



In this episode of *Selling Geek*, we find out why sales professionals should think about buying a GPS device.

Welcome to Selling Geek, the show about the latest gadgets, gizmos, and technology resources for sales professionals looking for a competitive edge. Our toll-free voicemail line in the United States is (877) 345-7763. Everywhere else in the world, dial 1-(404)-418-4970, or comment on our blog at SellingGeek.com.

And now, here's your host, the Selling Geek - Tim Sullivan!

Thank you, Ruth, and welcome, everyone. Again, I hope this finds you happy, healthy, and ahead of your sales goals. Coming up, we've got a great interview with GPS expert Tim Flight. But first here's a summary of the most recent news items from the SellingGeek.com blog.

The two leading web browser applications, Mozilla's Firefox and Microsoft's Internet Explorer, independently announced plans to improve their products before the end of 2008.

Mozilla reported that they will introduce a significant performance enhancement to Firefox, which will be part of the anticipated 3.1 upgrade to be released before the end of the year. This new enhancement, called "TraceMonkey", will enable Firefox 3.1 to boost execution of Javascript on web pages "by an order of magnitude or more," according to Mozilla. Many web pages use Javascript programs to present content, but many web browser programs manage Javascript content relatively slowly. TraceMonkey will enable Firefox 3.1 to compile Javascript as much as 30 times faster than current browsers.

Meanwhile, Microsoft released the second beta version of IE8 -- that's Internet Explorer version 8 for public review. Microsoft's program manager for IE8, Andy Zeigler, announced that the next version of the browser will include a new feature called InPrivate, which will enable users to use the web anonymously. With InPrivate turned on, users will be able to control the recording of browsing history, cookies, and other personal Internet usage data.

I've been using the latest IE8 beta since its release, and I have noticed a significant improvement in performance speed, although it doesn't seem to be as fast as Firefox 3.0 yet. I must also admit that so far I'm disappointed with the rather dull user interface, which looks virtually the same as the previous version.

Nevertheless, we think that salespeople should plan to use both web browsers on their computers. Firefox offers great speed and very efficient use of memory resources, as well as one of the easiest to use browser interfaces. Internet Explorer 8, when released, promises to be fast, too, but it also should provide a safe backup for browsing some sites that still require IE compatibility. And the ability to browse anonymously could also be very useful in some situations, such as when conducting competitive intelligence, for example.

A failure in network communication to a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) computer center located south of Atlanta delayed hundreds of flights nationwide, as U.S. airlines waited for approval of their FAA flight plans. Dozens of major airports were affected by the failure, which lasted approximately one day, especially in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago and many mid-Atlantic cities.

The FAA had to divert their flight plan processing to a second data center, located near Salt Lake City. Agency officials diagnosed the fault and had normal operations running again in about a day, but some industry observers speculated whether this incident shows that the FAA system is vulnerable to more problems in the future.

The tech blog Engadget has confirmed that RIM's new touchscreen-operated BlackBerry 9530 - their first device with no physical keyboard - will be called the Storm in the U.S. market when released on Verizon Wireless later this year. The 9530 will operate globally with a removable SIM card. It will also include an 8GB SanDisk microSD card, stereo headset, travel charger and USB cable.

It appears that the device may be marketed as the Thunder in Canada available through Rogers and in Europe through Vodafone. Pricing or final release dates are not yet finalized, although prior rumors has the phone pegged for a mid-October launch in the U.S.

LinkedIn, the popular business networking website, released new improvements to its Groups feature, making this function easier to use and more helpful to sales professionals looking to forge connections with customers and potential prospects.

In addition to fixing some previously annoying application errors, the latest Groups update now provides a centralized hub page for every group, so that members can

interact more easily in one convenient location within the LinkedIn system. In addition, users can now search a roster of group members. And there are a number of other group management enhancements, making it easier to administrate a group on LinkedIn.

These new features will make it much simpler to establish meaningful communities of LinkedIn users and will encourage more interactive social networking on the site.

Sales professionals can use the new Groups features to find new ways to find potential connections in their own business networks, making it easier to develop “warm leads” for new opportunities, to research relationships within accounts, and to arrange introductions to target prospects.

And that's the latest SellingGeek tech news for sales pros. Go check out SellingGeek.com for all the details.

One of the most popular websites for information about GPS devices is GPSreview.net, operated and maintained by GPS expert Tim Flight. GPS Review has received many accolades for their up-to-date and useful advice about how to use these navigational devices and how to get a good deal on one. Many salespeople must travel to meet with prospects and customers, and as a result, they've come to rely on GPS systems to get to the right place in the most efficient way.

But as you'll hear in our interview, GPS devices can do so much more today than just guide you to your destination. And as a result, GPS is rapidly becoming an indispensable tool for many salespeople. If you are a traveling salesperson, I know you'll find this interview full of useful information and practical advice. So it's my pleasure to present this interview with Tim Flight of GPS Review.

Tim Sullivan: Tim, thanks very much for joining me today. I really appreciate it.

Tim Flight: Thank you, Tim.

Tim Sullivan: Tell me a little bit about your site.

Tim Flight: Sure. I started the site just over three years ago, so I started the site as a hobby. I started out with just the basic general news information about GPS and quickly expanded into a few tutorials, talking a little bit about the devices that I myself was using at the time, and expanded that into writing reviews of other devices. The site really just kind of took much beyond my wildest expectations, and now has become one of the premier resources for people to find information about GPS devices online.

Tim Sullivan: I notice that you've received a number of accolades; in particular, C/Net rated one of the Top 100 sites, and you've had other accolades, also. It definitely seems to be one of the premier sources for people to get information about GPS devices.

Tim Flight: Yeah. You know, I'm certainly not the only site out there. We've grown quite a bit over the last few years. We get tens of thousands of page views every day and millions of visitors every month. There's a lot of interest in GPS out there right now and we try to do our best to get as much information out there as we can.

Tim Sullivan: Tell me a little bit more about your background. How did you become interested in GPS?

Tim Flight: I have a background in computer technology. Prior to doing this, I was in an IT firm, so I had a background in gadgets and computers and consumer electronics. But I also grew up in a very rural area, where I grew up hiking, backpacking, fishing, mountain biking, skiing, snowboarding, etc. So GPS was and still is a great hybrid of people who enjoy a lot of lo-tech activity out in the middle of nowhere, and combining that with something that's a bit hi-tech; essentially, a computer that can fit in the palm of your hand and tell you where you are and how far you've gone and how far you still have to go. So I really started with the outdoor GPS models. It was a great hybrid of two of my passions.

Tim Sullivan: For those that aren't aware, can you tell us what GPS stands for, and exactly how does that technology work?

Tim Flight: Sure. GPS stands for Global Positioning System, and there's a network of satellites -- it requires a minimum of 24 to work, but there's typically 30 to 32 in use. There's 30 or so satellites that are orbiting the earth every day, and they're basically just really accurate clocks. They constantly broadcast to anything that's listening what the current time is.

So you have a GPS receiver that's in your car or in your hand, and it listens in for those satellites telling it what time it is. Your GPS also knows what time it is, and basically it takes the difference between what time the satellite says it is and what time your GPS thinks it is, measures the time-lapse from when the signal left the satellite and when it arrived at your GPS, and then knowing the speed of light, figures out the distance between your GPS receiver and the satellite. And then once it knows the distance from a few satellites, it can calculate exactly where you are.

Tim Sullivan: And how accurate are GPS systems today? How close to true, if you will, can GPS systems plot your position?

Tim Flight: Once a GPS device has kind of locked into your signal, you can basically expect that it will give you an accuracy of 10 meters or better 95 percent of the time; and 95 percent is a pretty big percentage, so most of the time it'll be a good deal more accurate than 10 meters. Generally a reading around 5 meters or 15 feet is about the accuracy that you typically expect.

Tim Sullivan: That's more than enough for people who are traveling down the highway today.

Tim Flight: Right. But of course, that's only one-half of it. The second half has to be the accuracy of the maps themselves. So your GPS can know exactly where you are within a few feet, but if the map isn't accurate, it's going to look like your GPS isn't accurate. And there still are some areas where you'll find map accuracy is a little better than in other areas. But for the most part, your GPS won't have trouble figuring out what road you're on.

Tim Sullivan: Are there any particular vendors that are good at keeping their maps and map databases up to date, or are they all about the same?

Tim Flight: Well, that's one of the huge debates in the industry; who's got the best maps and who has the most accurate maps. One of the seldom-known bits of GPS trivia is that of all the GPS companies out there, at least in North America, they typically rely on one of two of the major digital mapping companies: NavTeq and Tele Atlas. They are the two companies that are providing the data to the majority of the GPS manufacturers out there. So if you go buy a Garmin or if you go buy a Magellan, chances are they're using the exact same mapping database as each other.

Overall, I'd say at this point they're isn't a huge difference between the two. I can go out there and show you errors in both systems -- and you will come across errors. You won't find that the road network is 100 percent perfect.

The good news is that both of those mapping companies have now made interfaces available on their respective websites where you can go in and report errors to them. So if you come across a neighborhood that has a new street that isn't mapped, you can report that to them. Likewise, if you find changes, one-way streets, or changes in turn restrictions, you can report those errors directly to the mapping company.

Tim Sullivan: How often should a user update their maps on a GPS? I guess another way to ask that is how often do the mapping companies update their digital databases?

Tim Flight: Well, of course, the mapping companies are updating their databases every day. They typically make those updates available to their customers, who are the GPS companies, once every quarter; and then it's up to the GPS companies to then determine how often they want to turn around and offer those map updates to those end consumers. Garmin will offer map updates -- or at least historically they've offered map updates once per year, which is typically in late April. Similar with Magellan; they've typically offered map updates about once every year to year and a half. The real different one out there right now is TomTom, who's offering map updates to their customers on a quarterly basis.

The map updates are not cheap. They generally start at around \$70 per map update, which is a lot cheaper than what the in-dash systems cost. So it's not like most people are going to go out there and spend \$70 every quarter to purchase a map update. But depending on the manufacturer, they'll come out every quarter or once every year, and then it's up to the consumer to choose how often they decide to update their maps. Most of them probably would update once every year or maybe once every year and a half. That's probably about what the average consumer does.

Tim Sullivan: Now when I get a map update, am I buying a CD or a DVD or am I downloading that from my computer? What kind of medium are am actually using to actually get those map updates into the GPS device?

Tim Flight: It varies a little by manufacturer but everybody right now is moving towards a download situation, and I think that's actually the only way you can get the updates right now from TomTom. From Garmin you can either download them or purchase them on a DVD and then install them to your computer and copy them over to your device.

But for the most part, they're being offered by download right now. So you'll pull up a program on your computer, you'll connect your GPS via USB cable, and you'll purchase and download the map updates to your computer and then install it on the GPS.

Tim Sullivan: Tell me, Tim, what do you think people should look for in a GPS? Why should they buy one today?

Tim Flight: I think the biggest one people want to buy a GPS -- and I think for your readership we're talking primarily about the in-car navigation systems -- to me, the biggest reason to buy a GPS is just because it takes so much of the stress out of driving. It's really one less thing you have to think about. You no longer have to think about, "Well, how far up is this turn? Where do I need to make the exit?" The GPS takes care of all of that for you.

I know a lot of people who spend a lot of time on the road, and I'm sure a lot of your listeners do, who spend a huge portion of their time in their vehicle, and for a lot of people, the in-vehicle time is the most stressful part of their day; dealing with traffic, dealing with trying to fumble around with a map. And so GPS really takes navigation out of the equation, and you can just sit back and focus on the most important task, which is actually driving the vehicle.

Tim Sullivan: What's your opinion of the in-dash options available for automobile manufacturers, and how do you think they compare to the standalone devices, the portable devices today?

Tim Flight: There's two big advantages that the in-dash systems have. The first is integration, where you don't have a suction cup hanging off the windshield; you don't have power cords dangling around. They're a little bit more difficult to steal. And they also typically have a little bit bigger of a screen than the average portable device.

Aside from that, I think overall the advantage lies on the side of the portable devices right now. They have a lot more functionality. They're a lot more easier to update. They're a lot less expensive to update and they're typically a lot less expensive to purchase.

Tim Sullivan: And you can take them with you if you travel to another city; can't you?

Tim Flight: Absolutely. You can take it with you if you have a sales meeting on the other side of the country and you're renting a car. You just pop the portable device into your briefcase and get to the rental car and slap it on the windshield and you're off and running.

Tim Sullivan: Are there any other disadvantages to portable systems? I have an in-dash system in my Acura, for example, and keeping updating that is very difficult. I think you mentioned that updating portable systems is easier. How is that exactly?

Tim Flight: Well, the portable systems typically will all have connectivity to your computer via USB, so it's really just as simple as taking the device to your computer, connecting it to your computer via USB,

and then running a program that the manufacturer will give you so that you can load updates onto it, whether it be software updates or map updates or additional points of interest. All those things can be easily updated from your computer just connecting it by the USB cable.

Tim Sullivan: So if I'm a salesperson looking for a GPS device, what do you think are some features or functionality that I should be looking for?

Tim Flight: One of the things that I think a lot of salespeople will look for is Bluetooth. A lot of the GPS devices these days come with Bluetooth, so you can have your cell phone in your pocket wirelessly connecting by your Bluetooth to your GPS device. When a phone call comes in to your cell phone, the caller ID information will display up on top of the GPS and tell you who's calling, and you can answer that call just by tapping on the screen of the GPS. So it's a lot more convenient and also solves the hands-free requirement that a lot of states are adding in now. So Bluetooth is definitely one of those technologies that I think a lot of salespeople will look for.

There's a few others as well. Traffic systems; there's a lot of GPS devices that are offering live traffic information. So as you're driving along, if traffic starts to build up on your route, they can automatically notify of that and offer you alternatives to get around that traffic.

Tim Sullivan: Now those traffic alerts; they're restricted primarily to large major metropolitan areas; is that correct?

Tim Flight: I think the number's around 125 or 150 metropolitan areas in the United States right now that are covered. So it's certainly not just the biggest cities. Some of the medium metropolitan areas are now started to be covered as well.

Tim Sullivan: Which kind of GPS systems do you think make it easiest for salespeople to get to a destination?

Tim Flight: Well, if they're connected to a live traffic service, a lot of the devices will do that automatically for you. If they sense a roadblock ahead, they can determine about how long of a backup it is, how much longer it'll take you to drive that route, and then consider some alternatives.

There are functions available for devices that don't have live traffic services available where you can manually re-route yourself around traffic. You can basically say to the device, "Hey, I think the next

mile of this road is going to be pretty backed up. Give me a route that avoids the next mile of the road."

Tim Sullivan: Now can you also store locations in certain GPS devices? If I'm going to the same office frequently, for example, is it possible for me to store those locations so that I can simply click a button and access it easier in the future?

Tim Flight: Yes, absolutely. Most GPS devices will allow you to store at least 50 of those what they call favorites, or waypoints, so that you can quickly recall them later. A lot of the GPS devices will also allow you to add what they call custom points of interest, which are really basically the same thing, only they typically allow you to store a bigger number of them. So you might represent a company who has 1000 locations nationwide and you could probably download a list of all of those locations into your GPS so that you have them right there handy for you.

Related to this, another feature that would probably be handy to a lot of salespeople is that of being able to send an address wirelessly from your computer directly to the GPS in your car, and there are a couple of systems out there today that will do that. The system called the Dash Express allows you to do that. You can simply just copy and paste an address from your computer and it will be sent wirelessly to your GPS. A lot of the Garmin Nuvi models that are compatible with the MSN Direct traffic service will also allow you to do that. You can go to Microsoft Live's map website, search for an address, and it will say, do you want to send this wirelessly to your car, and it will appear as one of these favorites on your GPS. So it makes the data entry process a little bit easier.

Tim Sullivan: That's certainly handy and not the kind of thing you would find on an in-car built-in dashboard GPS device, is it?

Tim Flight: Exactly. The in-dash systems are still a little bit behind a lot of the technology that's making it into the portable devices.

Tim Sullivan: What about GPS functionality that's starting to appear in mobile phones?

Tim Flight: The one thing that they certainly do offer is convenience of not having multiple devices. That's certainly the biggest appeal. They have a couple of disadvantages, though; the first being the screen is not typically designed to be a screen that's easily read in bright sunlight like you might have in a vehicle. So that's going to be one disadvantage. A second disadvantage is going to be the speaker. The speaker in a cell phone typically isn't near as good as the speaker in

a portable navigation device. So the voice quality and being able to understand what instructions are being spoken to you is sometimes a little bit difficult to hear.

So there's some trade-off there. The cell phone systems are definitely very convenient, but they do have a couple of disadvantages that somebody who's frequently using navigation would probably want to lean towards a portable navigation device.

Tim Sullivan: Give us an idea of what a good GPS system costs. What should a salesperson expect to pay for a reliable GPS device?

Tim Flight: Well, one of the interesting things about GPS technology is that the most important part -- the feature people are looking for the most -- is routing. I want to be able to see myself on the map and I want to see where I want to be able to go. And if you were to spend \$150 on the most basic Garmin Nuvi 200 versus spending nearly \$1000 on the most expensive Garmin Nuvi 800 series, the directions that you're going to get are going to be very, very similar.

So from that perspective, don't necessarily think that if I spend twice as much money, the route guidance that I'm going to get isn't really going to be any different. The difference is going to come down to a lot of the features like voice recognition for entering addresses, widescreen displays, traffic systems, Bluetooth; those kind of features are what's going to make more of the difference in price.

Specifically for salespeople, one of the features that a lot of people are looking for today are what we call multi-destination routing, or multi-segment routing. What that allows the user to do is to basically plan out their entire day versus just planning out where they're going next. So if I'm visiting seven or eight locations in a day, I can take a GPS that supports multi-destination routing and enter all of those into one single route, so it'll tell me my entire drive time today is going to be this many hours and it's going to be this many miles.

And then to take that even one step further, a few of the systems out there offer what we call route optimization; where not only can I build up a list of destinations that I want to go to, but it will actually sort those in the most efficient order to visit them all, so that you're doing the least amount of backtracking.

Tim Sullivan: So if I'm a salesperson covering a territory and I've got a number of different places I have to drive to today, the GPS system could really

save me a lot of time by not having to backtrack or by plotting out the most optimum route. Is that right?

Tim Flight: Exactly. It'll save you time and will most certainly save you some fuel as well, because it will basically take a look at all of those destinations and say, "Well, this is the most efficient order to go visit them all." And of course, some people won't have that flexibility. They may have specific appointments at specific times, but if you can control that ahead of time, you can just plug all those destinations into one route and say to the GPS, show me the efficient order to visit all of these. It isn't always the order that you'd necessarily think it might be, but they're typically really good at finding the best order.

Tim Sullivan: That kind of advanced functionality I would assume would be in the higher-end GPS devices. You mentioned a range somewhere between \$150 and up to \$1000. Am I right about that or can I find that kind of advanced functionality in less expensive GPS systems?

Tim Flight: The multi-destination routing feature you can actually find in some of the lesser expensive models. You don't typically find it on the lesser expensive Garmin models, but you can find it on some of the lesser expensive TomTom and Magellan models. For a GPS that has multi-destination routing, you can probably plan on spending \$300 and up.

Tim Sullivan: And we've mentioned a number of different models today; Garmin, the dash unit, TomTom, Magellan. Let's talk about some specific brands. If you were to recommend some GPS devices to salespeople today who are on the road and have to go to multiple destinations, what devices and models do you think particularly should be of interest to salespeople today?

Tim Flight: Out of the models that support multi-destination routing, the Garmin Nuvi 700 series, which includes the 750, 760, 770, and 780 are very popular among salespeople for a couple of reasons. Most of them have Bluetooth hands-free calling. Most of them are compatible with traffic systems. And they all support multi-destination routing. So those features really are attractive to salespeople and it makes the Garmin Nuvi 700 series very popular to them.

Looking at some other models, you can actually find multi-destination routing on a majority of the TomTom models, even some of the lesser expensive ones; although not every one of them. For example, the new TomTom XL 330 series does feature multi-destination routing, and those devices right now are down in the

\$200 range. What those won't do that the Garmin Nuvi 700 series will is they won't actually optimize the order; you determine the order yourself. And you can certainly play around with the order ahead of time and look and see which one produces the fastest route, but it won't do that for you.

Tim Sullivan: The prices on these GPS models certainly have come down, or at least the functionality has increased for the same amount of money. Do you expect that trend to continue?

Tim Flight: I think we're probably getting close to the bottom in terms of the bottom level of prices themselves. A couple of years, the least expensive models were \$300, and last year they were in the \$200 range. Now it's not uncommon to see them for \$125 or \$150 at the very bottom end. I think that bottom end isn't going to go much lower than that. For Black Friday this coming holiday season, I wouldn't be surprised if we see a bunch of devices get thrown out there for \$99. But I think we've really probably hit the bottom end as far as absolute price goes.

Feature-wise, though, they're going to keep getting better and better. GPS is still an emerging technology. It's still growing really rapidly. And as memory prices continue to come down and prices of components continue to come down, you're just going to see more and more features at those low price points. But I think that \$100 barrier is still going to be the bottom end.

Tim Sullivan: Tim, what kind of future developments do you see in GPS technology? What can we expect in terms of innovative new features for GPS devices in the future?

Tim Flight: I think the biggest advances that we're seeing are in the traffic systems. The traffic systems are getting better; they're getting more accurate; they're using larger sources of data. So while traffic isn't exactly new this year, it's a system that's getting a lot of attention right now because the data's getting a lot better. So that's one technology that I think we'll start to hear a lot more of in the future.

A second technology that comes to mind are the connected GPS devices. These are GPS devices that either have their own little cell phone SIM card installed or they might use a wi-fi network. They can basically communicate with the Internet in real time. So you might have an entry-level GPS device that has 1 million points of interest installed on it; points of interest being things like restaurants, gas stations, hotels, etc. And there's a lot more than 1 million points of interest out there, but in terms of saving space they don't include them all.

With a connected GPS device, you aren't limiting yourself to the memory that's installed in the GPS anymore. You can actually go out and search Google Maps live in real time or Yahoo! Maps. You can use those search engines directly from the GPS to find what you're looking for. So those kind of connected GPS devices are really going to be the wave of the future and one of the things that we start seeing a lot more of down the road.

Tim Sullivan: Tim, I think I saw something on a tech blog the other day where they had a GPS display that actually had integrated with something like Google Streets, where they actually were showing not only where you were on a map, but also a picture in a metropolitan location.

Tim Flight: In terms of being able to see a Google Earth-style aerial photograph or satellite image, I think we're probably a ways off there. A lot of our slower networks just probably don't have the bandwidth to broadcast that information and get it down to your GPS device in real time as you're driving along at 65 miles an hour.

What we are starting to see a lot more of right now are the kind of simulated views. These are 3-D views where you're actually going to see a picture of a building in 3-D that looks like the building that's standing right in front of you; and there are a few GPS devices out there right now that are offering that kind of feature, and they're pretty darn realistic, too. You come upon a red brick building; there's going to be a 3-D rendering of a red brick building in front of you. And so we're starting to see a lot of that now starting to come into play. And it certainly does aid in navigation, where if you can say, "Hey, I need to turn right after this gray building," it's certainly a little bit easier to see from a few hundred yards out where you can't quite see the street sign yet.

Tim Sullivan: Tim, if I'm thinking about buying a GPS, what are the key things that you think I should be looking for, especially for me as a traveling salesperson?

Tim Flight: Certainly multi-destination routing is something to look for. Then, start looking at the devices that can have traffic services connected to them. Some of them come with it and some of them are optional, and so if it's something that you may be considering down the road, definitely look at a device that it's at least optional with right now.

Tim Sullivan: Tell us a little bit more about your site. If I'm interested in learning more about GPSes, what can I find on GPSReview.net?

Tim Flight: On the top left-hand corner of our page, we have a little box that says "Find a GPS." You can just tick off the features that you're looking for and it will generate a list of GPS devices that match that criteria, along with current prices from thousands of stores that are updated every day. So that will certainly help you build up a list of devices to check out.

We have reviews of a lot of popular systems out there so you certainly read the reviews. The other big thing is our discussion forums. You can go in there and register, post a question, and lots of times, me or tons of other people that we have in there that are really helpful and experienced can answer your specific questions that might not be addressed elsewhere. I get feedback from a lot of the people that are actually out there using these devices every day.

Tim Sullivan: Tim, any final words of wisdom or advice for anyone that's thinking about a GPS device?

Tim Flight: Yes. I'd say the biggest thing is regardless of where you decide to purchase your GPS device from, get out there to a local store, be it a Circuit City or a Best Buy or a Radio Shack and take a look at the devices that are there and see which ones have interfaces that make more sense to you. You know, we still have the Mac versus PC wars out there, and we're still going to have the Garmin versus TomTom wars out there; so firsthand experience in playing around with the device is certainly helpful.

If you're at a store, take a look at the screen; see how the screen quality looks to you. Try and look at it from different angles to see how readable the screen is and give it a play. Unfortunately a lot of times when I go into stores, I find that the GPS devices aren't set up in an optimal manner; they have some weird preferences that people have set or disabled some features here and there, so be a little bit careful with that. But I definitely encourage people to go into a store and play around with them a little bit.

Tim Sullivan: Tim, this has been very helpful. Thanks for joining us today. We really appreciate it.

Tim Flight: Thank you.

And now, some feedback from *Selling Geek* listeners like you.

We've received several thoughtful messages on the SellingGeek.com blog this week, including one from Dave Stein, who responded to our post about the FAA's recent

computer troubles. "As an active instrument-rated pilot," Dave tells us, "I've got strong feelings about the FAA. When you're up there in bad weather, on very rare occasions, or with a problem, they are incredibly competent. With all my hours of flying, I've only had one or two air traffic controllers that I would call worrisome. I would rate that function of the FAA an A. As a business traveler on commercial flights, I have a different perspective than most. The FAA is very, very conservative. They don't take chances, period. When there is a flow delay during busy times or bad weather, I know that safety is first on their minds. I know there are many that disagree.

"As far as their technology is concerned, that's another issue. I know that numerous reputable sources, such as AVweb.com or AirlineSafety.com, say that the FAA is the world's largest consumer of vacuum tubes. They are decades behind where they could be, or, some might say, should be. And there is one big reason for that: the FAA is a government agency. They don't have the threat of competition forcing them into ever-increasing levels of effectiveness. Their biggest fear is not a summer afternoon with a thousand flight delays. It's a plane crash. That's foremost on their radar screen." No pun intended; I'm sure, Dave. "With respect to that goal, they've done a terrific job."

I'll have to agree with you 100 percent there, Dave; albeit with clenched teeth. Certainly, safety in airline travel is the utmost importance, and in that regard I agree that the FAA's record there has been excellent. And I must admit I'm not willing to fly faster in exchange for a higher risk of injury or worse.

Regardless, systems-related delays like the most recent computer network debacle frustrate me to no end, because I know they could be so easily avoided if the government would only keep their systems up to date. You're right about the FAA being outmoded, and although they have a plan for the next-generation airspace control system, they seem to be moving very -- slowly -- on this. And I think that just means more delays for traveling sales professionals and other traveling professionals as well in the foreseeable future.

We also received some provocative comments from Mark in response to our recent story about the Hang Up Act, a proposed law that would ban phone calls on U.S. airlines. Mark says to us, "So, what manners would you like Congress to legislate next? Did you read the bill? It does not prohibit aircraft seat-installed telephones, which have been around for a long time and are rarely used. The bill is based on an uneducated assumption that mobile telephone call on an aircraft will cost the same as on the ground, which is obviously wrong."

Mark also advises us -- tongue-in-cheek, I'm sure -- "Noise-canceling headsets: get them. Seriously."

Thanks, Mark. For the record, I'm opposed to legislating manners. You can definitely put me staunchly in the libertarian category there. To that end, I think the so-called Hang Up Act is silly and just political grandstanding; and I seriously doubt that it will

pass into law. However, when I pay for an airline ticket, I think it's reasonable to expect that airline to provide for our safety and comfort. This is why they banned smoking on planes now, and I was all for that. I thought that was rude behavior, too. It might be different if the seats were huge and there was lots of personal space available, but let's get serious here. The airlines are cramming us into coach like sardines. So, like the smoking ban, I'm all for airlines saying no to noise pollution on planes, too, by banning intrusive phone calls in-flight. Mobile phone calls are a privilege, not a right.

As for the old seat-installed telephones, I never see these anymore. All the airlines have pulled them out. Why? I don't think they made any money. Besides, when people did use them, at least they kept the calls as brief as possible. Why? Because it was hideously expensive. So if the airlines charge more than \$25 a minute for roaming charges for in-flight cell calls, I might be convinced that's okay. I'm all for the airlines making money and staying in business, and the high cost of such calls would make them very rare, and I can tolerate that.

By the way, I agree that noise-canceling headsets are a wonderful invention, and you've given me an idea for doing a review on them soon. Thanks. I personally use my iPod for the same purpose, with excellent effect.

So many thanks to all of you who sent us feedback. Every episode of *Selling Geek*, we award \$20 to the best voice message, e-mail, or blog comment that we receive. This show, our winner is Dave Stein. And we encourage you to send us your feedback, too. We ask only that your comments be substantive and interesting.

So ends this episode of *Selling Geek*. I hope you found it interesting.

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So Ruth, please tell our listeners how they can contact us.

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So until next time, good luck and good selling, everyone!
