

As I installed my Logitech Google TV box I checked my email, I mean GMail, on my G2 Slide. Someone needed some info, so I pulled up the information from a file stored on Google Docs using my browser of choice, Chrome.

Then it occurred to me. I'm surrounded by Google and for the most part, I like it.

It took the G2 Slide, with Android and a decent keyboard to finally dump my Sidekick. I can't type quite as fast on it as I did on my Sidekick but the features and apps make me just as, if not more productive than I was with the sidekick. The phone works. Its fast. It rarely freezes.. It has great integration with T-Mobile. I like the apps and the Google Market for Android has more than enough apps for what I want to do and more importantly continues to add more apps for the things I didnt know I wanted to do until I played around in the Market Place.

Just as importantly, it does a great job of running the Sling Player. I love me some Sling Box. Can't live without it. Not running it is a deal killer. It runs it well.

On the PC front, I have an HP desktop at home and use the new Mac Air, which truth be told I love as well. Perfect Size. Battery and sleep mode made it a keeper. I'm not a fan of Safari. No particular reason not to like it. No particular reason to like it. So I don't use it. I had been a fan of Firefox since it came out. Live Bookmarks to read RSS headlines works the way i work. I can get through more data quicker than using a Reader. Unfortunately, firefox freezes too much. It just goes out to lunch far too often.

For some unknown reason for which im not going to search for a solution because its inconceivable that it doesn't work, Firefox has a hard time loading GMail. Who knows why. Whether or not its me or the software is irrelevant. If you don't work with GMail or you don't recognize the problem of a load fail and offer a solution, I'm done with you. I'm sure at some level it has to do with something I've done with the configuration of Firefox, but I don't have time to deal with it. This is something that should never be a problem.

Which lead me to Chrome. I have always had Chrome installed on all of my PCs for when Firefox slowed or froze. It was my backup. When I ran into the problems with GMail, it became my primary browser. Its fast. It works. It has extensions. It syncs. Sold.

Which leads us to GMail. It works. I like the threading. Its fast. I have 2 Terabytes of additional storage that I buy from Google so any file is no problem. No more having to prune file sizes or worry about disk capacity which was a huge problem when I used Outlook. I think I have been using GMail 3 or 4 years now, and it hasn't ever given me a problem (save the random outages which are livable). I like the labeling. I like the filters. I have used Imap to import most of my old Outlook. Which is probably the worst part of using GMail. It's a pain in the ass to take 20 years of Outlook, Outlook Express, Eudora and other random email files and get them into GMail using IMAP. If anyone has a better solution, please let me know. Or better yet, can someone at Google please come up with an import from those files? Then I would never have to buy a copy of Outlook again. I'm guessing that would please Larry, Eric and Sergey to no end. Hopefully someone is putting some of their 20pct time (or whatever the percentage is now) to work on this opportunity.

Finally, the best part of GMail is because I basically have my professional history (I haven't kept all emails for the past couple years for various reasons, but I probably am north of 500k emails in GMail) and can easily search GMail from any device I can get access to information in seconds that I could never get to before.

True story. I was walking to a business dinner in NYC. Someone told me they were going to start working with a new manager and asked me if I knew him. The name sounded familiar and I thought I had done something with him during the Broadcast.com days. A quick GMail search from my phone and I found 2 emails we had exchanged when he was trying to sell a company he was involved with back in 1996. That's why I use GMail.

I find myself using Google Docs the same way. Used to be everything was open and saved with Office. No more. I haven't been able to dump my copies of office. There are still features and formatting options that Docs doesn't support. But anything sent to me via email gets opened first in Google Docs and then saved to Docs. Again, access from any device is a time saver and provides me the opportunity to never be without the information I need. No matter where I am. It's another opportunity for Google to enhance their products at the expense of Microsoft Office.

I also LOVE google voice. Love it. I have my mobile phone number forwarded to it. I LOVE the transcription and the ability to listen via email. I LOVE the extra phone numbers to give to people I don't want to give my phone number to. I love that I can save messages easily without filling up my phone. I love that i can respond to texts via email. It is just a stellar product that will only get better.

When it comes to devices, i try everything. I have my iPads, which I still use. Google products seem to work well. The iPad is the first device I use in the morning to go through my GMail. It's also my primary device for using SlingBox. The crazy thing is I probably use the iPad and Slingbox more IN MY HOUSE then I do anywhere else. There just is no point in trying to convince a 7-year-old that what daddy wants to watch is more important than her watching Scooby Doo for the 273rd time.

But the iPad doesn't have a lock on my tablet use. I just got a Samsung Tab. I have to say that I like the smaller size sometimes. And sometimes I like the bigger screen. So far, when I'm places where I can get comfortable, spread out and work, whether in my bedroom or in a hotel room, I like the iPad more. When I'm at a restaurant, in someone else's office, anyplace where space is more limited, the Samsung Tab just feels more comfortable. The Tab does pretty much everything that I use the iPad for, including all the Google stuff I do and of course Sling Box. Just the fact that it's not so obvious when I'm at the gym or at lunch somewhere just seems to make it a little more comfortable. I don't see taking both devices with me when I travel, but so far in this test face the Tab is more than holding its own and I can see why people would prefer it. Chalk one more up for Android and the Google LifeStyle

The last entry in my Google LifeStyle self-analysis is the Logitech Revue AKA Google TV. The good news is that it was a breeze to install. Plug it in. Turn it on. Let it download the updates and boom, it works. The problem is that it doesn't do much of anything of consequence. I wanted to find an NBA game that happened to be on. I typed in Heat vs Jazz. It gave me a list of Heat vs Jazz highlights that were on Youtube. I gave it a show that was on at the time. It gave me the SD channel for the show rather than the HD, despite the fact that the device required a HDTV and an HDMI cable to work. Beyond searching for shows or games that were currently on, it didn't interface with my DVR, which I expected and can deal with. It actually was easy to flip back and forth between my providers' and the Google programming guides. So the DVR wasnt a problem.

What was a problem was that search results seemed to put web video first. Even ahead of shows that were currently on or about the start. That made it unusable. It quickly became easier to use the default providers programming guide to see what was currently on, or coming soon.

That is not to say the Revue was worthless. The box showed real potential as a network PC. Using the built-in Chrome browser, it was easy to bring up Gmail, Google Docs and websites and do all the web-based things I could do on an iPad, Tab or PC. In fact, because of the keyboard, I could possibly do some work using this box. Possibly being the operative word. Gmail in particular was far too slow. Slow to load. Slow to bring up new screens. But if and when it does speed up, the Revue could easily be a very inexpensive network PC.

I also like YouTube's Leanback. It didn't work great for me as a TV alternative. It's too much work and too much of a crapshoot to use it as a primary source of entertainment. It excelled as background noise. That is probably a bigger compliment than it sounds. Whether its music or a TV, I like to have something on. It's just a nice diversion. Leanback excels at putting up music or interesting clips that have the quality of sound and picture to make full use of my big screen.

I don't know where this puts me on the Google Fan Boy meter, but Google has sucked me in to the Google Lifestyle. Not on all fronts. Google TV has a long way to go, but Google is right there. Next up ... Google App Maker.

Oh, and since most people think I hate Google because I called their acquisition of YouTube stupid and supported Viacom's lawsuit against them, let me just say that I haven't changed my mind. I think Viacom is right in appealing the lawsuit. IMHO, and I'm not a lawyer, YouTube broke the spirit and letter of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act their first couple years of existence. There were many other companies who got into the same business and tried to become successful without breaking the law. Had they chosen to do what YouTube did and ignore copyright law the entire digital video landscape would be different. I think that's a bad precedent to set. That said, YouTube deserves credit for completely changing how they do business. Their contentid system works. The realtime option to content owners to choose to monetize content rather than take it down was and is brilliant. I also think their content people are starting to realize that offering content on consignment is not going to work for any but long tail content. So Youtube is starting to do some things right. But they still have one fundamental problem.

YouTube's fundamental business problem is that they are in business of subsidizing ALL/100pct of the bandwidth and hosting costs of consumer and small to medium size business video. That is a huge problem. Our ability to capture ever-increasing amounts of video at ever-increasing bit rates is growing exponentially. How happy are companies like Cisco knowing that the better they make their FLip cameras, with more storage and better resolution, the more money Google/YouTube has to spend as people host it on their servers and use their bandwidth to show to their friends and family. Of course it's also costing Facebook more and more money. Which has created an interesting dynamic as both compete to host video.

Ask anyone what it costs to host their videos for their friends to watch. Everyone thinks its free... Which brings up the business question, will advertising ever ramp up fast enough to cover the costs of hosting and distributing video ?

I don't know. What I do know is that Google choosing to pay for all my video hosting costs is just one more reason to choose the Google Lifestyle.

Is there a T Shirt for this anywhere ?