

# PERSONAL JOURNAL



**Saving at the Pump With a Rental Car**  
 PERSONAL FINANCE D2



**Carpet Services Beat A Path to Our Door**  
 CRANKY CONSUMER D4

Nonprofit Consumers Union to launch a hospital-ratings service — **HEALTH** D6  
 A smorgasbord of musical theater at the Spoleto Festival USA — **LEISURE & ARTS** D9

© Copyright 2008 Dow Jones & Company, All Rights Reserved

\*\*\*\*\*

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Thursday, May 29, 2008 **D1**

**PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY**

## No BlackBerry? Your Cellphone May Do the Trick

BY VAUHINI VARA

**A** MESSAGE FOR THOSE of you with no iPhone or BlackBerry: Your cellphone is smarter than you think. In fact, your boring old cellphone has enormous potential. Here is a guide to checking your email, looking up information and updating your calendar, just by sending text messages. You can use any cellphone, but you'll need a generous text-messaging plan.

For email, I tested TeleFlip, a free service that lets you send and receive email via text messaging. TeleFlip works with any email account that doesn't require a secure connection to the Web. That applies to all the major Web-based email providers, including Yahoo Mail, Hotmail and Gmail.

Signing up for TeleFlip took me under five minutes. All I needed to enter was my Gmail email address and password, my cellphone number, and a confirmation number that TeleFlip sent to my cellphone—via text message, of course. TeleFlip then had me build a "whitelist" of contacts, by importing my address book or manually adding email addresses. If I receive an email from someone not on that list, I don't get it on my cellphone—an annoying quirk. (TeleFlip has plans to let users access all of their emails, beginning around August.)

TeleFlip does what it promises—but it's neither fast nor pretty. It took from three to 35 minutes for TeleFlip to text me my emails after Gmail received them, averaging about 10 minutes. Because cellphone carriers typically limit text messages to 160 characters, TeleFlip chops each email into snippets, sent in successive text messages. You can decide how many snippets you want to receive. I thought three was enough to get the gist of the messages.

**Y**OU CAN ALSO instantly send email. TeleFlip assigns a nickname to each of your contacts—the first six characters of their email address. To send email, text TeleFlip at 33715 and type the recipient's nickname and the message—for example: "walt.m Thanks for your email. I'll get back to you soon." It will appear to the recipient as if it came from your email, not your cellphone.

One turnoff: Each time I received an email via TeleFlip, the company sent a one-time email to the sender telling them about TeleFlip. I found that intrusive. TeleFlip says it will let users disable those emails starting around August.

To search the Web, I tried services from Google, Yahoo and 4info. Google can be reached by sending a text message to 466453 ("Google"); for Yahoo, text 92466 ("Yahoo"); for 4info, text 44636 ("4info").

To find information, it's useful to know some shortcuts: For a stock quote, text message a ticker symbol. For sports scores, type a team's name. For local information, type "weather," "movies," or the name of a local business, along with a ZIP Code or the name of a city. In my tests, all three services responded accurately to my text messages in under 10 seconds.

Each service has unique features. To find local businesses, I liked Yahoo because it includes cross streets. For instance, when I searched for a certain Indian restaurant, Yahoo gave me its phone number and address, as well as the text, "Near the intersection of Valencia St and 21st St."

I liked that 4info lets you set up customized alerts to your cellphone—texting you, say, when Target's stock falls by more than 5% (4info.net/alerts/add/stock) or when a Red Sox game ends (4info.net/alerts/add/sports).

Google, meanwhile, sends you driving directions if you text it this: "directions from (address, city or ZIP Code) to (address, city or ZIP Code)." You can also do rudimentary searches by texting Google: "web" plus the search term.

In response to Web-search queries, Google typically sends back text messages with words from the top search results. So, be extra-precise with your search terms. While parking my car, I couldn't remember what a blue curb meant. I texted Google, "web blue curb" and got an unhelpful result from a university Web site. Next, I typed, "web parking blue paint curb" and received a message telling me that a blue curb designates parking for the disabled.

With Google Calendar, you also can check and update your calendar using text messaging. To start, visit calendar.google.com. Click "Settings" in the top corner and then click the "Mobile Setup" tab to register your cellphone for notifications. Click the "Calendars" tab. Next, click "Notifications" and follow instructions.

You can receive text-message reminders for events. You can also ask for a daily agenda, or even get reminders on the fly at 48368 ("Gvent"). Texting "day" got me the day's schedule, texting "next" got me my next event and texting "nday" got me the following day's schedule.

My favorite part: You can add events to your Google Calendar by texting "Gvent." To add a dinner date for the following week, I simply wrote, "dinner Tuesday 7 pm." When I visited Google Calendar online a few minutes later, the event was already listed.

Send email to [Vauhini.Vara@wsj.com](mailto:Vauhini.Vara@wsj.com). Walter S. Mossberg returns on June 5.



Synthetic grass in the front yard of Jude Albanese's New Jersey home.

David M. Russell for The Wall Street Journal

## Just How Green Is Faux Grass?

BY SARA SCHAEFER MUÑOZ

**J**UDE ALBANESE doesn't pay a landscaper or run lots of sprinklers to maintain his lawn. He has retired his mower, and he doesn't use fertilizer. Yet the grass in front of his New Jersey home looks so lush that some passersby feel the need to bend down and touch it.

The reason is simple: The grass is fake. "You want to enjoy your yard, but it was always work and upkeep," says the Nutley, N.J., homeowner, who had **JM Synthetic Grass Surfacing** install his faux lawn last month. "Now it's much cleaner and neater. I should have done this years ago."

The synthetic-turf industry, known for As-

troTurf and other versions of faux grass in stadiums and on athletic fields, is increasingly targeting the residential market. For several years, people have been turning to faux lawns in areas of the Southwest to conserve water. Now, manufacturers are increasingly pitching them to homeowners around the country who are fed up with maintenance, allergies, or muddy paw prints all over the house from the family dog. Artificial turf is convenient, the companies say, and moreover, it saves water and cuts down on fertilizer use.

But others say faux grass is anything but green. Lead has been found in turf-covered athletic fields, and environmental groups and parents have raised concerns over the

Please turn to page D4

**ON STYLE**

## The 'Sex' Effect: Empowering To Some, Trashy to Others

**L**ET'S TALK about "Sex" for a moment. With the "Sex and the City" movie opening Friday, get ready for a flood of body-baring, haute-priced fashion inspired by the 300-some outfits worn in the film by the characters Carrie, Samantha, Charlotte and Miranda.

Hollywood and the fashion industry are gearing up themed fashion shows and an advertising blitz to help us all look like "Sex" heroines. There are even online guides to dressing like your favorite character. Patricia Field, the show's costume designer, is selling the movie's fashions—such as a \$3,000 Swarovski crystal-encrusted handbag shaped like the Eiffel Tower, which her Web site proclaims is this year's "It bag."



By Christina Binkley

As anyone who lived through it can testify, the TV show "Sex and the City" was wildly influential over the past decade. It not only introduced a generation of women to high-fashion brands like Blumarine and Chloé and pushed the concept of mixing pricey brands with flea-market finds; it also fostered pride in feminine friendships and pursuits. The show promoted the idea that successful women could take a liberated attitude toward fashion; they could dress like women at work and not look like they were copying men.

But as the show's fashion influence extended into the workplace, some people felt that such daring looks—regularly baring bosoms, midriffs and upper thighs—were more trashy than liberating.



Kim Cattrall wears a characteristically sexy look in the movie version of "Sex and the City."

As Carrie might write in one of her columns, has sexy office attire gone a step too far? Women now feel empowered to be girly, flash cleavage or have a rollicking good time. But how liberating is that if these freedoms fail to advance women's push for better jobs and salaries?

Women's gains in the workplace have been slipping for the past several years. In 2007, women

Please turn to the back page

## New IRS Rules Help Donors Vet Charities

Revised Tax Form Will Make Nonprofits Reveal More About How They Spend

BY MIKE SPECTOR

**A**MERICANS SEARCHING for the best places to make charitable donations are about to get more help from the federal government.

The Internal Revenue Service, the tax agency that serves as the main regulator of nonprofits, is ramping up efforts to increase charities' transparency as donors clamor for better tools to evaluate how their money is spent.

The first tangible signs of reform are happening now, as charities' annual tax form—known as Form 990—gets a makeover for the first time in nearly 20 years. The changes promise to provide potential donors with a standardized, one-stop shop for information on charities amid a sea of varied nonprofit watchdog Web sites. Charities begin using the new form next year, when they report their 2008 information.

The form, which nonprofits must continue to make available to donors and others on request, will now include a top summary page listing comparative financial information—revenues and expenses—over a two-year period. The next page requires charities to detail their organization's accomplishments during the past year, moving that information closer to the front of the form than before. Other sections ask charities to provide more-detailed information about fund raising, governance and compensation for top executives and trustees.

"I will probably use [the 990 form] more in the future because it has more due-diligence questions that I typically would ask," says frequent donor L.H. Bayley, the 72-year-old chairman of a Chicago-based investment firm who likes to scrutinize charities' missions, board makeup and finances before donating. But he also believes the new IRS form will be "no substitute" for donors doing their own extensive homework on charities.

In recent weeks, Americans have been opening up their wallets to help victims of twin disasters in Myanmar and China. It is all part of an explosion in charitable giving. Americans gave \$295 billion to charities last year, and donations from individuals dwarfed corporate gifts and grant-making totals from the nation's largest private foundations.

The number of charities has surged about 85% over the past decade to 1.2 million, said Steven Miller, deputy commissioner of the IRS's tax-exempt and government entities division. During the same stretch, he said, the money they took in annually more than doubled to about \$2 trillion.

The IRS's move to shine a brighter light on

**Where to Follow The Money**

- **Guidestar** ([www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org)) is a one-stop shop for IRS filings.
- **Charity Navigator** ([www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)) scores charities on a scale of 0 to 10 for efficiency.
- **American Institute of Philanthropy** ([www.charitywatch.org](http://www.charitywatch.org)) grades charities on spending and fund-raising costs.

For tips on how to help victims in **China** and **Myanmar**, see page D2.

## Quick Fix

Online Buys From Bad Spellers

■ **Problem:** Finding hidden deals on eBay from sellers who have inadvertently mistyped their listing information.

■ **Solution:** Items for sale on the online auction site that have misspellings in their listing titles or descriptions are likely to receive fewer bids—and sell for less—because they're more difficult to find. Free online services can help uncover those hidden treasures by searching eBay item listings for misspelled words. Enter the correct spelling of the item you're looking for at a Web site such as Auction



Bloopers ([www.auctionbloopers.com](http://www.auctionbloopers.com)) or Missing-Auctions.com ([www.missing-auctions.com](http://www.missing-auctions.com)). The sites will divert you to eBay results that include misspelled variations of the term you are seeking. For example, a search for "Laura Ashley" may turn up listings spelled as "Laura Ashly." Typo Buddy ([www.typobuddy.com](http://www.typobuddy.com)) searches for typos in items on sale at both the eBay and Craigslist sites.

■ **Caveat:** Some searches may yield items that are unrelated to the one you're seeking. For more precise searches, read the sites' Frequently Asked Questions sections to see if you can exclude certain terms.

—Suzanne Barlyn