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## {Technology} SPOTLIGHT

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A Delray Beach, Fla., police officer uses PocketCitation software from Advanced Public Safety Inc. to fill out a traffic ticket on his BlackBerry. A printer on the officer's hip allows him to print the ticket without returning to his cruiser.

- PHOTO COURTESY ADVANCED PUBLIC SAFETY INC.

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### New apps put BlackBerry on hips of non-traditional users

By MATT WALCOFF

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WATERLOO

From its humble beginnings as a two-way pager, the Research In Motion BlackBerry has become the Swiss Army knife of electronics.

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Most people know the BlackBerry as a device for e-mail, web browsing, telephony and, on recent models, music, video and

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In the past few years, however, a broad community of RIM partners have come up with hundreds of other uses for BlackBerrys, some of them taking ingenious use of the devices' low cost, flexibility and ubiquitousness.

Police officers can use BlackBerrys to write tickets without having to return to their cruiser. Fleet managers use BlackBerrys' GPS functionality to keep track of trucks or school buses. An Irish company is testing a system in which auto mechanics plug a BlackBerry into a car to run vehicle diagnostic tests.

Locally, Victim Services of Waterloo Region is working with RIM on a program to provide BlackBerrys to women at risk of domestic violence. In case of danger, a woman could press a panic button on the BlackBerry, which would use GPS to relay the person's location to the police.

The 2007-08 BlackBerry Solutions Guide includes 616 applications created by RIM's partner companies, from ABC QuickSilver Ltd.'s Chinese-language stock-quotation software to Zingerang Connect, a mobile messaging service.

Perhaps the most unique BlackBerry-based solution of all is under development at Diabetes Detection Inc. (DDI) in Palo Alto, Calif. DDI has started clinical trials of a BlackBerry add-on that uses the device's vibration function to measure patients' sensitivity to shaking.

Reduced sensitivity to vibration is a symptom of neuropathy, a warning sign of adult-onset diabetes.

Traditionally, doctors have tested for neuropathy using a tuning fork, says Sadruddin Currimbhoy, chief operating officer of DDI parent company Hathaway Global Inc. Doctors subjectively try to determine how fast the fork is vibrating when a patient begins or ceases to feel the vibrations.

With DDI's solution, a doctor places a BlackBerry against a patient's body and gradually increases the vibration until the patient feels it, or decreases the vibration until the patient stops feeling it. The doctor then presses a button on the BlackBerry, which records precisely how fast it was vibrating at the time.

"What our product provides is the ability for doctors to be able to have some sort of quantifiable detection threshold," Currimbhoy says.

DDI hopes to have the solution on the market in the first half of next year, he says.

A Markham company has integrated BlackBerrys into its infectious-disease control program for hospitals.

Wimcare's software keeps track of sick patients, medical equipment and staff to prevent cross contamination.

The company's older software only provides information to doctors or staff members working on stationary computers. In case of emergencies, a "code red" or "code blue" might be announced over the public address system, possibly worrying patients and visitors.

By integrating BlackBerrys into the infection control system, Wimcare will allow doctors and staff to be notified immediately and discreetly of any urgent matter, says Cheryl Advocat, Wimcare's CEO.

"When people are walking around with their BlackBerrys, they're getting a special ring for these codes, and it doesn't intrude on the noise level or the environment," she says.

In addition, users can push a button on their BlackBerrys to inform the program, and other staff members, that they are on their way to deal with the situation.

Because BlackBerrys are relatively inexpensive, BlackBerry-based solutions

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can appeal to a broader base of small businesses and institutions than can solutions requiring dedicated equipment, says Jeff Scott, marketing director for RIM partner Infinite Peripherals.

For instance, warehouses typically scan barcodes with all-in-one scanners/mobile computers that can cost more than \$1,000 US each.

For \$349, Infinite Peripherals offers a simple, "dumb" barcode reader that attaches to a worker's BlackBerry. Software on the BlackBerry processes the barcode information.

"Not everyone has the deep pockets of a Frito Lay," Scott says. "Although they want to use the technology and leverage it, they were unable to financially."

In some industries, BlackBerrys are already fairly common, so BlackBerry-based solutions allow customers to improve productivity without buying much, or any, new hardware.

Jack Siney, chief operating officer of Advanced Public Safety Inc. of Deerfield Beach, Fla., says BlackBerrys are not the ideal devices to write and print traffic citations, since their screens are so small. But many police officers already use BlackBerrys to send e-mail and run background checks, Siney says.

So early this year, the company released a BlackBerry version of its PocketCitation software used to write and, with an attached printer, print off tickets.

"It's the folks that have already invested in that platform that now gives it more leveragability," Siney says.

BlackBerrys are also attractive to third-party solution providers because they are relatively easy to customize.

"One of the advantages of using the BlackBerry is their software development kit is highly configurable with the hardware within," Currimbhoy says. "Some of the other developers don't give us that capability."

Like Microsoft Corp. and Apple Inc., RIM has fostered the development of an ecosystem of third-party software developers and solution providers to develop new applications for RIM's BlackBerry devices.

The company allows registered developers to download the software environment they can use to write their own programs for BlackBerrys. More than 125,000 programmers have done so to date.

RIM has an extensive partnership program for third-party solution providers. The Waterloo company helps its partners obtain equipment, software, technical support and marketing support, among other services.

"They have an ISV (independent software vendor) program which has been excellent to work with and to obtain critical information," Scott says.

"They're also very open for discussion. I'm able to obtain meetings all the way up to the CEO level, and I've had many of them."

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