

Top 10 Tips When You Decide to “Go Mobile”: Converting from Desktop to Laptop

By J. J. Murphy

Ever since I discovered it was possible to operate a VA business using a laptop as a primary computer, my goal has been to “go mobile,” using a laptop and cell phone. It seemed a perfect fit for this career and I wanted to break the tethers.

In late November, the laptop became my main machine, but getting there took a bit more time and savvy than I realized. In fact, I’m still working on the cell phone part of this plan.

This month, I wanted to share what I’ve learned along the way for those of you seeking to take the plunge.

1. Get IT Support

Having IT support before purchasing a laptop helps with set-up. A laptop is not a miniature PC. It takes specialized knowledge to set up security, cope with elements (like energy saving issues) and transfer files.

2. Wired vs. Wireless

Wireless networking provides greater flexibility, so you can reconfigure your office space

as your client base grows and changes, and you have the option of doing business while you are mobile.

3. Time to Transfer

Be sure to budget time for being connected to the PC and laptop simultaneously while you learn. When I first set up the laptop, the security and energy saving default was set to “Hibernate,” which meant that my computer screen went black and was unresponsive to the keyboard every time I took my hands off it for more than a few minutes. While I learned and adjusted my settings, it was a relief to have the PC for backup.

4. Backup and Wipe Clean

Before actually disconnecting your business from the PC, make sure all critical files and programs are backed up. Also, make sure the software installed on the laptop is working. My old PC is now the property of a family member, so I wiped all information from the hard drive.

5. Traveling

While you are in transit, make sure your laptop and any peripherals are safely encased

in bags designed for this use. Always power off by using the Windows Shutdown option before moving your laptop.

6. Test drive

Before you need the laptop in a mobile situation, take it out. Be prepared by checking to see if everything is working properly. I quickly discovered a problem with the Bluetooth connection on my cell phone. For now I’m wired on cable again, but I know better than to expect to operate in a remote location until I get the cell phone issue resolved.

7. Battery power

My laptop’s battery is charging while the laptop is plugged into AC. While traveling outdoors, make sure you have enough battery power. Temperature is also important. Hot batteries discharge too quickly whereas cold batteries won’t produce much energy. You need to know this if you use or store your battery in such temperatures (like in cars).

8. Overheating

When operating on battery power, to minimize your laptop’s tendency to get too

hot to handle, work on a hard surface, rather than on your lap. Also consider a device to increase air flow, such as CoolPad (roadtools.com).

9. Peripherals

The keypad on my laptop is comfortable, but the touchpad slows me down. Now I have to decide on whether adding a mouse and having something else to carry is worth it. Before making the leap to a laptop, I had not even thought of a printer. What I am using in my office is too bulky to take on the road. Everything becomes a matter of bulk and weight now.

10. Future needs

As computer technology gets smaller, faster, and more responsive to mobile consumers, I have to balance what I invest now with how quickly I can recoup the return on my investment.

IVAA has been a wonderful resource for me through this process because members who are hardware and software savvy openly share their experiences, which purchases worked, and what didn’t work.

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By Angela Allen Parker

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—Tom Lamm
YelpForHelp.com

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