Technology is changing the way location professionals work faster than you can say “the Cloud.” The good news: The countless hours spent looking for a photo lab, pasting photos into folders and rushing them to FedEx after a long day of scouting are gone — and they’ve been replaced by a need for speed. In the past, we were given two full weeks to scout and prep. Now we’re lucky if we can get two days. Location professionals are not only asked to find a needle in a haystack, we’re asked to thread it too. So what are some of the must-haves for today’s locations pros? We queried members of the **Location Managers Guild of America** (LMGA) for the latest in technology tips, and these are their Top Five:
The Smart Phone

It’s only through our iPhones, Blackberries and other “smart” devices that location pros are able to make the impossible possible. With a smart phone, you can take a couple quick reference shots of the location a director finds over lunch, upload it to your Website and send an email of it to the rest of the team. You can receive emails and images from your team in the field and answer their questions (like “Where and when will the sun rise and set?”).

What apps do most scouts and managers have on their smart phones? The LMGA Filmmakers Guide to Location Filming is the first app offered by an entertainment guild. Created by LMGA founding member Beth Tate, the app includes professional resources from film-friendly locations and film commissions to vendors of on-location must-haves, like temporary air-conditioning or portable restroom and dumpsters. You can also find a professional scout or manager, and there’s a direct link to the LMGA site (at locationmanagers.org) where the online “Cyber Kit” houses many more useful tools.

Additional popular smart-phone apps include:

• **Sun Seeke**r and **LightTrac** (because sunlight and photography go together)

• **PanoStitch** and **AutoStitch Panorama** (or any panorama or photo-stitching application)

• **Spyglass** (which allows you to apply a compass overlay directly onto a photograph along with a myriad of useful tools)

• **OneEdit** (which lets you make batch changes to images before emailing or uploading)

• **FTP on the Go** (or other FTP programs that let you upload your scout photos directly to your Website)

• **WorldCard Mobile** (or other card scanners for transforming a picture of a business card into a database contact)

• **Scan to PDF** (or any app that lets you use your mobile phone camera as a document scanner)

• **PDF Expert** and **EasySign** (which help you to manage, fill out and sign forms and contracts or obtain signatures while in the field)

• **Google Earth** (to help you peer into backyards while parked up the street

• Any GPS app, like **TeleNav** (that lets you jump from your car to the scout van and still navigate seamlessly with your own GPS)

• **Yelp** (which helps you to find the best place for a tech scout lunch but, more importantly, shows photos of restaurants, spas, libraries or any other business that you’re interested in scouting)

The Digital Camera

Digital photography now allows for hundreds of images per location with instantaneous file

transfers to your creative team. While high-end cameras are always fun, something small, light and handy is always useful. A number of scouts like the **Canon** S100 because it fits in your pocket and offers automatic modes for point-and-shoot moments as well as a full manual and RAW modes (for when you want to take beauty shots). It shoots in the 16:9 aspect ratio favored by cinematographers and offers a 5X optical zoom.
Sony
also offers a few slim pocket cameras that feature an in-camera sweeping panorama option that saves scouts from the tedious task of photo-stitching. It's great for keeping perspective, whether shooting small rooms or out in open spaces.

The Apple iPad

Part computer, part presentation tool, the **Apple** iPad is a location pro's dream. It lets scouts and managers present their work in a format that's much easier on the eyes than a small smart-phone screen. It's an indispensable tool for presenting images to your creative team while on the go. You can also use it to fill out permit forms and obtain contract signatures — and then you can just email them to your office or upload them. Many iPhone apps are available for the iPad, so you can perform an array of functions on the road, from breaking down a screenplay to completing budget spreadsheets. And while other tablets may perform most, if not all, of the same functions, location pros seem to favor the iPad for its high-resolution screen and ease of integration into their other tech systems.

Dropbox, YouSendIt and the Cloud

Emailing a picture or two is easy enough, but when you're in the field and need to move larger files around, there are several popular programs that allow you to send large images and files to clients, co-workers and your other devices. Now that the Cloud is around, it's easier than ever to access your digital photography devices.

Photo Websites

Television, feature film, commercial and print scouts and managers rely on their personal websites to display their scout photos. Popular options include **SmugMug** and **ImageEvent**, but a few location pros have taken to creating and marketing highly sophisticated Web galleries

of their own.

While location professionals have always been early adopters of new gear and gadgets, today's scouts and managers don't live by technology alone. Having all the hottest and newest tech tools, bells and whistles is no substitute for experience and training. To survive at the top of the game, a great location scout or manager needs to have an encyclopedic knowledge of the local environment and resources. They also need razor-sharp practical logic and budgeting skills combined with the mindset of an explorer (and the tenaciousness of a rat terrier!). Above all, the consummate location pro must have exemplary people skills to manage their own team as well as satisfy the needs of directors, producers, production crew and the general public (whose agenda does not always mirror that of the production). And all that is needed just on Tuesday.