones have GPS capability. Google Maps is the standard, it is free and it is indispensable when looking up addresses and finding street information. You can switch between map and satellite view so you can get a good idea of the area you are looking at. You can also easily find and display information such as proximity to schools, shops, restaurants, public transport and other public services. There are also many paid navigation applications such as TomTom that will help you get to that open inspection on time on a busy Saturday, with turn by turn directions, just as any in-car navigation would.

Social networking / Facebook

Social media is often not enough of a part of the day to day for many real estate agents. Facebook is no longer just about making contact with your old school buddies. Agents have the ability to use Facebook to "check in" to a property at an open

inspection and at that point provide information about the property, including photos, web links and other information. All of this can increase awareness and exposure of the property and helps both the vendor and purchaser feel that the agent is utilising this exciting new technology in the best way. You would be amazed at how effective this type of marketing can be.

RPData

Every real estate agent knows about RPData's portfolio of products for desktop computers, but few know that the smart phone app, currently available on the iPhone and iPad, places much of this information at your fingertips when you are outside the office. You can look up RPdata's estimated value, sales history and in some locations ownership information of almost any property. Imagine showing a potential vendor client, a map of their neighbourhood with real time valuation estimates and sales history. You can also access photos, listing history and much, much more.

Mortgage calculator

There are many free applications in this space, but I have found the Mortgage Choice loan helper application to be one of the best featured and easiest to use. This application will allow you to very quickly give a potential purchaser a quick estimate on their borrowing power, repayments and even what the stamp duty might be. All of this is available from your phone, in the comfort of the buyer's living room or at the open inspection.

Angry Birds

One of the most popular and yet time wasting applications for any smart phone platform. It might only be just for fun, but what else are you going to do during those really boring sales team meetings? This game is as popular as it is mind numbingly addictive. Install it with caution!

Property depreciation and tax benefit optimisation tool

Washington Brown has released a specialised application that really comes in handy with my real estate agent clients. This depreciation app provides an on-the-spot ability to highlight serious tax deductions to buyers and landlords, educating them about the tax benefits of a property based on real data. Armed with this information, you may just be able to get that serious investor across the line with your sale. In a market that many experts think is ripe for selling to investors, imagine the confidence your client takes from a piece of advice that could save them thousands of dollars. Regardless, you can make sure you match the right property to the right purchaser.

Business card scanner

I use Cam Card and this is one of my personal favourites, although I am sure there are many out there. As a serious business networker, immediately after I attend a networking function, I spend a few seconds, even before I leave the car park, photographing the business cards I have collected. This app automatically enters the new contact into my phone, which in turn synchronises with my desktop email client running on my laptop (Outlook). I then have a copy of the card and my new connection's contact details on permanent record.

Dragon Dictates

The future is here. Really! Most of this article was in fact dictated to my phone and then uploaded into my word processing software. This free application recognises my voice and translates that into text that I can then copy and paste into email, or any other text editor. Using an appropriate hands free headset and bracket I can dictate my emails, projects and even Facebook posts while I am driving my car!

Open Docs

This application allows you to open, view and edit Microsoft Office suite of documents. Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint document access on the go. When people email you these types of documents it is invaluable to be able to make a quick change before sending it on when you are on the road.

Love it or hate it, with smart phones both our personal and our professional lives can be improved. Used correctly, a smart phone can free us from our desk and allow us to get out there with our clients both physically and in the virtual world. Or even just help us workaholics achieve a better work life balance.

Jon Paior has worked in Small Business IT for more than 15 Years.

He is a Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE), and has a skill set that has enabled support for some major computing, networking and telephony projects.

Jon has worked in many different diverse industries with a focus on the Information Technology needs for service professionals such as: Accountants, Doctors, Lawyers, Real Estate Agents and the like.

Following the Microsoft Small Business Server product line from 4.0 (1997) through to the current version of SBS 2011, Jon is widely recognised as an expert in the field.

Prior to that, Jon a geek since before the term was coined, was a co-founder of Adelaide's premier geek hangout, Valhalla LAN parties.

In the last 18 months, Jon has transformed his business, Geek, into a major managed services player in Adelaide, more than doubling in size, and is expanding nationally with high profile clients such as the Australian Industry Group, Mirvac Hotels and of course including many real estate agencies. Voice over IP Technology, information security and consulting are just some of the skills and concepts he brings to this market, enabling better use of available human and technology resources in your business.

But mostly he's just a geek who loves technology!

For more information or even just a chat he can be reached via **www.geek.on.net** or **jon@paior.com**