How I Stay Sharp with Technology

by Jason Moos

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The role of technology in my life has changed dramatically over the years, from using the internet as a simple search engine, exchanging mail, interacting and corresponding with people all over the world, to powering tools and gadgets, such as my home speaker system. The internet is not just a way of communicating with humans either, it's granting me access to the things I love most, like music and beautifully crafted hardware. The development of wireless automation is what excites me most about where technology is headed, so this year, I set off with some self-motivating goals. It started small, turning an analog turntable into a digital feed, and blossomed into a grand objective of automating as much of my household as possible.

Thanks to streaming services like Spotify, I spend hours listening to the thousands of artists and albums, available at my fingertips. In the past I've hooked up my iPhone to the receiver and just let the music play. Since my love of music is immense, and so is my record collection, I decided my first hack was going to be the turntable. I wanted to hear that warm vinyl sound in every room of my house.

First, I needed a set of [Play:1 Sonos speakers](). After a few clicks and a virtual swipe of my credit card, a set of 6 white speakers quickly arrived on my doorstep. To set them up, you must download the Sonos App on your smart phone, laptop, or iPad, then plug in the main power cords of each speaker. This allows you to connect your WIFI and control the music. During the set-up process the Sonos App gives you the option to use [Trueplay]()—which is software that tunes your speakers by analyzing the acoustic of your room. Basically, you to wave your iPhone around your room so that the speaker's software can work out the perfect sound for the space. Using the Sonos app, you can stream your music, with a Spotify app integration, from your devices. If you get a couple of speakers then you can group them together to play the same music at the same time, or each speaker can play something different.

Now that I had the standard install up and running, I started reading all the blogs, to figure out how I could join my turntable to the same network. Turns out I still needed a line-in port component. Dang. More hardware to purchase. Since I already had a pre-amp, I went with the [Sonos Connect hardware](), which allowed me to adjust the line-in source level. Turntables on a digital network can be quiet, so I turned it up to level 8. After assigning a name and IP address and creating an independent Wi-Fi network, as I did for the speakers, I was ready to drop the needle on the black circle. Easier said than done. I was experiencing extreme latency, as the transfer of signal was delayed and cutting in/out. The signal strength was also weak.

My first idea was to blame the record player, but I persisted and dove deeper into the blogs and chats seeking work-arounds anyway. It wasn't a hardware issue at all, in fact my record player was fine. In the process of getting my speakers and turntable online, I managed to create competing networks. They were not only fighting for signal strength; they were unable to properly communicate with each other. The record would spin, but I was only hearing every other word. A little more patience and and a lot of troubleshooting allowed me to consolidate the network and reset the residing components. Anxious and excited, I dropped the needle again… no delays! All my frustrations evaporated as I heard each beautiful note of [John Coltrane's Blue Train]() play through on rich sounding vinyl.

As technology changes, so do our expectations. In 1997 I expected to access my email and maybe place some bids on eBay. Depending on the connection, it could take minutes for a webpage to load. Now, with wireless automation, I have the expectation that by the end of the year I will have my speaker system acting as an alarm clock for each member of my family. Our smart system will know who everyone is that walks through our front door and simultaneously play their favorite song as they move through each room of the house. Small experiences, like setting up my wireless home speaker system, helped me set larger goals of implementing smart locks throughout my house and automate energy efficiency too. It's not that the technology is so cutting edge, we all know and see these things in action, but solving small puzzles and learning every day is how I stay sharp.