

Increase your productivity with these 3 tech tools

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Octa Whale Kit

I love reading and learning. One of my favorite ways to do that is on my iPad, especially books from Kindle. The challenge has been a comfortable way to hold the tablet. I've used some other tools in the past that have worked well, but this [Whale Kit](#) ^[3] from Octa takes it to a new level.

Octa is a company that specializes in unique tools for your tablet (iOS, Android, whatever), one being the Monkey Tail, a twisted cable that can be adjusted to hold your tablet conveniently and works similar to what you might have seen from the Gorilla tripod family. The company also has the Whale Kit (\$39.99 retail), which is a suction cup carefully designed to be placed on the back of your tablet. It allows you to view your books (or other material read from your tablet) in either landscape or portrait mode. I love the way I can use it to read while holding my iPad on my lap, or place it comfortably on my desk.

This simple, yet elegant tool can be a great gift for the book lovers on your list. The company also has a new Lynx and Spider Monkey that can help position your tablet in places that were not accessible previously. Check out the videos they have on the site if you have a tablet and want to get more use out of it. I also put together a [video about this](#) ^[3] for you to see it in action.

Plantronics Voyager Edge UC

Our mobile phones today are a direct part of business. When you need to connect with customers, the [Plantronics Voyager Edge](#) ^[4] gives you a competitive advantage by using three separate microphones for noise cancellation and vocal enhancement. This can be very helpful when you're in a noisy or windy environment and need to make an important call.

When I checked with tech support, they were very helpful about how to use the unit with the touch-to-answer button, volume control and on/off switch. It is a very light unit. I even thought I had lost it once until I discovered it was still in my ear!

I found it most enjoyable to use it to listen to podcasts. This can be very handy when you need to keep one ear available for environmental assessment (think driving a car). The sound quality from my smartphone podcasts was remarkable and I was able to stay in tune with my surroundings when running outside — even in the Florida heat!

Watch the video I put together on this for some additional information. I enjoy this unit and got a lot of use out of it. The unit retails for \$199.99. See the [video I created](#) ^[4] on this.

Plantronics Blackwire 725

One of the great learning tools we have today is YouTube. I enjoy getting information from a variety of experts on a wide range of topics. The [Blackwire 725](#) ^[5] is my new best friend for listening to YouTube and learning.

I found the quality of sound to be very high and clear. This was helpful during my morning study. I also enjoyed the microphone, as its enhanced equalizer helped my voice sound better on a few recent video interviews that I recorded. If you're doing webinars, this is a tool you want to check out.

The Blackwire 725 retails for \$179.95. I enjoyed the active noise canceling switch that helped block external noises. If you're in a noisy environment and need to use your computer for Skype calls, audio recording, video recording or other functions, this is worth an investigation.

Don't tell my boss, but I love listening to Dvorak's New World Symphony through these audio-optimizing headphones!

Another added benefit I found was the quality of dictation I could create with this on my MacBook Pro. This headset, with its active noise canceling ability, made my words clearer for detection by the computer. Fewer errors means getting my work done in less time, and that means more time for consuming some more delicious audio! Check out this [video I created](#) ^[6] (with the vacuum cleaner running!) to experience the Blackwire 725 yourself.

These three technologies can help you in business and in your personal life. Watch the videos and you'll see some practical ways they can help you.

Disclosure: [Plantronics](#) [7] and Otca provided test units for these evaluations.

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