

Tech Connection

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Tech List Checklist

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Before you fling the doors open for spring, do one last thing: Make a tech list checklist.

Why? Things happen. At a conference last summer, I ate lunch with a sales rep from a huge horticultural company in the U.S.

“What are you speaking about?” she asked me.

“How to hire and manage tech professionals so you get what you want.”

“Ohmigosh. That is so important. This spring our website got hacked and held for ransom. Our tech company bolted two days later. We didn’t have any backups. We’re trying to piece together orders by hand right now.”

I wish I were kidding, but that kind of thing happens all the time.

Here’s another scenario: In Q4 2023, Google and Yahoo announced that they were going to enforce some specific policies related to email marketing. You might have heard the term “DMARC record” floating around lately. This record helps authenticate email as coming from your company and not a spammer or spoofer. It improves the chances of your emails hitting the inbox and not the spam folder. In October, though, two of the biggest email clients declared that in February 2024, they’d start enforcing the need for those records and direct to the spam folder any emails coming from a sender without DMARC DNS records. It was always a good idea to have them, but not strictly necessary. Until it was. Cue pandemonium on the Internet.

If you haven’t done this yet and you do any type of email marketing, you need to get it done. Open a search window (Google, Ecosia, Bing) and type this in: google dmarc record info. That will bring up instructions from Google that you can either follow yourself or take to your web manager.

Once you do start down the path of working on your DMARC records, you’ll see why it pays to get all of your tech information in one handy place. Namely, our tech stacks are all messy. We’ve had businesses for years, and we’ve acquired bits and pieces of digital assets along the way. Maybe you started with a Shopify website and registered your domain (www.yourawesomегardencenter.com) with Shopify. Then you switched to WordPress, but your domain is still at Shopify. Meanwhile your email is through Office365, but it’s on a different domain (www.yourawesomегc.com) and that domain is registered with GoDaddy and the email on that account is yourawesomегc@gmail.com. Your Dropbox account is registered with your Gmail, but your Square login is with yourname@yourawesomегardencenter.com. A mess, right?

Mine was like that for a while because it's so darn aggravating to get it organized. It's finally shipshape. And, I gotta tell you, when I had to make some sensitive staff changes a couple of years ago, I was really glad I took the time to get my ducks in a row. I had everyone locked out in 30 minutes. It would have taken me days before doing the organizing.

Once you find the place you can manage your domain, you need the login info. Then what if there's a two-factor authentication to get in? Which phone number is on there? Is it your web developer from five years ago? I got a call about that yesterday. "Katie, does your phone end in 8366? That's the recovery number on my Stripe account." And we even TRY to be meticulous about making sure our clients' numbers are the ones on there for account recovery.

When a problem happens, like a big website hack, you'll be able to manage it much more easily if you've taken time now to document where everything is.

By the way, I looked up the DMARC records for the domain that was hacked and held for ransom last summer. That company sends marketing emails. They have no DMARC record. Their emails are now going to spam. Check if you have a record. Go [HERE](#) and type in your website URL.

But for real, don't lose the ability to send on your own domain. Fix the DMARC situation. Then map the rest.

Making Your List

Just by working through the answers to this checklist, you'll be ahead of most of your peers, and when sudden changes in policy come along, such as new Gmail and Yahoo email sender requirements, you won't be scrambling to find the info you need to comply.

Note: Do not write down passwords. Use a password manager like 1Pass. Do write down the email or username and phone associated with the password/account. If you lose the password, it can be reset.

See below for some examples of what should be on that checklist with some definitions. This is a shortened version—see the full template of what can be on your Tech Checklist [HERE](#).

Tech Checklist Examples

Domain: Your domain is the web address for your website, your email, etc. This should be in an account that YOU control, not your web developer's account.

Domain: myawesomegardencenter.com

Domain registrar: GoDaddy, customer number: 123456

Email: me@myawesomegardencenter.com

Phone: (123) 456-7891

Email: This is your everyday email address, not your email marketing provider. Ideally, your email comes through a public provider with your own account and is not on a web developer's account.

Email: Office 365

Administrators: Owner—Me MyLastName, phone: (123) 456-789; Store Manager—MySister HerLastname, phone: (123) 456-7892

Website: This is your website! It might be a squarespace, Wix, Wordpress, Shopify or proprietary system connected to your ERP.

Website host: WPEngine, Company account [Where does your website live? If it is something like WordPress, we

recommend having your own hosting account somewhere like WPEngine, BlueHost, etc. Don't host on your developer's server.]

Other host access: Web Developer: TechLady Lastname, phone: (456) 789-1011, email: techlady@awesomehelp.com

The Call From Inside the House

Many issues with tech come from disgruntled former staff with access that was never revoked. In addition to serving as a guide when something does happen, this list can serve as a reminder to clean up if you clean house. Don't forget to check out the video corner where I show you the types of info I am talking about here and [download your template for the full checklist](#). **GP**

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