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The Portable Life: Why We'll End Up Carrying Just One Device

The phone and the computer will merge into one device, because once work means talking to your agents, it no longer matters which device you talk to them from.

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I feel the line between the phone and the computer belongs to the past. Today I need two devices to do what is really one thing: talk to my AI agents. Why can't they be one and the same? I believe the two are heading for a huge merger, and that what will drive it is the need to stay connected to your agents at all times.

My own experience

I'll confess I've developed a need: to be able to talk to my agents from anywhere so I can keep working. I run my business with agents, from internal and external communications to invoicing. Those agents run on a Mac mini I keep at home, although the intelligence behind them lives on the AI companies' servers. And since everything they work with lives only on that machine, I'm tied to it whenever I want to keep working.

For me that was a really serious limitation, so I built myself a phone app, to feel I was still in control of my business. With it I connect to the terminal windows on my computer where my agents work, and I keep talking to them as if I were sitting at my desk. There's basically no difference, because what I do in both places is the same: talk to the machine.

I know this need comes from how deep I am in AI. But I think everyone will end up having it. People will be on the train and want to know how their emails went, whether a piece of work is done and where it is, or to send something they forgot. That will be one of the big demands we make of our devices: the portable life. Over time, devices will be marketed for exactly that: for letting you stay connected to your day for longer, and better.

A change in how we talk to machines

That's why the change I see is less in our devices than in how we communicate with machines, and the devices merging is what follows from it. Until now the computer has been a helper, and apps simply the tools you needed to do what you had to do. Once people see the computer as an equal, someone they can simply ask in their own words, we'll stop thinking in terms of unnatural interfaces. And if all we do with the machine is talk to it, it doesn't matter what device we're holding.

It'll happen the way it did with the telephone. Less than forty years ago, in some Spanish villages, an operator still put your call through by hand at a switchboard; in Spain we call them "las chicas del cable," the cable girls[1]. Today that feels like another world. We don't even dial anymore: we tell Siri "call so-and-so," and it does.

Why now

People have been trying this for more than a decade, with phones that double as a computer when you plug them into a screen[2]. But it has barely changed how anyone works: it's something you use in a pinch.

Until recently, nobody could seriously consider it. Phones had to run desktop apps designed for a mouse and keyboard, and phone apps are still stripped-down versions of them, because you know the heavy lifting, like managing your clients or editing video professionally, gets done on the computer. With agents, that changes: the heavy lifting becomes something you ask for in plain words, from any device.

The power it takes is already almost in our pockets. The iPhone 15 Pro could run console games, and the iPad has the same kind of chip as the Mac[3]. I think AI will help us squeeze even more out of the small processors Apple and Qualcomm design, and build software so efficient that everything a computer can do fits into a smaller device. Don't get me wrong: computers will get much more powerful too. But what the average user needs grows much more slowly. The intelligence will stay on the servers, and all the average user needs is a connection to their apps' servers and two or three agent terminals open. Once a phone running a desktop operating system can handle that, why not merge the two devices?

You could argue I've already solved this: with my app I talk to my agents from my phone, and the intelligence is on the servers. But all my business data still lives on the Mac mini at home, and I'm tied to it if I want to keep working. My app, like those phones that double as computers, gets me out of a jam, but it doesn't free me from the second device. What still keeps the phone from being that computer comes down to the hardware: cooling, heat and battery life, plus the complexity of the chip itself.

I live in Apple's ecosystem and have everything synced, but I still have two devices. Why can't I have just one?

What I'd like to see

These days I hardly use a mouse: I work with a keyboard and a small remote, six buttons and a D-pad, that I use to jump between apps and bring up each app's agent. The remote doesn't have to do the work; it just has to get me to the agent, and from there I talk. I picture the computer of the future as a small box, about the size of a Mac mini, that you plug into any screen and use with a keyboard and that remote. And maybe that box will turn out to be the phone in our pockets.

Wouldn't it be incredible to just bring an iPhone Duo[4] close to a keyboard and a remote, let MagSafe, the magnet on its back, connect them, and have a computer nearly as powerful as a Mac mini? Then you detach it, fold it and take it with you to lunch, where it goes back to being what the phone has been ever since it was invented: the quick, always-there device.

In the morning you unfold it and carry on working in the car or on the train. You get to your desk, where there's only a screen, a keyboard and a remote. You bring the phone close, or plug it in with a cable (I think HDMI is here to stay), grab the remote and pick up the conversation with your agents right where you left off. At the end of the day you unplug it, fold it and put it in your pocket.

And when you travel, which we'll do more and more, your whole world could come with you in that one device: communication inside companies is going to change so much that far more people will be able to work remotely, and travel keeps getting cheaper. Eventually we may not even need the remote: we'll just hold down the screen and send it a voice message, the way we do on WhatsApp.

What changes

The real problem you face today is being cut off from your work. When you're not at your computer, your work stops completely, and on your phone all you have are apps that help you get by. Agents that do things for you will put an end to that feeling, and your phone will become your computer too.

In the end, people will be on the train, on a plane or in the car, talking to their agents and running their day from a single device.

That world, where someone else's AI writes the emails, yours reads them and yours replies to theirs, comes at a price for those of us who live in it, and I want to devote my next essay entirely to that price.

The portable life

For now, though, I still need two devices to talk to my agents. When what you do in both places is the same, the line between the phone and the computer stops making sense. Technology is as much about exploring as it is about creating. Right now, carrying your whole life in a single device is an experiment, and so far I'm only living half of it.

Notes

[1] Spain's last manual telephone exchange closed in Polopos, in the province of Granada, in December 1988.

[2] Motorola tried it in 2011 with the Atrix and its Lapdock, Microsoft in 2015 with Continuum, and Samsung in 2017 with DeX. In March 2026, Google brought desktop mode to Android on Pixel phones and compatible Samsung devices.

[3] In 2021 Apple put the M1, the same chip it used in its Macs, into the iPad Pro.

[4] The iPhone Duo, the first foldable iPhone, was introduced in September 2026. For now, its MagSafe only handles charging and accessories; it can't drive a display.

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