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Build a Multimedia Go Bag

More and more reporters are being asked to collect information out in the field and deliver it back to their editors immediately. Newsrooms are starting to hire "mojos," or "mobile journalists," and they're expecting high-quality digital content on deadline. We all know that requires solid news judgment, good information gathering skills and a knack for working well under pressure.

But as any mojo will tell you, it also requires having a well-stocked multimedia "go bag."

Often when I'm leading seminars on multimedia reporting in the field, one of the first things I do is offer up my bag to participants and urge them to rifle through it. I'd like for you to do the same here, virtually. My goal is to both show you how easy it is to carry all the necessary tools of a mobile journalist and to provide you with a list so that you can get started building - and using - your own go bag.

The Essentials

- laptop (I have a MacBook Pro)
- additional protective cover for the laptop (I use the Axio hardsleeve)
- power supply
- extension cord for power supply (I use Monster Power Outlets to Go 4)
- four AAA batteries
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- mobile phone with data connectivity: I use the BlackBerry Pearl, T-mobile is my carrier
- additional protective case for phone
- power supply for phone: I have one that works both in the car and with a regular outlet
- audio recorder: I use the Olympus WS320 audio recorder (I'm currently testing two other audio recorders, however)
- lavalier mic (generic - brand unknown)
- two sets of cheap earphones: you may want/ need to have a source listen to audio or video content
- High-quality noise canceling earphones: I use Shure
- a digital camera: I use the Canon Powershot SD1000
- a digital video recorder: I use the Sony Handicam (DCR-HC21) or the flip.
- Two blank mini-DV tapes

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Helpful in the Field

- iPod + case
- USB cable for iPod
- additional power supply (wall unit) for iPod
- five additional USB cables (varying sizes)
- power adapters for countries where you'll be traveling
- 3' crossover ethernet cable
- a retractable ethernet/ USB/ phone cord with converters
- some kind of international GPS device: I use the Garmin nuvi 750 (car/ bike/ pedestrian navigation unit)

These Might Come In Handy, Too...

- Canary Wireless Sniffer (no longer manufactured)
- three Mac video adapters (for projectors)
- extra 6' projector/ video extension cord
- S-Video cable
- DocuPen R700 for scanning and saving documents on the fly
- mini plug splitter
- bluetooth headset (I'm currently using a Jabra BT 250v, but that's likely to change soon)
- mini staples

Personally, I Never Leave Home Without...

- wallet
- house keys
- business cards
- vitamins (I take U.S.-brand Flintstones - more powerful doses make me sick)
- eyeglass cleaning kit
- sunglasses
- small notebook
- three multicolor pens (I use the Pilot FEED GP3, but you can only get them in Japan)
- two Sharpie permanent markers
- Listerine mint strips
- Tums (antacid lozenges)

The contents of my "go bag" weigh in at around 22 pounds (nearly 10 kg), and for a long time I was looking for something that was less strain on my back. Until recently, I was using the Downloader Laptop Backpack from ebags, which I liked - however I wanted something a bit more professional. I still use it for long trips, but for day-to-day assignments and client meetings, I now use a Briggs & Riley rolling bag.

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