Information and the Time to Use it
Jason Richelson, Founder and CEO of ShopKeep POS

What do you need to succeed as a small business owner/operator? Useful information about your business and the time to make sense of it. It is vital that anyone running a small business finds time every day to immerse themselves in the details of their business and make smart, insightful decisions. Not every moment is going to turn out to be game changing, but enough intelligent and thoughtful decisions in a row tend to equal a successful enterprise.

Of course, this is easier said than done. Brick and mortar retailers are some of the busiest people I know. When you run your own place, you are responsible for absolutely every aspect of it. You are running the books, managing inventory, training employees, looking into marketing promotions, forecasting for the coming months, trying to predict cash flow, cleaning the windows, scrubbing the floors and generally worrying that you're forgetting something important.

Fortunately, there are a number of affordable, cloud-based programs available that can really help make day-to-day processes more efficient, give you more time and get you closer to the detailed information you need. I'm a strong believer in cloud-based applications and we use them every day here at ShopKeep POS. I've listed a few of my favorites below.

The first and perhaps the easiest to overlook is **Google Apps**. For just 5¢ per month per employee, you get access to branded e-mail addresses (e.g. bob@shopkeep.com), group calendars, online data storage and more. You can access this data from anywhere, it's secure and most importantly, if something happens to your store, your computer or your server, it doesn't impact your data. All your information is safely stored in the cloud.

WhenToWork makes it easy to schedule shifts, see when employees are working and fill empty slots with those who have availability. It keeps all employees in touch, so it makes the whole process much smoother. No more forgetting who's supposed to open tomorrow.

For small business owners, that nightmare of you falling from a high cliff is often replaced by a tower of paper tumbling onto you, waking you up right as you are about to be buried. Use **Bill.com** for payables management and get some sleep. You and your accountant will have everything you need to manage day-to-day finances and cash flow.

I would also highly recommend **FreshBooks** which offers the ability to create and manage invoices, estimates, expenses and projects all in one place. It's a really useful and easy to use tool for keeping the financial side of your business in good order. They also provide really great customer support which is something that is really close to my heart.

One thing small business owners sometimes miss out on are those amazing phone systems favored by larger corporations where everyone has the same prefix, and it's easy to access the phone number of any employee. **RingCentral** offers an inexpensive cloud-based phone system that does what those legacy systems do, but even better. It also works with mobile phones.

For brick and mortar retailers looking to find a powerful point of sale system that doesn't break the bank, it is now possible to get set up with a full-service **POS system** that includes an iPad register and stores data in the cloud. ShopKeep POS is designed to empower small businesses by giving them tools like advanced data analysis and new technologies like mobile payments that they historically have never been able to access.

There are an incredible number of resources available to the small business community to help them reduce stress, find more time and generally be smarter about how they channel their business efforts. Additionally, a lot of these services are able to integrate with one another -- which can save you even more time.

*Written by Founder and CEO of **ShopKeep POS**, Jason Richelson. Jason has spent his career starting and growing businesses in both the technology and retail space. He opened his first wine store in 2002 and quickly expanded, opening locations across NYC. In 2008 Jason had the inspiration for a cloud-based point of sale system that was reliable, affordable and provided the kind of functionality previously only available to big-box retailers.*