



The Paradox of

THE FANNY PACK

Remember when — oh, some 10 to 15 years ago — when we had multiple digital devices clipped to our belts? Certain people had so many things to carry, they strapped a fashionable fanny pack around their waist to contain all of these gadgets.

At the time, we were amazed by these tiny digital devices that literally changed how we communicated. Not only did these devices keep us busy, they helped us manage our lives. We were loaded with single-purpose gadgets including cellphones, PalmPilots, pagers, portable music players, and even laptops. Back at home, we had desktops, game consoles, DVD players, and home theater systems.

The most visionary ones (or maybe just the impatient ones) dreamed about a future when we would have one device that would do it all.

As time went on, we got closer to this Holy Grail of gadgets. The devices became smaller and smarter. As they learned to do more things, our fanny packs started to disappear. We were happy.

But progress never stops. Today we find ourselves on the next level of an evolutionary spiral. The devices we use every day are starting to multiply again. But because these devices can do so much, we are not ready to be limited to a fixed form factor.

Every day — often simultaneously — we are using our cellphones, laptops, tablets, smart TVs, and gaming consoles. Ironically, we're not exactly using them the way they were intended to be used. We hardly speak on our cellphones — we're mostly texting, using apps, browsing the Web, or playing games. We hardly play games on our game consoles — we're mostly dancing along, exercising with, or watching videos on demand through these powerful machines. And don't get me started with tablets...

These days, it has become less about which device you chose, and more about the context in which you are using it. All of these things can now deliver pretty much the same func-

tionality. They just offer a different form factor and user interface.

The Ubiquitous Experience

So where does this leads us? Good question. I'm not an oracle, but I think the most probable direction is a "ubiquitous experience." That is, one small smart device that becomes an extension of ourselves...serving most of our needs and desires. And that does it in the context of our interaction with it.

Imagine when a small "magical" device in your pocket (probably resembling a smartphone) will automatically know to connect to multiple screens. Seamlessly. Our experience will change depending on which screen(s) we are connected to.

We will be talking, video chatting, texting, IMing, listening to music, playing games, watching videos, and surfing the Web...all on the same device but... using different screens. The concept of a "second screen" should not mean use of multiple separate devices. It means use of one device that can express itself differently in the context of how we use it.

You will be working in your office using a wireless keyboard and mouse being connected wirelessly to a 24-inch display. Your "magical" device just sits in your pocket. When it is time to go to a meeting, you will grab your tablet screen because it is offers a better interface. All of your apps and documents are still there, in your pocket, except now your user interface is now optimized for this 10-inch touch screen.

In your car, your device will automatically connect to your audio and navigation system, allowing you to listen to your music, play audio on demand, connect to your contacts, or take an important conference call. Behind the wheel, it's all voice or car-display activated at this point.

At home, you use it on your 60-inch TV to watch a movie. At the same time, you use the compact touchscreen to look up information about actors and tweet a recommendation to

Contributed by



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your friends. Gaming, music, and exercise will become a very different experience, thanks to this ubiquitous experience.

The New Reality

Sound like sci-fi? Well, you'd be surprised at how quickly this will become a reality. Today we're seeing more technologies like Apple's AirPlay, Microsoft's SmartGlass, Intel's WiDi, and HTML5-based apps that are built using a "responsive design" technique that makes this all possible. This magical future is virtually here.

And the best part — no more fanny packs. All that power will reside in your pocket. **PV**

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