

7/1/2019

The Art of Science

Jennifer Polanz



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This month marks the anniversary of an American feat so amazing that there are some people still to this day who don't believe it actually happened.

I'm talking, of course, about Apollo 11's Eagle lunar module landing on the moon, which happened 50 years ago on July 20 (at 3:17 p.m. Eastern, if you want to celebrate it properly). It's probably the ultimate example of what a talented group of people can accomplish when they work together toward a common goal. It's also the ultimate example of the perfect scenario, where it seemed nothing went wrong when literally anything could have gone wrong.

I have to believe after losing three astronauts in a devastating fire two years prior during preparations for the Apollo 1 mission, NASA worked every problem backwards and forwards (and launched several unmanned missions after that) until they felt confident they could put a crew back in an

Apollo capsule. Perhaps that's why most of the missions went off without a hitch (with the exception of that famous Apollo 13 "Houston, we have a problem" mission, which was another example of a talented group of people working every problem to its solution).

Those missions and subsequent ones laid the foundation for where we are today, not just in space, but on terra firma, too. I recently had the good fortune to go on a tour of the SLOPE Lab at the NASA Glenn Research Center in Cleveland, where they're creating better tires for Moon and Mars rovers made of a metal mesh that has "shape memory" so it can be shrunk down to the size of the hub during space flight and bounce into a perfectly shaped tire when needed. Those breakthroughs can eventually be put into practical application on Earth for any vehicle that requires tough tires, as well as a multitude of other uses unrelated to vehicles.

So what does that have to do with this particular issue of *Green Profit*? We're taking a look at the science of retailing this month and some of the technology that's been developed over the years to help you move your business forward. Just like those NASA pioneers, software programmers have been working their problems for years, making adjustments to provide the newest solutions to business owners.

For example, technology expert Joe Dysart takes a deep dive into the technology available to navigate online reviews (and believe me, a couple of bad online reviews can really be a thorn in your side).

Freelancer extraordinaire Katie Elzer-Peters helped us get a handle on more technology to assist retail salespeople

and take some of the pressure off during those busy spring days.

I talked to a couple of retailers who are leading the way when it comes to eco-friendly garden center offerings. NASA is just one of many agencies talking about climate change (to see a list, visit climate.nasa.gov) and garden centers are well-equipped to help customers embrace changes that can help our environment (and recover from unruly weather patterns). From encouraging native plants to teaching composting, highlighting drip irrigation and rain barrels for water conservation and more, we can make a difference.

Because in the end, it's amazing to shoot for the stars (or the moon), but most of us still keep our feet on this one Earth we all share. **GP**