

Ten Ways a Smart Writer Can Use a Smart Phone - 1

by Vanessa Kier

I have a confession to make. I don't own a smart phone. That's right. Despite my love of technology, I can't surf the internet or download e-mail with my phone. My practical, cost-analyzing side has never been able to justify the expense. However, I realize that I'm in the minority. At every writer's gathering people are talking, texting, and performing other tasks on their phones. This was particularly evident at RWA National in Orlando. Look at any table during lunch or the awards ceremony and you'd see at least one smart phone in use.

As I watched my friends on their smart phones, I began to wonder if a smart phone is an essential tool in a writer's career rather than a luxury or a toy. In what ways might a smart phone be used to help a writer's career?

After surveying members of my writing chapter, I've come up with these examples of writing-related uses.

1. *Connection.* Whether published or unpublished, having a smart phone allows a writer to stay in touch with editors, agents, and fellow writers even while running errands or attending a child's swim practice. No more delay in receiving a critical, and potentially time-sensitive e-mail about those latest contract changes. This is particularly helpful when traveling out of town, since many business class hotels now charge a daily fee for internet access. And for areas where cell reception is poor but there is wi-fi connectivity, a smart phone allows a writer to at least stay connected via e-mail.
2. *Promotion.* Whether posting on blogs, updating her Facebook page, or any other aspect of social networking a writer participates in to keep her name and book title in the public mind, having a smart phone allows a writer to take care of some of these tasks whenever there's a moment of down time, such as waiting in line at the grocery store or waiting to get through security at the airport.
3. *Research.* Again, waiting in any line is a great time to surf the internet to find out just what type of boots the heroine would need for a climb in the Andes.
4. *Directions.* Suppose a writer gets lost on the way to a weekend writing workshop and none of the listed contacts are answering their phones? A smart phone allows a writer to pull up the directions from the host's website. Some phones can even download step-by-step driving instructions.
5. *Industry news.* Keeping updated on the latest publishing news and following new releases and upcoming tour appearances of favorite authors is another way a writer can put a smart phone to use.
6. *Scheduling.* A smart phone allows a writer to keep all calendar events handy, making it easy to instantly reschedule a critique group meeting or set up an impromptu lunch with fellow writers. She can surf the internet to find a restaurant centrally located to all involved and even check out the menu to make certain all food allergies are accounted for.
7. *Contact management.* With contacts stored on a smart phone involving more than just phone numbers, there's no more need for business cards (except for the pretty designs). A writer can enter the contact info of the fascinating person next to her at lunch, and even snap a photo of the

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person and attach it to the contact info. Add that person to the mailing list group for some marketing points.

8. *Documentation.* Most smart phones now have decent cameras built in. A writer can use her phone to take photos of downtown Paris while on a research trip, or to capture a friend posing with her new RITA. She can instantly e-mail out the photos, or save them to post later on a website or blog.
9. *Notes.* Whether via a voice recording explaining that the photo of the castle is the one the hero lives in, or by typing pitch notes into a text program as a handy reminder if her mind blanks during her editor appointment, a smart phone allows a writer to store information about her story while away from home.
10. *Writing.* Text applications can be used to write new story material. Using a mobile application such as Dragon Dictation to translate speech into text, a writer can add to her story while driving or taking a walk.

I'm certain there are other uses for smart phones, but you get the idea. There are many ways a smart writer can use her smart phone to further her career.

Add all of the above together and a writer might very well be able to justify the cost of a new phone and the additional monthly fee for a data plan as a business necessity.

As for me? I'm a bit closer to making that leap, but haven't quite found the phone/carrier combination that will make the upgrade worth the cost.

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