

Speaker 1 00:00:05 Welcome to the Clear Impact Podcast brought to you by PGTI University. Thanks for joining us today. My name is Sherri Connor, and I am your host.

Speaker 2 00:00:19 So that's my big recommendation is get out there and see it. Don't just take, Hey Joe said, use X software, talk to a couple of vendors. It's key to just get and keep eyes wide open when looking at software and hardware.

Speaker 1 00:00:32 Just how important is your technology and systems? Well, you know, as soon as it doesn't work right? Today on the Clear Impact Podcast, we talk about all things technology with our Vice President of IT, Steven Colopy. We discuss the value of good systems, what to look for when hiring a professional service, and how to navigate the ever-changing landscape of technology. Whether you're a novice or pro, we think you'll get something good out of today's episode.

Good morning. We are here on the Clear Impact Podcast today, and we are talking with Steven Colopy. Did I say that right? You actually did! Steven Colopy, and Steven is our Vice President of Information Technology. So you're the VP of IT, and welcome to the show.

Speaker 2 00:01:13 Thank you very much. So I'm excited to be here.

Speaker 1 00:01:15 I'm glad that you're here today. So I want to just start off with some basic introductions. How long have you been with the company? Are you from Florida? How did you get here? Just give us a little background.

Speaker 2 00:01:25 So I've been with the company for just over six months now. My first time ever living in Florida, I had been to Orlando, obviously to Disney, as most people have. So I ended up with PGTI, via a recruiter, but I have had lots of experience in manufacturing, from large pet food manufacturer, which is process manufacturing, to company that did high-end television studios, which is discrete manufacturing, like PGT and, and everything in between, and sizes from startups to major international companies.

Speaker 1 00:02:01 Okay, awesome. And what do you think of being in Florida so far?

Speaker 2 00:02:04 Well, I moved here from Park City, Utah, so very, very different living at 7,500 feet elevation, a ski town, to Florida, but so far I've loved it. The people have been fantastic. The PGT people that I've met have been fantastic. And a lot of the dealers that I've met have been just fantastic, and it's been great.

Speaker 1 00:02:26 Yeah. There's no hills. You don't have to worry about, you know, your emergency brake so much here.

Speaker 2 00:02:31 No. And it's very difficult to get frame of reference of where you actually are without mountains around you.

Speaker 1 00:02:38 Um, right. That's true. We just know, you know, just keep going west and you'll hit the water.

Speaker 2 00:02:44 I think if you go south, west, or east, you'll hit the water.

Speaker 1 00:02:46 Eventually, right? That's the beauty of being on a peninsula. Exactly. Nice. So we're in the series, Running a Successful Business, and we just want to talk about what are some

foundational that our dealer audience can use regarding their IT practice. Because we all know what happens if the internet goes out, or if our computer's frozen, like you're at a standstill, your operation is completely halted. If your IT is not humming along smoothly. And so what are maybe three key things that an owner or a manager needs to understand when it comes to their technology?

Speaker 2 00:03:22 Some of the key things people need to remember is number one, IT does not solve process problems. A lot of people think if I just put in a new system, all of a sudden, you know, angels will be singing from the sky. Life's just beautiful. But if you have, for example, a warehouse and people aren't putting things away in the right spaces, putting in a new system is not going to change that. Now it may give you the opportunity to re-look at those processes and go, what do we need to do differently? And if you can do that, along with putting in a new system, that's where you really get your big bang. So that is kind of my number one thing, because a lot of people just think systems solve everything, but it's really process discipline is a key, in addition to putting in new systems.

Speaker 1 00:04:13 Right? Because those IT things are just a tool. It's just a tool to enhance what you're already doing, or maybe streamline what you're already doing and making it more efficient, but it doesn't solve the hiccups. Exactly. Okay.

Speaker 2 00:04:25 The other thing is I think it can really help to develop a long-term corporate memory. People using applications, such as CRM is a fantastic way to develop more intimacy with your customers. In this day and age with people moving jobs so quickly and so often, it's very, very important that you know, that next person coming in to meet with the customer, kind of knows the history of what's going on with that customer. What are their service issues? What are their sales volume? People don't like to have to re-explain to somebody brand new, Here's who I am. And I've been a great customer for this long, but we've got these service issues. You should know that in this day and age.

Speaker 1 00:05:09 Right, that makes sense. And we use Salesforce here and I'm sure some of our customers are probably on Salesforce. And I think we also have a little bit of a CRM ourselves. I think our marketing department has kind of come up with a CRM and, uh, Josh Soto and I talked about that in one of our earlier episodes.

Speaker 2 00:05:25 Yes, it is called Lead Match.

Speaker 1 00:05:27 Lead match. Thank you.

Speaker 2 00:05:28 Yes. Yeah. And it's fantastic because it connects, you know, consumers who are looking for windows and doors directly to dealers.

Speaker 1 00:05:37 And that all filters through our systems so that we can help nudge people along and make sure that they're being directed in the right place.

Speaker 2 00:05:45 Yeah. I think the other two things would be really, you know, right-size your technology spend. You don't need to go out and buy the biggest system out there. Talk to people in the industry. When I say talk to people in the industry, I mean, talk to other dealers that you know. Don't spend crazy money just to solve a minor problem. So that's one of the big things. And I have gone to actually add a fourth thing, and that is really focused on, most people are buying cloud applications. Now, two things to know about that when they buy a cloud application, it's a subscription model. So you have to pay them every single month. If you don't pay them, they will turn it off. So people need to be aware

of that. And the other thing is when buying a cloud application, make sure you find out how that data is backed up. A lot of people assume because I'm buying it in the cloud, that that company will do everything for you. It's a key question to ask, because most people don't ask it, and you don't want it to learn after the fact, oh, we were expected to backup our own data that a cloud company was hosting.

Speaker 1 00:06:54 Oh yeah. I wouldn't know that. I would think that that would be an automatic thing. So they need to ask what that process is for backing up their data, and then how to retrieve it when their system crashes, if, if their system crashes.

Speaker 2 00:07:06 And it's not necessarily even if their system crashes. It's if somebody makes a major mistake in the system, and you want to recover back to yesterday, you need to know how that is backed up and how to restore that data.

Speaker 1 00:07:18 That's a good point. Okay. So to summarize, so there are four key things and that is, the technology doesn't solve process issues. Technology helps create a corporate memory so that you can better serve your customers and have that intimacy, correct. We need to right size your spend. So you don't want to overbuy or under buy. Correct. And you want to make sure that if you are on a cloud system, that you know how that backup is handled. Was there anything else on that?

Speaker 2 00:07:45 Those are the key points.

Speaker 1 00:07:46 Oh, nice. Okay. I love being able to summarize things, especially when it's written down in front of me, that's always helpful. Okay. So some people are more tech savvy than others. I, myself am not very tech savvy, but that's why, you know, we have geek squad and that's why we have, you know, other services like that. If an outside vendor is needed, if somebody in our dealer audience is not, maybe, maybe they're like me, they didn't grow up with tech. They're not as comfortable with that. Like these are, you know, we're talking about people who install and sell windows and doors. So they're very comfortable on the construction front. They're comfortable with that technology, but when it comes to their computers and their systems and things like that, maybe they do need some outside help. And so should they hire somebody? And if so, what are some key things to look for if they have to outsource their IT?

Speaker 2 00:08:31 So I have done this in the past. And I think the key is you can find companies that do this simply by Googling. Who doesn't Google these days, simply by Googling computer service providers typically come up, because it's, location-based those where you are. It will typically come up with people around you, or the acronym MSP, and as a Managed Service Provider. And most of these companies have a menu of options that you can choose from. So network administration, PC support, security, and, you know, talk to them, have them come in, interview them, see what other clients they are supporting around you.

Speaker 1 00:09:11 Be sure to tune in for upcoming episodes to help you understand the fenestration industry, what you need to know when buying windows and doors and other related topics, you can find out more about us at pgtiuniversity.com. You can also find us on Facebook and LinkedIn.

Speaker 2 00:09:30 But my big recommendation in terms of working with a company like that, is what you want is consistency. You know, make sure that the technicians that they're going to send out, you would like to see the same people over and over. They get to know your employees. They get to know your systems. And it's not a new discovery every single time a new employee comes in. Right? So a

lot of these companies will have a help desk type function, that your employees can call and someone can remotely jump on to fix a problem. Again, they will do back up and restores. They will do security. And yeah, I think they will help you grow as you grow. So managed service providers, typically for a small to midsize company, or just a really good typically financial decision, because they can have 10 people in their company that are going to know a lot more about security, versus you hiring one person and they're trying to do it all.

Speaker 1 00:10:31 Right. And sometimes it's good to know what you're not good at. And, you know, I think outsourcing things that you're not comfortable with, and IT is something that is changing every moment and to try to keep up with all the latest, greatest, like it used to drive me crazy when McAfee updates would come up and I'm just like, ah, what do I do? Do I need to do this? Do I need to spend \$20 a month? I don't know. And so I love having other people that are smarter than me in those areas to rely on, so that I don't have to be an IT expert, but I do have to know how to interact with an IT expert. Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:11:03 Yes. And I think in this day, especially of security breaches, people see it on any major news service that there is a hole in Microsoft code, and you need to do updates. At the end of the day, I think business owners can sleep more soundly if they know they're partnered with a company that, Hey, when this happens, they're going to be in there the next day. They're going to take care of it all. And again, it's developing that great relationship versus Johnny who's working for me. Oh, he's on vacation somewhere for the next two weeks. Is this, how big is the risk? I don't know.

Speaker 1 00:11:39 Right? Yeah. I'm thankful that we have an IT department. I, yeah. I'm glad that you're here. Are there some tried and true best practices for evaluating new hardware and new software? Like what would you say to somebody who's assessing their IT needs, what are some milestones or key points that they need to be looking at when they're deciding if they need to invest or improve their current systems?

Speaker 2 00:12:05 A lot of people wait until it's almost too late to invest in new systems. The pain of a specific system is just so bad that then they find, oh, this is the trigger point that I need to now go out and spend money, invest in a new system. I typically like to tell people, you know, prior to getting to that point, try to be a little more forward thinking of where you are, where do you think your competitors are today? And what should you be doing to keep up with technology as a company? I think again, you know, my big piece of advice is talk to other people in our industry. See what they're doing. I go back to a WMS system, a warehouse management system. If you're interested in that, ask people about that, most people are really open. Hey, we tried this. We did this. This worked really well. This was a nightmare. People are happy to share those stories because at the end of the day, warehouse management, as long as you're in a good warehouse management system, not a single one is going to just all of a sudden be like, oh my gosh, I am 10 times more competitive than my next competitor. So again, this is why I think people are pretty open to share those types of stories.

Speaker 1 00:13:19 Okay. Should they ask for client references? What is the approach with a vendor?

Speaker 2 00:13:24 100% when evaluating a vendor, I always try to make sure you see proof of concept. Number two, and if you have to take a trip, it is well worth it. Most companies have reference accounts. So if you need to go see a reference account in another city, I highly recommend it, because then you're at that business. You're seeing how that software actually works. You're seeing how the end users interact with that software. Is it difficult? Is it easy? But you can talk to people too. And again,

most people are willing to tell the story. This was such an easy implementation. Oh my gosh, this was a nightmare implementation. Here's what we would do differently. A lot of times that will come directly from the people on the floor using the software. So that's my big recommendation, is get out there and see it. Don't just take, Hey, Joe said, use X software, talk to a couple of vendors. It's key to just, again, keep eyes wide open when looking at software and hardware.

Speaker 1 00:14:21 And to probably think ahead, even like, okay, I have a pain point now, this system isn't serving me, but where do I envision my needs being in three to five years? And how is this company growing, and how are they growing their offering along with me, so that I don't outgrow this system in three to five years and have to do this all over again. You know, who's on the leading edge? how many software developers do they have on board? How many engineers are they hiring? How solid is their, their financial structure? You know, are they a public company? Are they private? Are they in trouble? Are they going to fold and close their doors in a few years? And now you're really in trouble with what you're doing. So I've been through a couple of software changes and system changes in my history. And you know, the sales team can razzle dazzle you all day long, but it's that migration team. And that support team that are the ones that, you know, you need to be in love with. Those are the ones that is the relationship is built with. That sales team is long gone after you sign on the contract.

Speaker 2 00:15:22 100%, a big recommendation in terms of when you're looking at those vendors, feel free to ask them, Hey, I want to see a resume, a bio of the people who would actually be implementing this. Have they implemented it 10 times before, the team that you're sending to me? Or is it Joe Jr. that it's his first job out of college? No offense to that person, but they probably don't know even the software well enough yet and the industry. So it's very helpful to make sure that the people implementing it have our industry experience as well.

Speaker 1 00:15:55 Right. That's awesome. Okay. So one more question. So what is a solid piece of advice that you've received when it comes to keeping up with technology?

Speaker 2 00:16:06 So I think at the end of the day, you could spend again, because technology is changing so much every day, every minute. You could spend all day, every day trying to keep up with technology, but most people, if they're not in the field, do not have that kind of time. Right? So my big piece of advice that somebody once gave me, when you're at trade shows, when you're IBS, Glass World, go spend the time, there was always software vendors there, go spend the time, see what those products do, talk to those vendors. And again, this was, you know, probably a half day experience to just see where those software vendors are going, but that will spin up ideas in your head. It may do it at that moment in time. It may do it at midnight that night, which is great because then you can go back and talk to them more directly, face to face.

Speaker 2 00:17:00 It may spin up an idea six months from now, but it's you know, one time a year, that you can kind of dedicate and go, Hey, I've got to keep abreast of what's happening in technology in our industry. And I think by doing that, a lot of times, that's where you will get that aha moment of, oh, it is time to really pull this trigger. I think, you know, we've been struggling with this issue, or I just know we want to improve this area of the company. And I think it's just a great piece of advice somebody once gave me. Again, spend that time because you typically, as a CEO of a company, as a manager of a company, you don't have time to think about that all day every day.

Speaker 1 00:17:40 No, not at all. Awesome. Well, I am so thankful that we had some time today to chat about this, and to get to know you a little bit more, and I look forward to our next conversation.

Speaker 0 00:17:50 This was fantastic. Thank you very much. Thank you Steven, have a great day.

Speaker 1 00:17:51 PGTI University is the customer education team for an entire family of brands. We began with the original Eze-breeze porch enclosure line, then became PGT, America's leading brand of impact resistant windows and doors. We then added CGI, CGIC, WinDoor, Western Windows, New South Windows, and Eco Windows and Doors. We create products built to withstand major storms, keeping people safe, secure, and prepared. Our exceptional brands give you the protection you need without compromising design or functionality. PGTI University is here to educate you, our listener, so that you can be a more informed consumer of window and door products.