

You don't need a BlackBerry

Instead, try these simple ways of getting messages on the go. By Manek Dubash.

Want to access your email and other messages while you're on the move? It's never been easier. There's a vast number of options, some cheaper than others, and even on the premium services, prices are plummeting.

The obvious starting points are smartphones like the BlackBerry and Palm Treo. But these can be overkill. Or in some cases they don't go far enough to deliver what you need. And we've covered them extensively in *Real Business* already. So here's our pick of the best ways to make mobile messaging a cinch – without shelling out for a new handset.

MobilePA

This new mobile email service allows you to access your emails, calendar, contacts – even browse the internet and review other files – in a variety of ways. It will retrieve your latest emails and summarise them according to your settings. Alternatively, you can have a synopsis read out to you, albeit by a rather robotic voice that mars comprehensibility somewhat. The service works on most mobile phones and PDAs. You can also access it with a Mac or PC: use your laptop or just step into an internet cafe.

There are two versions, standard and enterprise. The latter allows you to access your company's intranet. So your sales reps, for example, can access contacts databases. You can use MobilePA across your business, even if your staff are on different networks – potentially a big money-saver.

MobilePA indexes the information it retrieves so you can find it again quickly, and also learns from the information you access frequently, putting it on the front page. So, if you're interested in watching England thrash the Aussies, for instance, cricket will head your news items. On a more businessy note, MobilePA can prioritise emails

relating to diary appointments and create links between related items, such as calendar entries, contact details and relevant emails.

We found it worked well, with the only caveat being the robotic voice. Otherwise the £10 monthly subscription looks like it could be good value for a lot of businesses.

MobilePA

✓ **Pros:** Fast access to emails and news on any device.

✗ **Cons:** Robotic voice.

Price: £10 monthly (inc. VAT).

Contact: www.sirenic.com/mobilepa



The alternatives: laptop 3G and transcription



Vodafone 3G Mobile

Forget video chat: fast internet access is 3G's real benefit. The problem is, although 3G coverage is good in most cities, it's patchy across the rest of the country. The solution is a 3G card, which plugs into your laptop and lets you use the internet at either 3G speeds – not much slower than a DSL-based broadband connection – or the older, slower GPRS.

Vodafone's 3G card switches to GPRS seamlessly, though downloading live voice or video while you're on a train (for example, to make a phone call using Skype) is unworkable. Other than that, this system does a good job of keeping you online. The connection software works well and is easy to use. And if you've got a contract with another operator, Vodafone will be happy to take your money just for 3G access.

✓ **Pros:** High-speed internet access, international roaming.

✗ **Cons:** Shortens laptop battery life.

Price: £127 for the card plus £20 monthly for 75MB (medium price plan; other plans available). All prices ex. VAT.

Contact: www.vodafonebusiness.co.uk

SpinVox

The final piece in the mobility jigsaw is the ability to manage voicemails, which is where SpinVox comes in.

When you're mobile, it's often tough to scribble down notes from voicemail. Phone numbers and other details can pass you by. Not only is this a pain, it can also be expensive when abroad, especially if you have to listen again to get the full gist. Now multiply that expense by the number of people in your company...

What SpinVox does is pick up voicemails from mobile or desktop phones and deliver them as either text or email. Not only could it save you money and hassle, it's great for when you're in meetings and you've set your phone to silent.

And if you want a good reason for using it, SpinVox donates £1 to Save the Children for every new user.



✓ **Pros:** Saves time, possibly money.

✗ **Cons:** Transcriptions not always accurate.

Price: From £5 to £40 monthly, inc. VAT.

Contact: www.spinvox.com