Beckingham, @suebecks' Emergency #EdTechRations

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When considering my choice of emergency items - the items I cannot possibly go without on a daily basis - it got me thinking about if and how our personality might affect our shopping habits. How do traits like being decisive, cautious, curious and adventurous impact on the way we shop for and then engage with technology?

- **The Decisive Shopper**: knows exactly what she wants and goes to the store, locates the item, buys it and leaves.
- **The Cautious Shopper**: often hesitant and will ponder, not necessarily making a decision until opinions are sought.
- **The Curious Shopper**: spends a lot of time exploring different items
- **The Adventurous Shopper**: loves to try new things and known to buy on impulse

Indulge me here whilst I take this a bit further. We don't buy technology every day or even every week, but we all buy food. Our food shopping habits might portray us as:

- **Just in time buyers**: last minute to fulfil immediate needs
- **Organised**: weekly replenishment and a planned shopping list
- **Bargain hunters**: after the latest special offer
- **Scouts** (be prepared): extra supplies prior to public holidays or impending severe weather
- **Hoarders**: multiples of everything
- **Indulgers**: special treats or big spenders on those often calorific non-essentials

The Larder
What goes in your larder can depend on the kind of shopper you are. Available time to shop and cash to spend, the time of year, increased work commitments, impending visitors and other factors are also likely to affect your shopping habits and therefore what you have on your shelves. Access to power and the size of your fridge and freezer will determine what you can store. Recipe books, cooking programs, friends and new healthy living regimes can all influence what you buy.

The Emergency Ration Pack
When you think of the term emergency rations you'd be forgiven for thinking of those food items that you buy in case of emergency when partaking in some outward-bound activity – water, chocolate, meat jerky, nuts. But think about the items you habitually use. On a daily basis I pack my emergency rations to get me through the day at work, avoiding the need to go out and buy supplies at inflated prices. Ration packs need to be compact and light to carry, nutritious, and where

no access to a kitchen, ambient (no refrigeration needed) and ready to eat. Typically, this might be a sandwich but I am often influenced to try new things by observing what my peers eat.

So, applying the food analogy to my use of technology, let me share with you what I currently have in my 'Tech Larder' and the items I must have with me in my 'Tech Emergency Ration Pack' (aka cannot go out without).

My Tech Larder

The items in my larder have increased considerably over the last couple of decades. Looking back to the late 90s as a family we shared a desktop PC and a landline telephone. Dial up internet meant we could choose to use one or the other, but not both at the same time. Before long we all acquired mobile phones, which were then upgraded to smartphones. Wi-Fi gave us all 24/7 access to a whole new online experience. As prices came down, laptops replaced the desktop and in time we each had our own. A combined wireless printer and scanner serves us all. New apps like Skype enabling video chat required webcams and headsets, but then were made redundant as replacement laptops had these integrated within them. Streaming entertainment and the use of headphones meant we could engage in individual interests whilst sitting in the same room. Multiple devices required additional multi-way plug extension sockets to keep our devices charged. Portability became a focus and iPads and tablets became desirables, providing extra screen size our smartphones didn't have, and yet were still light to carry around. From 3G to 4G, mobile contracts gave us access to the internet wherever there was a signal and as we became 'forever switched on'; battery packs provided power back up when we were out and about. A solar pack kept my phone going when I spent 5 days trekking across the Sahara Desert!

So, in my tech larder I have amassed a variety of items. Some are used daily, others sporadically, and there is a collection of items laid to rest in the loft as I haven't yet had the heart or inclination to dispose of them.

I'd consider myself as a Curious Tech Shopper (spends a lot of time exploring different shops) usually doing so online. My interest in technology is often piqued by the devices my peers have, articles and reviews I read online, and a network I can reach out to and find out more. My shopping habits for technology are multiplex:

- **Organised**: in the main I'll replace items only when needed
- **Bargain hunter**: it's sometimes a challenge to miss out on a special offer
- **Scout (be prepared)**: the battery pack, extra batteries, spare pencils and, if space, a multi-way plug extension in case sockets are in short supply are all essentials when away from home
- **Hoarder**: find it hard to throw things out, rather than multiples of the same device
- **Indulger**: always tempted by upgrades … and I would add
- **Window shopper**: I have a list as long as my leg of things I'd like to buy!

My Tech Emergency Ration Pack

Now to get to the point of this chapter, what tech would I consider as essential items in my emergency rations? If I had to gather the most cherished items I use every day into one bag I could carry with me, here is what I would include and why each is important.

Smartphone: For years, I cherished my neat and compact Nokia, but with advent of the smartphone I chose the iPhone and have never looked back. Within this amazing device I can access a phone, address book, email, clock, timer, calculator, camera, video, notes, reminders, voice memos, music, compass, map, and of course the Internet. To add to this, I can download a multitude of apps which provide direct links to the social networks I engage with, interactive bus and train timetables, news and shopping sites, and a whole host of other apps that inspire productivity, creativity, and collaboration, as well providing access to entertainment and informal learning. I use my phone a lot so taking its charger is a must. As access to power might be an issue I've recently invested in a Recharge battery charger to provide emergency power.

Laptop: My current laptop is an HP Pavilion which comes with a built-in webcam. I chose a 15-inch screen and find this a nice size to work with. It fits nicely into a Built neoprene laptop bag, the spongy handles making it comfortable to carry. I've not really taken to solely using the touchpad and prefer a mouse. The HP Wireless Z4000 Mouse is slim and a useful travel companion. My preferred browser is Chrome and I've added my frequently used sites to settings so they auto-launch when I open the browser. Battery life is good but the charger has to come with me if I intend to use the laptop throughout the day.

Tablet: If I want to travel lighter, then I may forgo taking my laptop and charger for an IPad Mini. This is just a bigger version of my smartphone (minus the phone) but is easier on the eye. I'm looking for an integrated keyboard/case as for prolonged use I'd find this preferable to the touch screen. A neoprene cover keeps it protected. It shares the same charger I use for my iPhone.

Pen drive and External hard drive: Whilst I use Google Drive and Dropbox for collaborative work, I tend to store items I'm working on and photos on a pen drive, then back this up on an external hard drive. This habit stemmed from the need to access saved items offline. Technology is moving on, and it's now possible to view and edit files using Google Drive offline, and then sync the new version once you have access to Wi-Fi. (Tip: You must be connected to the Internet to turn on offline access.) I'm still reluctant to let go of the pen drive and external hard drive but sometime soon I should.

Kindle: Whilst I could access eBooks on other devices I have, in the sunshine the screens are not reader friendly. The Kindle is small and compact and can easily slip into my bag, providing a source of reading. Battery life is good but taking the charger is a must if away for a few days.

Moleskine notebook and Papermate Non-Stop mechanical pencil: I still love to

write and doodle by hand and rarely leave home without some kind of notebook and pencil. Believe me I've had numerous notepads in various shapes, sizes, designs and colours but my Moleskine has become my favoured one. It is sturdy and the elastic band keeps it closed. I have an A6 version for notes and A5 versions (in different colours) for work and studying. I write with a pencil and go for the mechanical pencil with rubber attached. I'm left handed and not the neatest of writers. Ink smudges.

My daily productivity increases when I have access to technology. I can utilise the time commuting to and from work, or indeed wherever I am. Access to the Internet and my personal learning network has opened my eyes to numerous ways technology can be applied. Curiosity and the willingness to experiment in the knowledge help is always at hand is what I feel has made my 'emergency ration tech pack' so valuable.
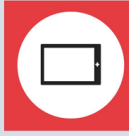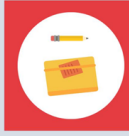

My Emergency Tech Rations — Sue Beckingham @suebecks

Smartphone
If I had to choose just one item it would be my iPhone. I take it everywhere. It provides all I need, however the small screen can be challenging for prolonged working.

Tablet
Lightweight and ideal for meetings and conferences. Bigger screen than a phone. Ideal for social media use and dashboards like Tweetdeck and Hootsuite.
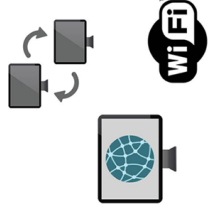
Kindle
It's small, compact and can easily slip into a bag, providing a source of reading wherever I am. Big plus is the glare free screen which makes it ideal in the sun.

Moleskin notebook and pencil
Its always good to have a back up! No worries about battery life or indeed forgetting the charger.

Laptop and mouse
A laptop is my 'working' must have. It replaced a desktop many moons ago. Has a good sized screen and allows for flexible working. Yep, still a sucker for a mouse over touch pad.

Pendrive
Still a useful back up even if you also save your stuff in the cloud (which you should).

Emergency Ration Tips

#01 Use devices and software that sync so that you always have access to what you need.

#02 Develop your personal learning network to gather tech tips and tricks from others.

#03 Know your WiFi hotspots!.