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Dispelling Tech Myths in the Landscape Industry

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I've been in this industry for nearly 20 years. As both the CEO of a landscape contracting business and the CEO of a horticultural buying and selling platform, I've seen the industry continuously evolve. In particular, I've witnessed firsthand how technology has helped develop this industry and make us more productive as a whole. Unfortunately, what I've also seen is that time and time again there's a hesitance to embrace new technologies. Sure, change can be scary. Nevertheless, embracing new practices, new tools, new techniques or technologies can help the way our industry operates.

Let's look at some of the common myths and misconceptions associated with technology in the landscaping industry:

1. Technology eliminates the personal touch in my business.

It certainly doesn't have to. For example, if you're using email to create more efficient communications, it doesn't mean you need to eliminate calls and in-person meetings with your buyers and/or growers.

An excellent technology tool that actually allows for greater personal interaction is oLark—it allows you to interact with your website visitors directly. Regardless of whether you're at a computer or using a smartphone, you can create instant connections with buyers looking to find out more about your business. Technology exists to help you be more productive, not hinder your relationships with your customers.

2. Using technology will subject me to being hacked!

Technology is already part of your business in any number of ways. Making technology-enabled tools like social media, email, marketing platforms and phone apps an active part of your business isn't going to lead to being hacked. By embracing the technologies that make sense for you, you limit your risk and add horsepower to your business operations.

Here are a few extra tips to help give you peace of mind:

- Keep your computer up to date. All software companies provide security updates to their software and most make it very easy to allow it to auto-update on its own.

- Think before you click. If you receive a message that doesn't feel right, then take the extra second to think about whether it's something you should be following-up on or simply "marking as spam" and sending to the trash folder.
- If you're uncomfortable sharing a piece of sensitive information via email or the web, then don't do it. You're in control of your own information, so go at whatever speed makes the most sense for you.
- Create a strong password and use different passwords for different sites. Worried about forgetting too many passwords or passwords that are too complicated? There are a number of great products on the market, like 1Password, to help you manage and secure your accounts.

3. Learning a new tech tool is way too time consuming

The truth is that there's a learning curve associated with everything. However, you have to compare the time investment in learning a new tool to the time saved once on board. Here's an example: the typical plant sourcing process is just not efficient—gathering and sifting through hundreds of availabilities is a massive time suck. It's time that the industry considers trying out more effective solutions.

There are several resources available to buyers to help search databases and more efficiently purchase materials. Advanced technology platforms such as Plantbid allow you to do just this. Think about the possibilities and the time you'll add to your day if you open your eyes to new approaches.

Key takeaway? Be open, adopt new technology and don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone—it's in the interest of driving your business. **GP**

Cameron Cantrelle is the co-founder and CEO of Plantbid, a horticulture platform that connects the right buyers to the right sellers and saves both parties time and money in plant sourcing. He has decades of experience in the landscaping industry and also is president of a design/build/maintenance firm in Louisiana.