Embrace Your Inner Geek Session Notes

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Greenius – www.gogreenius.com – Greenius is an online suite of tools for training, onboarding & performance excellence, with over 50 videos for crews and supervisors and an extensive tailgate talk library for getting your crew equipment-trained and safety-ready.

STAFF

Evernote – www.evernote.com – Evernote allows you to capture and prioritize ideas, projects, and to-do lists, so nothing falls through the cracks. It can be loaded on multiple devices and the program syncs seamlessly between the devices when connected to the internet.

OPERATIONS

App Sheet – www.appsheet.com – This app building software is easy to use and can transform your workplace by helping you turn paper documents into an app on your employee's phones (ie. circle check form, accident reporting, etc.)

Fleetio – www.fleetio.com – This all-in-one fleet management app can help track your fleet and maintenance, regardless of fleet size, all in one place.

Google Suite – www.gsuite.google.com – This cloud-based software provides e-mail, calendar, document creation, document storage, and even video chat in one program that is easy to use and very cost effective.

Microsoft 365 – www.office.com – This is Microsoft's answer to G-Suite. It has all the programs you're used to in a cloud-based platform that is usable on all devices.

Grammarly – www.app.grammarly.com – Grammarly is an online grammar checking, spell checking, and plagiarism detection platform. This is one of my favorite apps and should be used by anyone who sends any sort of correspondence to customers.

Tom's Planner – www.tomsplanner.com – This free app allows you to plan out your entire landscape business. It can be used for design-build projects or planning your maintenance business for the entire season. It gives you the ability to then share it with your team.

Microsoft Planner – www.task.office.com – This program is another option when it comes to planning your business using a Gantt chart format. Share and assign tasks to your team and see the progress they are making on all your projects.

Landscape Management Network – www.golmn.com – This landscape-specific software helps with budgeting, customer relationship management, estimates, mobile time tracking and much more.

COMMUNICATION

Voxer – www.voxer.com – This walkie-talkie app can replace the old push-to-talk cell phones we use to have. This app offers secure real-time communication that can be used with groups or individuals. It is a great tool for your snow operations.

Zoom – www.zoom.us – This video communication tool is an industry leader in offering solutions for online meetings, training, and webinar hosting services.

What's App – www.whatsapp.com – This messenger app works on all platforms and allows you to text, send photos and voice memos, and make phone calls - and its free! We use this app almost daily to talk with our family in West Africa and it's like they're right around the corner.

Slack – www.slack.com – SLACK is an acronym for "Searchable Log of All Conversation and Knowledge". This set of team collaboration tools and services allows for fewer meetings, less internal e-mail and an area where you can share documents and information with your team. It allows you to communicate to groups or individuals.

Skitch – www.evernote.com/products/skitch.com - Skitch helps you communicate visually to your staff and customers by allowing you to take a picture, mark it up using arrows, text, and color and then send it out. This is a huge time-saver in your operations.

Hoot Suite – www.hootsuite.com – Hoot Suite manages your company and personal social media accounts. It makes scheduling, managing and reporting on social media as easy as laying sod!

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Blinkist – www.blinkist.com – This app allows you to listen to educational material in the areas of personal growth, history, management, leadership, communication skills, and motivation.

Grow The Bench – www.growthebench.com – GTB is an online professional education development platform built for landscape and snow contractors. It offers courses on many different topics from time management to conflict management. New content is added regularly.

Downcast – www.downcastapp.com – This is currently my most used app. It allows you to subscribe and listen to podcasts. I listen to podcasts every day and love that they can go with me anywhere.

Audible – www.audible.com – This Amazon company app plays digital audiobooks, radio and TV programs. This is my favorite app to play audiobooks, especially at 2.5x speed.

Day One Journal- www.dayoneapp.com – An online daily journaling app that provides a simple digital way to record your thoughts and memories in the cloud.

Go iLawn – www.goilawn.com – This online property measurement service is a great tool that creates efficiency in your estimating process.

DOZR – www.dozr.com – DOZR is an online marketplace for rentals of heavy equipment. It's like Airbnb for bulldozers and excavators. You can rent the equipment you need or offer your own equipment for rent. It's a perfect example of the new shared economy that we are living in.

This is not an exhaustive list by any means, but hopefully will get you thinking about what technology can do to make your business better. I encourage you to talk to other companies about what technology they use, what they like and don't like, what programs or apps they couldn't operate without. I've found that people are willing to give advice and share their experience. This can be one of your greatest resources.

Implementing Technology

So now that you've decided you need some new technology, how do you implement it?

1. Choose software as a leadership team, getting input from each division. Ask each division to create a list of what technology would make them more effective and efficient. Review these lists, going back for additional information until you have a clear picture of what you need from your technology.

2. Set up an implementation team that meets regularly to work on implementation and set clear goals and expectations. The leadership team must commit to the implementation process. If not everyone is committed, then when something else is vying for your attention, the process will get stalled. And don't worry, something will go wrong along the way. Have the implementation team assign specific tasks to specific people during the implementation process. Use a Gantt chart or Microsoft Planner to lay out the process for everyone to see. Include a time budget in the planning, as implementation takes time. Don't forget to track the downtime or shop time of your crew staff in order to get an accurate sense of the time being put into the implementation.

3. Implement some accountability within the staff to follow the documented process and steps. For example, your sales teams may not want to put their leads into the CRM system as it takes too long. They feel it's easier to just keep things as they were. If this is the case, the sales team is lacking an understanding of why their adoption of the software is essential to the rest of the process and how it affects the company as a whole.

Learning new technology takes time. So be patient – with yourself and your staff. Too many owners get frustrated and impatient so stop using the program and go back to doing things the way they've always done it. This is not the way to grow your business. Hang in there! As for your staff, they have to be trained to use it and to recognize its value. There is often a misconception that implementing a system like CRM will solve all your problems. The truth is, it often creates more problems. You'll experience a range of responses from early adopters, to the open but cautious, to outright opposition. Be patient as you deal with all of these responses, but don't stop moving forward. It will be short-term pain for long-term gain. And you may find your inner geek through the process!

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