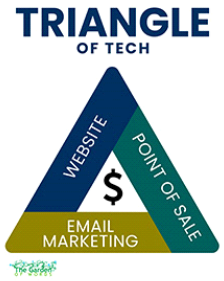
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Tech Connection

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The Tech Triangle of Success

Katie Elzer-Peters



It costs five times more to acquire a new customer than to sell more to an existing customer. Returning
customers spend up to 67% more than new customers. That's because you have to encourage a behavioral change for new purchasers, which is a big psychological lift. Because of that it makes sense—especially in this spending climate—to use all of your everyday tech tools to encourage repeat visits from existing customers.

Triangulate for Top Sales Potential

It's so hard to help people visualize how to connect tech pieces because, while there's hardware involved, the concepts are mostly abstract. But Houston, we now have a visual—a triangle! The three points are:

- Website
- POS
- Email marketing service provider (MailChimp, Klaviyo, etc.)

Let's sidebar for a sec: Isn't it annoying when you sit down at a restaurant table and the table wobbles because all four legs aren't level? The reason the table wobbles is that it doesn't strictly need four legs. It needs three stable legs to stay upright and the legs need to be equal in length for the table to be level. If this isn't a metaphor for all kinds of things, I don't know what is!

For a triangle to be a triangle the points need to connect. For your tech to efficiently help you make money, it needs to connect. For a three-legged stool to be stable and level so things don't slide off, each leg needs to be the same length. For your business to have steady cash flow, all three parts of your tech triangle need to be equally robust.

What's New? Shopify Collective Opens Up

There are new developments in the world of tech that will allow you to provide a better, more personally tailored shopping experience for your customers that will then result in higher, less-costly sales and you can access those tools even though you're not a huge business.
I'm what some people might say an obsessive follower of Caroline Weaver, the creator of The Locavore Guide, an online directory to over 14,000 independent retailers in the five boroughs of New York City and the owner of The Locavore Variety Store—that directory made real as an actual brick-and-mortar store. I follow Caroline on Instagram

(@thelocavorenyc) where she posts about her shop AND about what it's like to be in independent retail right now. Check it out.

When she opened The Locavore Variety Store she was firm on not engaging in any sort of e-commerce. I'm paraphrasing here, but she said something like this, "E-commerce takes everything you love about in-person retail and makes it awful." E-commerce is a big part of my world and, honestly, same, if you're talking about day-to-day e-comm. She's done several videos highlighting the real costs to run a retail business today and came to the conclusion that based on her circumstances it made sense for her to offer limited offerings online.

The key words there are *limited offerings*.

I'm now 100% not in favor of micro businesses going all in with self-fulfilled e-commerce. That's a reverse of 2020 me's opinion. It just isn't feasible for retailers without a whole team dedicated to that. There are businesses that will allow you to go all in without managing any of it at all. If you want to stick your toe in yourself, what I'm in favor of—if the business is managing the online portion of the business themselves—is limited e-commerce. There's a GREAT new way to do limited e-commerce now.

Use Shopify Collective for a curated selection of products or limited time collabs. I've worked with a citrus nursery for several years. In late 2023, the owner approached me about a service called Shopify Collective. At that time, you could only participate if you'd already had $50K in sales through your Shopify store.

That restriction is now gone. If you have a Shopify store you can now connect to product manufacturers around the world who also participate in Shopify Collective and they can drop ship for you. I've been working on this with a couple of smaller e-comm clients to feature a "Visitor of the Month" on their website. By doing that you give yourself something else to talk about in your email newsletters and you offer something fresh to customers without needing to pay to stock it or fulfill the order. You can use Shopify Collective to do that now. The SUPPLIER will fulfill the order. CobraHead is an example of one manufacturer of awesome tools that's active on Shopify Collective. (If you have questions about this, PLEASE feel free to email me katie@thegardenofwords.com. THANK YOU to the readers who've emailed me with questions. You've made my day!)

This opening of Collective also allows independent retailers to tap into the psychology of tech-based consuming. Makers (potters, jewelry makers, painters, etc.) do drops of their work on Instagram and TikTok. Consumers are amped up for those limited-time drops. It's an emotionally charged activity for them. "Visitor of the Month" lets you play on that emotional-driven spending field, too. Something like this will strengthen the website side of the Tech Triangle and make it work harder for you.

What Else? Klaviyo Customer Insights

This is a new-ish feature of Klaviyo that marries your customer purchase data with the Klaviyo email marketing platform to allow you to set up automatic emails that nudge people to come back in and shop, encourage them to make appropriate follow-up purchases (they bought a hanging basket and four weeks later are reminded to come back and buy fertilizer), and suggest the next round of seemingly unrelated products they'll have to have (based on analysis of aggregated customer data).

Your POS has this data, too. Or it should. However, unless the POS is connected to your email service provider (ESP) and that ESP has the capability to ingest the data and spit out recommended customer communication flows, your POS and email sides of the Tech Triangle are flapping away next to each other, NOT providing a stable

foundation. You can set up post-purchase flows if you have Square POS and MailChimp for email, but the platforms do none of the work for you.

If you use Counterpoint for your POS, I can now confirm that it's possible to hook up to Klaviyo and pass customer data over to make use of Klaviyo's insights because we're working on that now.

Shopify Goes All-In with POS & Mobile POS

Literally everyone I know hates their POS. I wrote a whole column about it. And while it sounds like I'm being paid by Shopify to talk about Shopify, I assure you I am not. I'm talking a lot about them right now because if you have a side of your triangle that isn't connecting and you're thinking about making some major changes, I want you to make those changes in a way that allows you to easily assemble your triangle. Joan Dudney, who works with me, is always saying, "Katie, people just want you to tell them what to use."

After many, many years of working with indie businesses and e-commerce companies alike, and experiencing Shopify's push into the world of point-of-sale, I can unequivocally say that if you're looking to shore up your Tech Triangle for the future, you need to seriously consider Shopify for your website and your POS system. Then hook that on to Klaviyo for email marketing and you have a powerhouse stack that's 100% affordable in comparison to the other popular groups of software and will, MOST IMPORTANTLY, work together. Shopify also integrates well with Quickbooks for bookkeeping.
So there you have it. My final answer. Run your whole business on Shopify + Klaviyo for maximum flexibility and access to ever-evolving tech and tools.

Nothing is Getting Less Expensive

A POS migration is a pain and it's expensive. Labor is expensive. Products are expensive. You HAVE to claw back some efficiency in your business wherever you can. Your tech doesn't have to be a Bermuda Triangle. It's time to re-route. These new tools will help these changes pay for themselves. **GP**

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