

How to keep your mojo rising

From hardware to apps, **Ivo Burum** outlines your basic digital toolkit

Steve Jobs warned that “what’s wrong with education cannot be fixed with technology”. My dad, John, has a favourite saying: “Learn your craft and you’ll always have a job.” One man invented technology that made it easier to do stuff; the other, a panel beater, had his unique skills subsumed by computerised technologies and new ways of doing *his stuff*. Sound familiar?

Print media, as we know it, is slowly morphing online and transforming tabloids into tablets. Technology is creating new outlets for news and new ways of doing stuff in the newsroom. The result is decreasing revenues, operational shifts, redundancies and newspaper closures.

If you believe what *The Guardian’s* own journalists are writing, the print edition of this English bastion of liberal news and open journalism is about to axe its print plant and open a shopfront to sell products that sit comfortably “with the newspaper’s left-leaning bias”.

In Australia, Fairfax never saw retail as a possible way to save an estimated 1900 jobs. As former *Sydney Morning Herald* editor Amanda Wilson observes, this is a slide so deep that “the bottom of the cliff is not yet in sight.” True, but as the business of journalism continues to embrace digital trends such as mobile journalism (mojo), the descent into digital enlightenment can be relatively painless.

The first step is knowing what mobile technology is out there and having the right skill set. Strange as it may seem, traditional storytelling skills may enable print journalists to find digital relevance. But with 1123 fart apps on the market just to make flatulence sounds, the following list of must-have tools may help the budding mojo breeze through the smelly ones.

In the new order, user generated content (UGC) is subsumed by the more relevant and editorialised form, user generated stories (UGS). The following information focuses on mobile technology used to create UGS.

The mojo kit: Mine comprises a smartphone (usually an iPhone 4s), mCAM cradle to help steady the iPhone, a rechargeable light, a mini-microphone and an audio splitter cable, and a light tri- or monopod. Cost is between \$350 and \$1100 depending on the type of mobile device.

Smart device: UGS content can be recorded using many different types of Android and iOS mobile devices (phones, iPods and



A mojo on Elcho Island in the Northern Territory. PHOTO BY IVO BURUM

tablets). Look for devices with an 8 megapixel or higher camera that record 1920 x 1080 broadcast quality HD video, which negates a technical debate that can occur with mobile technology. A microphone input (usually the headphone jack) is crucial. I use an iOS device because it runs my preferred editing package and, because of that, the remainder of this article focuses on iOS apps.

Tip: Both Wi-Fi and 3G connectivity are key.

mCAM: I use the mCAMLite cradle for my iPhone. It provides stability and attachment point for my light, microphone and tripod. It also lets me attach Canon or Nikon SLR lenses. It’s available for \$129.

Camera app: Those designed for iOS devices use the onboard camera (front or back). The back camera is usually a higher resolution and consequently it can use up to six times more memory, but delivers better images (in 16 x 9 ratio) than the front camera. For advanced camera work, I use the FILMIC Pro 2 (FP2) app. FP2 has a real time 4x zoom and full control over focus, exposure, white balance and frame rates. It includes audio metering and a host of motion options (for 1000 fps super slow motion also try the Slo Pro app). FP2 lets the user send content to the regular social media sites and Camera Roll (useful for importing footage into Voddio for mobile editing). Another very useful feature is its ability to send footage to FTP servers. The app is a bargain at \$5.49.

Edit: Mojo editing is done on the device. All non-linear editing, whether desktop or mobile, requires flexible software. The most professional iOS editing apps are Voddio and 1st Video. Both offer multi-video tracks, four tracks of audio (six on the iPad), audio mix and fade facilities, FX, supers and subtitles, multi-locational send functions and more.

Content can be uploaded to social media sites via Wi-Fi or 3G. Both apps allow the user to import video and audio and to export content at multiple resolutions.

These apps use an integrated stills and video camera and audio recorder. The iPad version enables all tracks to slide left and right along the timeline, arguably the most important feature in non-linear editing.

The apps have a Wi-Fi sharing function that allows seamless content transfer to and from desktop computers. A network version that enables uploads to numerous FTP servers is available on a monthly subscription basis. From VeriCorder, the apps cost about \$10.

Tip: Use Filmic Pro 2 to shoot the tricky stuff, export to Voddio for the edit and send the finished product to YouTube or back to Camera Roll. If you need to go to an FTP server, but don’t want to sign up to VeriCorder’s network service, then export from Camera Roll to iFTP Pro (read the instructions!), or if you have an old version of FILMIC Pro, import into that and use its free FTP transfer function.

Sound: The quality of sound is crucial. A directional microphone will help and can cost anywhere from \$25 to \$300. I use a \$25 microphone that comes with the mCAM. Appropriate splitter cables let you use radio microphones with your smartphone. **Tip:** The basic rule of sound recording is to get in as close to the subject as possible to eliminate background noise.

Live broadcast: A number of options (LiveU, TVU, Dejero) are now available to broadcast live. The Dejero system offers a mobile platform for recording and streaming live HD footage from an iPhone. While all systems work slightly differently, they manage bandwidth and latency across 3G, 4G and Wi-Fi connections, effectively splitting the signal and sending it across all three connections, before bonding or re-encoding it at the destination. They’re not cheap systems, but the results are incredible.

It all sounds very techy doesn’t it? But mojo is about linking community with a global communication sphere, and more about storytelling than technology. Go mojo.

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