



App stars

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Once upon a time, dreaded tasks like dictation, scanning and travel planning were strictly the domain of unlucky assistants. Nowadays there's an ever-growing collection of mobile applications designed to facilitate everything from crafting a presentation to remembering your bosses' coffee orders.

We dug through them, consulted app mavens and polled nine-to-fivers about the digital aides that make their day easier, and put together the following list of the best smartphone apps for helping you get through the work day.

Gist

This app allows you to keep up with contacts, clients and colleagues across your various social networks by pulling them together in one place. With real-time updates on their Twitter, Facebook and blog posts, you'll always know who's up to what, making meeting prep and small talk that much easier. For Android and iPhone; free.

Evernote

Keep your ideas organized with this popular app, which allows you to create and store voice, text and photo notes and synch them with your desktop. It also lets users photograph business cards and store the contact information.

"It's like my personal pocket secretary," says Leora Kadisha, founder of StyledOn.com. "The only thing it doesn't do is make coffee." For Android, BlackBerry, iPad, iPhone Touch, iPhone and Palm Pre; free.

Action Method

This one allows users to organize and track their to-do's by project, due date, keyword and urgency.

"I use it for project management and personal organization on a day-to-day basis," says Evan Vogel, director of the TriBeCa ad firm Night Agency. "It helps guide me through the execution of my ideas." For iPhone and iPod Touch; free.

How To Tie a Tie

Corporate world newbies will appreciate this step-by-step guide to mastering the perfect tie. With its illustrated instructions to executing 12 of the most common tie knots, it's the next best thing to having Dad do it for you. For iPhone and iPad; free.

GoToMeeting

A great tool for business travelers and remote employees alike, GoToMeeting facilitates interactive online gatherings complete with all the audio and visual hallmarks — think reports, slide shows, your boss's longwinded explanations — of an in-person meeting. For iPad; free.

Coffee Order

Interns across the city know that the office Starbucks run can be an infuriating undertaking — grande nonfat extra-hot chai latte with 1.5 Splendas, anyone? — but it's no match for this app, which stores and saves coffee orders from more than 10 million available drink combinations. For iPad and iPhone; free.

Keynote

Create professional presentations on the go, complete with animated charts and spiffy transitions.

"It's easy and effective at setting up slide presentations," says Internet strategist Gahlord Dewald. "I recently moderated an entire afternoon of panels using it." For iPad; \$9.99.

FlightTrack Pro

This business-traveler favorite provides up-to-the-second information on flights' statuses, gates, cancellations and area weather. It often posts info "before airline personnel appear to have it," notes devotee Bruce Bachenheimer, a Pace University professor. For Android, iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch; \$9.99.

White Noise

Perfect for creative types who work best with a little background audio, this app lets you mix 40 ambient sounds to create the perfect soundtrack. For iPad, iPhone and iPod touch; \$1.99.

Dragon Dictation

Save time on business communications with this voice-to-text app: simply speak e-mails, text messages or notes, and watch as it transcribes your words into text. Offers an editing feature that can pick up on suspect words and prevent embarrassing gaffes. For BlackBerry, iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch; free.

Flipboard

An easy way to keep track of clients and industry news, this new app turns your favorite news sources, interests and Twitter and Facebook feeds into a "magazine" that's easy to flip through.

Night Agency director Evan Vogel calls it ideal for "keeping up with my Twitter feed and industry-related content." For iPad; free.

mbPointer

Fumbling with a mouse during a PowerPoint presentation is so last decade. Instead, use mbPointer to turn your iPhone into a slideshow remote control.

"It's a lot easier than standing by the computer or using a separate clicker," says Alex Moazed of the mobile agency Applico. For iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch; \$2.99.

Next Train NYC

Rushing to a meeting? This local app puts an end to the "taxi or train?" debate by identifying the subway closest to you and counting down the time until the next train arrives. For iPad, iPhone and iPod touch; \$1.99.

Dropbox

Being able to work remotely is one of the great boons of the digital era, but many of the presentations and photos workers need to share are too big to e-mail. Dropbox allows you to sync and share files online and across computers, all while backing up your precious files on the app's Web site.

"It simply rocks," says Jason Scoggins of Eureka Canyon Enterprises. "It's the one app that allows me not to take my laptop with me everywhere I go." For Android, iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch; free.

MiniBooks for FreshBooks

Jesse Hollington, the applications editor at iLounge.com, touts this invoicing app for self-employed folks. It allows you to create, edit and send invoices and expenses, and also tracks time worked with the tap of a button. For iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch; \$14.99.

JotNot Scanner Pro

Not only does this app turn your mobile device into a portable scanner — capable of scanning multipage documents, including signature-required contracts and stacks of business expense receipts — its proprietary image processing removes shadows to ensure clear images that are instantly converted into sharable PDF files. For iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch; \$4.99.

LogMeIn Ignition

Remotely access your home or work computer — including all files and programs — with this app, which works for both Macs and PCs. iLounge.com's Hollington insists it's worth the \$30 price tag — and mobile marketing pro John Packes agrees, saying "It's allowed me to help out my co-workers and clients in more than a few emergencies." For Android, iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch; \$29.99

Excuse Generator Pro

Sufferers of chronic tardiness or hangover-related absence take note: this humorous app offers up text-able excuses for why you're not at your desk. They're complemented by a range of noises — heavy rain, alarms, static — to help you make a quick escape from uncomfortable calls. For iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch; \$.99.