

Resources

Home > Resources



What's Your Favorite App? CAEs Share Their Secret Weapons

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As Certified Association Executives, we are a busy lot, thriving on a fast-paced schedule that juggles a myriad of personal and professional pursuits. We are constantly challenged to produce at a high level, often while balancing a calendar that may find us in multiple cities and states over the course of just one week.

The explosion of smartphones, apps, and online tools has made it easier than ever to do our jobs from wherever we find ourselves on a given day. A 2012 [Flury Report](#) puts this explosion in perspective, noting that the rate of Android and iOS adoption has outpaced the 1980s' computer revolution.

Beth Ziesenis, author of the [Ask Beth Z website](#) and your self-proclaimed "Nerdy Best Friend," regularly offers association professionals thoughts on how to take advantage of apps and online solutions. Beth explains the explosion by saying, "We can't help but ride the technological waves, and we discover how much we can get done with just our phones and our tablets."

In Beth's experience, association professionals are turning to apps and online solutions predominantly for three reasons: syncing files, increasing productivity (e.g., task management), and managing email on the go.

So, which apps and online tools are CAEs relying on? Having recently left the friendly confines of a standalone association and launched a new venture, I'm always on the lookout for tools to help me create a truly virtual office. I rely on [Evernote](#) (file management, paid), [Asana](#) (project management, free) and [HootSuite](#) (social media, free/paid) on a daily basis.

Other CAEs recently used the [CAE LinkedIn group](#) to share their favorites. Here is a sampling of responses:

Jill Snitcher McQuain, ESQ, CAE: "My favorite app is [Audible.com](#). I can download a ton of self-help or business-related books and read (er, listen to) them while I am running. It's great because exercise clears my head, and it's a great time to think big-picture about being a leader or running a business. Most of my creativity and brainstorming happen this way."

Emily Woody Bibens, MPhil, CAE: "My favorite apps are [Google Drive](#) and [CloudOn](#). Not the most exciting apps, but for a small AMC, Google Drive eliminates the need for expensive servers and IT infrastructure while still allowing all of my files to synch between devices (perfect for traveling). I have started using [Podio](#) as well. My initial reaction is positive, but I have yet to really implement it."

Susan Brinkhaus, CAE: "[Wunderlist](#) is wonderful. I can keep lists for both work and home that sync with all of my devices and have the ability to share with others. It's definitely a valuable organizing tool."

Brian Summers, CAE: "I use [Dropbox](#) to share folders or files with volunteer leaders and staff. I use [Join.Me](#) for quick online meetings and webinars. I also use [Prezi](#), which is more of a program, but a great substitute for PowerPoint."

Down the road, Beth expects that "we'll switch our mindset from talking about individual apps and think more in terms of systems. Instead of having one app that manages our calendar and another that handles our file synchronization, we'll find more features under one roof."

One thing is for certain: As long as we continue to use smartphones and tablets, there will be a continuously growing pool of options to pick from.

Todd Von Deak earned his CAE in 2009 thanks to countless hours with his flashcards and an incredible study group. He is now the founder and president of TVD Associates, a consultancy based in Philadelphia focused on membership, marketing, and operational challenges. Email: todd@toddvondeak.com