

Getting Down to Business

I've previously shared apps to improve your life. Because after all, we aren't just event managers. With any luck, we have lives outside of work, and if you're like me, you could use anything to make yours more efficient.

But this might beg the question – do we really need more digital tools? Aren't we already glued enough to our phones, devices and computers? Certainly there is a point of diminishing returns. But before you reach that, let's focus on the point of returns – return on your time, return on your efficiency and return on your quality of life!

The point isn't to make you feel overwhelmed. My hope is that you'll take a few ideas to help make your life better. So use what resonates, and leave the rest... and be at peace. Now let's get down to business.

As a digital marketing service provider, my team uses many technical tools in our jobs. Today, I'm going to tell you some of the ones we find most useful.

Dropbox File Storage & Backup

First up, Dropbox. Many of you have used Dropbox at some point to share files, but we use it to store and back up all of our files. Every person on my team has Dropbox, and we store all work files there. Documents are on the cloud, as well as on our hard drives, synching every time we are connected to the web.

The one downside to Dropbox is the dreaded "conflicted version" that happens when two people modify a file at once. But earlier this year, Dropbox acquired Pixelapse, a version control and collaboration tool, so I'm sure we will see some improvements in this area.

The major benefit of Dropbox is that you can easily get your files from any computer or connected device. This can be a life saver if you have computer problems, if you're traveling and need a file, or even if you work from more than one computer.

Dropbox is free to get started, but it is \$99/year to get virtually unlimited storage.



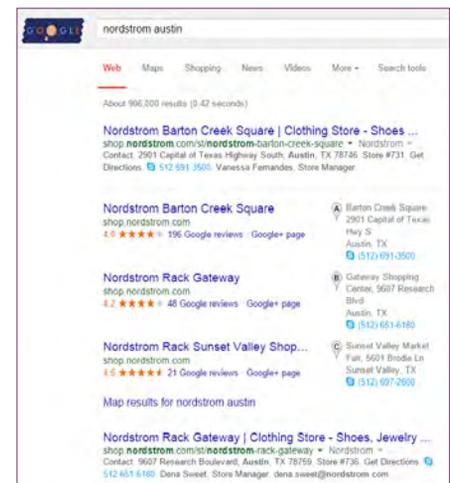
Skype Chat & Internet Phone

Skype is another app that you may have used, but I think it's fair to say that members of the Saffire team are power users of Skype. Email is great for non-time sensitive communication (don't get me started on the inefficiency of constantly checking email – I check 2x/hour, and I think that is too often).

But when we are on the phone with a client and don't know an answer, we often use Skype to ask others on the team. This eliminates a further email string, and it allows us to provide amazing, Houdini-like service to clients.

Skype is a happy medium between the lag of email and the immediacy of yelling

across the room. There is an app version so you can message from your phone or tablet, you can use it to video chat or you can even use it to replace your land line phone. For about \$3 a month, you can make unlimited calls to the US and Canada. Increase efficiency by clicking numbers right in your internet browser, rather than taking time to dial numbers.

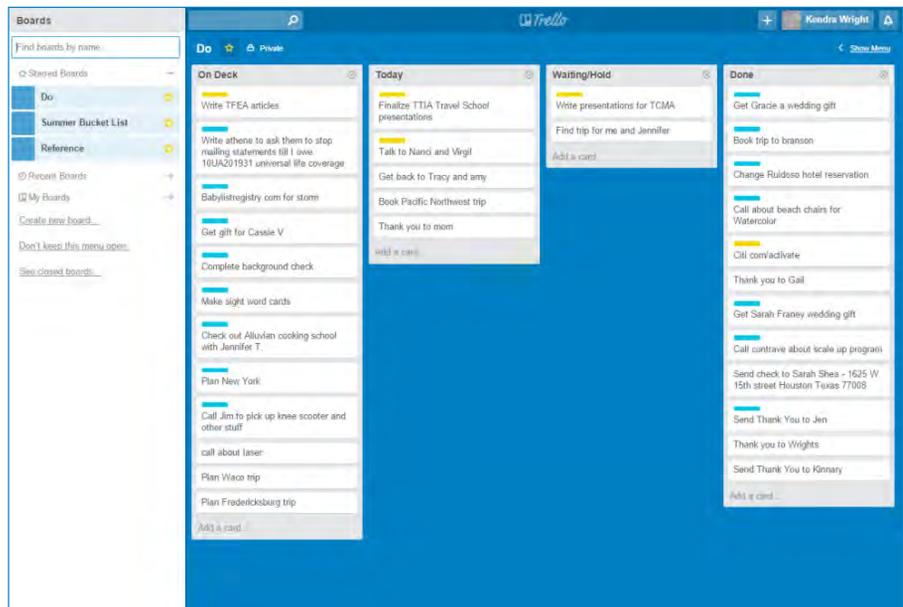


Trello for Organization

A useful tool you may not have heard of is Trello. Trello is like Evernote, helping you get organized and share to-do lists and progress with anyone. But I like Trello even more than Evernote.

The interface is simple, allowing you to create a "board" for each topic, and add unlimited Lists with unlimited Cards to each one. (It's a bit like Pinterest, where you have various Boards with unlimited Pins.)

My favorite use of Trello? I have a To Do List board, with the following lists: On Deck, Today, Waiting/Hold, and Complete.



I add to-do items to my On Deck list. Then each morning, I drag a few selected items over to my Today list (and then reorder them by dragging them up and down).

Let's say I make a phone call but leave a voicemail; this item is not completed, but I don't need it to be active, so I move it to Waiting/Hold. As I finish items, I drag them over to Complete. Once a week, I archive all the cards in my Complete list (and for those who do a weekly report, they are all there handy). Items even start to grey out if I leave them in a list for too long, reminding and encouraging me to take action!

Trello is also good for longer term goals – I have a Bucket List board, with categories like Home, Local and Farther in Lists. And Trello really shines for holding information so you can get it out of your brain. I keep a separate board called Reference, with Lists to record things like Books, Movies, Music and Restaurants that people recommend.

You can share boards and upload files, as well as add checklists, due dates and comments to your cards. And yes, there's an app for that, making Trello one of my top picks for business tools.

More Great Tools

Here are a few more to make your business life more efficient.

- **GeniusScan** – Every time someone tells me to scan a document and send it back, I save time by taking a photo of it with my phone and save it to PDF with GeniusScan. (Note: I usually email the doc to myself and then forward it from my desktop, to avoid writing the whole email on my phone.) *FREE*
- **Fill & Sign** in Acrobat - Many scanned documents require a signature, and with

my travel schedule, I let my staff “sign” documents on my behalf with an electronic image of my signature they can place in any PDF document. *FREE*

- **Amazon Prime Same-Day & Now** (selected cities) – I've long been a fan of Amazon Prime for its two-day shipping, music, video and book lending features. Now Amazon is pushing the envelope by offering same-day shipping to 14 cities and 1-2 hour shipping to 7 cities in the US. More cities are being added all the time, so watch for yours! *\$99/year*

I hope you'll try out a few of these tools and let me know of any others I've missed. In my next article, I'll share some apps and other tools to make your marketing more efficient and effective. Until next time, be well!

Kendra Wright started her career managing non-profit fundraising events. Then in an “about face,” she took a job managing global Internet strategies at a Fortune 1000 company in 1995, just as the Internet came to being. She left that company in 1998 to found Wright Strategies, working with clients like KEEN Footwear, Nike, Jeep, Chrysler, Intel and Panasonic. Then in 2009, Kendra launched Saffire to do integrated online marketing and ticketing for hundreds of events, venues and destinations. It's been a wild ride! Kendra can be reached at kendra@saffire.com, and more information about Saffire can be found at www.saffire.com.