

FAST, SMOOTH SERVICE – WITH A HUMAN TOUCH

> In working with florists across the country, I often hear this complaint: “Technology helps me work faster, but it kills the personal touch! And my clients love my personal touch, but all that individualized attention requires so much time!”

What’s a busy floral professional to do? Is anyone actually achieving a balance between tech efficiencies and personal touch?

The short answer, yes — but it’s not always easy.

As technology improves and becomes more widespread, the balance between human touch and tech has gotten trickier.

Six years ago, my wife, Rachael, and I founded Twisted Willow Design in St. Louis — from there we created Curate, our event software platform. Both experiences have helped me understand that as technology improves and becomes more widespread, the balance between human touch and tech has gotten trickier. (And some industry members see

tech as the enemy — the “thing” that could replace an amazing teammate!)

The reality, though, is that tech innovations are happening at every level, no matter your role or industry segment, and for the most part, that’s a very good thing. Technology can streamline processes and free up staff time to do other things — a shift that can potentially increase the profitability of a company. What could seem like opposing forces — humans and tech — can actually be quite the dynamic duo!

Here are some of our favorite tech tools in high-need areas. These are resources that I feel help us hit the balance between efficient services and top-notch user experience, while making clients feel the real human bond between us, too.

Daily Work Life Tools:

- **Pandora**, a music-streaming service, may seem like an unlikely tech choice, but having music on while designing, or even while working through mundane tasks such as accounting, sets the mood for a great day at work. (Two stations I like in particular: Brandon Heath Radio and Tauren Wells Radio.)
- **Google Drive** ensures that everyone can access our team files (from anywhere, at any time) and collaborate. We save everything from our marketing materials to employee/freelancer contracts and client contract templates in Drive.
- **Google Forms** have helped us get more detailed questionnaires from our clients. (You can see a sample at safnow.org/moreonline.)

Finance Resources:

- **Wave**, a free accounting software, is simple to use and understand. With the Wave Receipts app, we can track business-related receipts by simply taking a picture

of them and uploading them to Wave. From there, the software automatically matches the receipt to our bookkeeping record.

- **Stripe**. We accept credit card payments through Stripe (which integrates into Curate, making life easier for us). Other event florists we work with endorse similar services such as Square and PayPal.
- **Bank apps**. Some clients still prefer sending in hard copy checks, and that’s okay. Our bank has an app that allows us to take a picture and deposit the check immediately, no trip to the bank required.

Applications for Communicating with Clients:

- Our business email addresses are branded with our business name (@twistedwillow.co) but they are powered by **Gmail** and **Google Apps**. With this system, we still all have the branding benefits of a personalized, business email (rather than the generic @gmail.com), but we also have full access to all of Google’s tools.
- **Google Voice** provides call forwarding and voicemail services, voice and text messaging, seamlessly through smartphones and over the web. As an added bonus, because clients don’t have our personal numbers, we’ve been able to draw a line between our business and personal lives.
- There are ten million things that need to be done the week of an event and **Awesome Note** helps us keep track of them all, even syncing time-sensitive tasks to our calendar if we’d like. 📌

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