Assess Your Winter Technology Investments In The Spring

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As the winter gives way to spring, take this opportunity to assess your business to be more productive and efficient before your summer's work has you running flat-out again.

What did you do well this year? What needs improvement? Does equipment need to be fixed or replaced? Do you have outstanding employees that deserve a bonus or some other incentive to encourage them to return next year? Do you need technology upgrades?

The investments you make into software systems will provide a return on investment that you will realize almost immediately and that will pay for themselves in less than a season. Weather modeling, route optimization, fleet monitoring, employee management and de-icing measurement all will allow you to be more efficient, productive and ultimately profitable.

We have gone through adoption curves before, from cellphones and tablets to accounting software and fleet management. Can you imagine trying to convince a colleague to use a weather app? Seems ridiculous, but it wasn't long ago that many still needed to be persuaded that the computer in your pocket might be more timely and accurate than the National Weather Service.

The same evolution of thought happened in our personal lives as new mobile apps entered our daily routines in ways we never could have imagined. It's only been about five years since we put stamps on our letters, paid for our coffee in cash and used paper tickets at the airport.

Now what about your business? Are you still passing paper around the office? Does your accounting software integrate into the other parts of your business? Do your management tools talk to each other? Are you measuring the

amount of product that is spread at each site? Do your service providers provide data analysis support or just a pile of spreadsheets that you need to make sense of?

If you're an early adopter, then you already know that it's difficult to find integrated systems or choose a platform that allows your technologies to work together. This is still the case in many industries far more sophisticated and technology dependent than ours. But in many ways, if you've waited to adopt enterprise resource planning software until now, then you're in luck because they are much better now and less expensive. You can take advantage of 2.0+ versions that have better functionality, integration and user interfaces.

But this requires an honest audit of your year and your business. This takes time, time you probably can spare in a brief window before you start getting your crew and equipment ready for the summer rush. This isn't a chore. You owe it to yourself and your business.

Here's a suggestion: Establish a committee of trusted, age-diverse staff that can audit the business and potential software solutions for pain points that you experience. Take your time to assess all your options, but don't freeze when it comes time to make a purchasing decision.

You have a better chance to buy a solution that does all the things your business needs today, and there won't be an easier time to do it. Or, you run the risk of sounding like the guy who still gets all his weather information from the NWS.