Independent Retailers Winning with Technology

Six stories about retailers using technology to reshape their businesses—and their success.

Contents

Introduction 3

North Plymouth Hardware 4

Tweedy and Popp 6

Kalleco Nursery 7

Pine Hills Nursery 9

Forest Lake Greenhouses 10

Amaton Baby Imports 11

Introduction

America's independent retailers are critical to the nation's economy.

Across the country they're working hard to meet consumer demand and expectations, evolve with market conditions, and navigate unforeseen events ... and it's paying off.

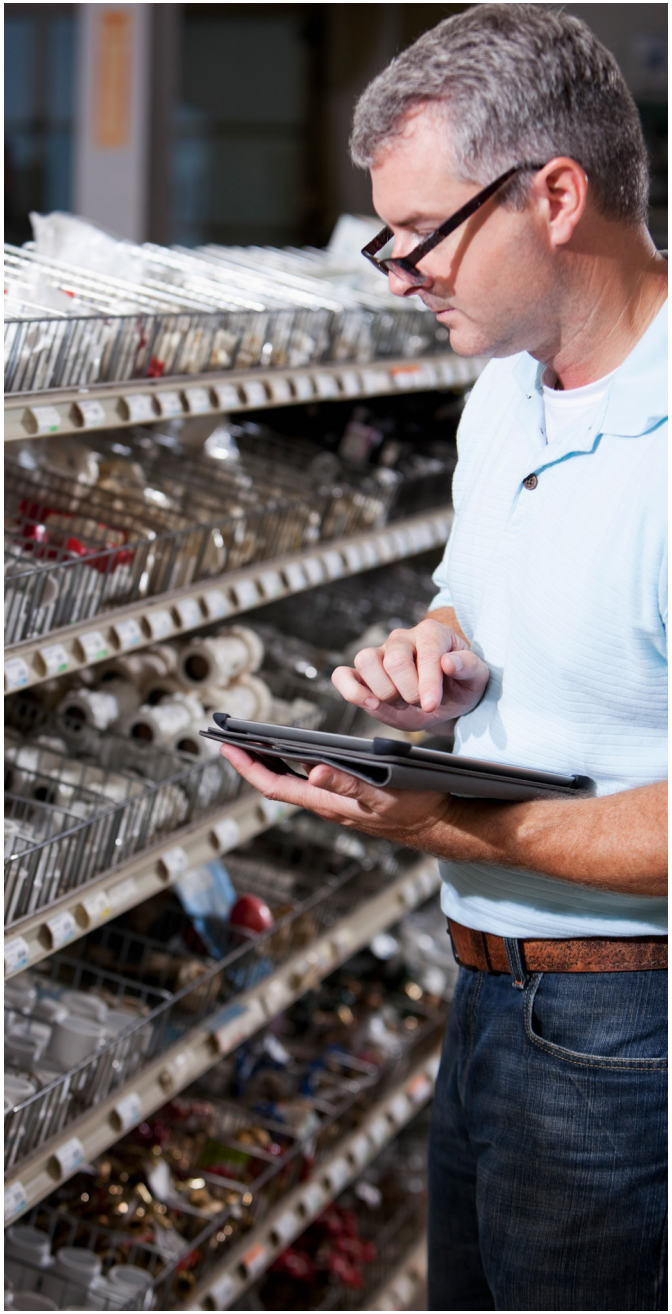
Research from Epicor reveals an ambitious outlook from independent retailers, with 84% wanting to expand online, 63% looking to open new stores, and 61% wanting to expand nationally.

As drivers of their own destiny, independent retailers are optimistic about the future.

They're seizing opportunities to be more nimble than the competition. They're also optimizing supply chain and inventory management, expanding product lines, and getting closer to customers.

Here, we tell the stories of six independent retailers responding to changing customer needs and streamlining how they work to position their businesses for the future.

Find out how they're succeeding in a world of retail shaped by unprecedented change.



North Plymouth Hardware

Family-Owned Hardware Business Staying Competitive with Cloud Technology

Serving the Local Community

North Plymouth Hardware, located in Plymouth, Massachusetts, is a small, family-owned hardware store and sells hardware, home improvement supplies, grills, lawn and garden items, and tools.

As the town of Plymouth becomes more commercial, the hardware store's focus on customer service continues to make it the go-to place for the local community.

"Since starting the business around 47 years ago, I've faced competition from superstores like Walmart and big box stores such as Target or Home Depot," explains Charlie Vandini, owner of North Plymouth Hardware. "My focus on providing an essential service to my community has enabled me to stand apart and create a loyal customer base."

Out with the Old, in with The New

To remain competitive, Charlie recognized the importance of updating his store's legacy point of sale system. He knew they had to move away from on-premises to a cloud-based retail management solution.

"I'd been using the on-premises system for over 20 years, but updates were complex and piecemeal," Charlie says. "Epicor Propello was the perfect opportunity to move my retail systems to the cloud and ensure I could benefit from future updates and new features as I needed them."

"We were really excited to move to Propello. There's always some risk in change, but the Epicor team made this an easy transition. Our staff picked it up quickly, and the improved processes allow us to better serve our customers and community," he shares.

Epicor® Propello™ also proved to be invaluable in coping with unexpected events. When a storm brought down a computer in the back office, Charlie was able to continue running the store.

"Having Epicor Propello meant I could get back up and running immediately as I could use any standalone computer to run the store," he says. "It's something I've never been able to do before and basically kept me in business."

Helping Customers in a Time of Need

Having a retail management solution that can smooth any business disruption has been transformational for North Plymouth Hardware. Like many other

independent retailers, the store had to quickly adapt when social distancing and mandatory stay at home orders came about. Propello gave Charlie the ability to find new ways to serve his customers.

"During Covid-19, we were able to offer curbside pickup and Propello made the process very easy," Charlie shares. "We could instantly check what products we had left in stock in real-time, making sure orders were fulfilled and customers weren't disappointed."

Propello has also helped Charlie work more efficiently and reduced time-consuming tasks so he can focus on other areas of the business.

"With Propello, I can now multi-task and complete jobs in the course of about five minutes, which I've never been able to do before," Charlie explains. "I can be working on purchase orders, receiving orders, and doing bookkeeping, all while sorting out in-store pickups and taking order numbers. Since moving to Propello, it's clear the platform is the central piece of the puzzle in continuing to drive the business forward."

"Epicor Propello was the perfect opportunity to move my retail systems to the cloud and ensure I could benefit from future updates and new features as I needed them."

Charlie Vandini, Owner | North Plymouth Hardware

Tweedy and Popp

Seattle's Oldest Hardware Store Renews with Cloud

The Best of Past and Present

Tweedy and Popp is a Seattle, Washington, hardware chain of five stores that began in 1920. They have a loyal local following built on decades of service offering products for hardware, home improvement, grilling, lawn and garden, and more.

While the stores were running well in isolation, owner Tom Paik knew that a cloud-based retail management system would bring his stores into the future.

"Managing the stores using separate, on-premises technology systems was extremely time consuming and caused disruption to the store whenever the systems required maintenance," Tom explains.

Transforming the POS Experience

Tom selected Epicor Propello point of sale (POS) and retail management system, a cloud solution with secure access, data protection, software upgrades, and server maintenance.

"Propello is 100 percent cloud-based, which means all updates are made online rather than locally, removing the need for me to close a store and install new software on each PC," highlights Tom.

Using Propello, Tweedy and Popp also transformed the POS experience for both staff and customers with a simpler, and intuitive, browser-based user interface (UI).

"Propello's modern user interface allows the team to quickly look up products, even those without barcodes, and easily complete product returns at the point of sale," Tom says.

Business Insights and Looking Ahead

The local chain also benefits from powerful reporting capabilities in Propello and can easily access real-time information on sales and best-selling products—and their most loyal customers' purchase history.

A future goal for Tweedy and Popp is to incorporate eCommerce into the business. "Online sales will become a strategic area for us in the future, especially now that we're in the cloud with Propello," Tom says.

> ***"Propello is 100 percent cloud-based, which means all updates are made online rather than locally, removing the need for me to close a store and install new software on each PC."***
>
> *Tom Paik, Owner | Tweedy and Popp*

Kalleco Nursery

Plant Nursery Masters Inventory Management to Accelerate Growth

A Business Underpinned by Expertise

Located in Tillson, New York, Kalleco Nursery is a plant nursery selling trees, shrubs, perennials, and annuals, as well as gardening supplies and hardscape materials. Established in 2013, the business has strong growth and demand is high with people taking on more gardening and home improvement projects.

"We're expecting to grow and expand the business, and there's a good opportunity to offer more products and services," says Rebecca Iseldyke, Administrative Assistant at Kalleco Nursery.

Kalleco prides itself on its specialty and continuously trains and educates its staff so they can offer good customer service and guidance on plants. The staff helps customers with product information as well as share their knowledge on planting and landscaping tips.

> *"There are just so many features that can help with different areas of the business."*
>
> *Rebecca Iseldyke, Administrative Assistant | Kalleco Nursery*

Moving Inventory More Quickly

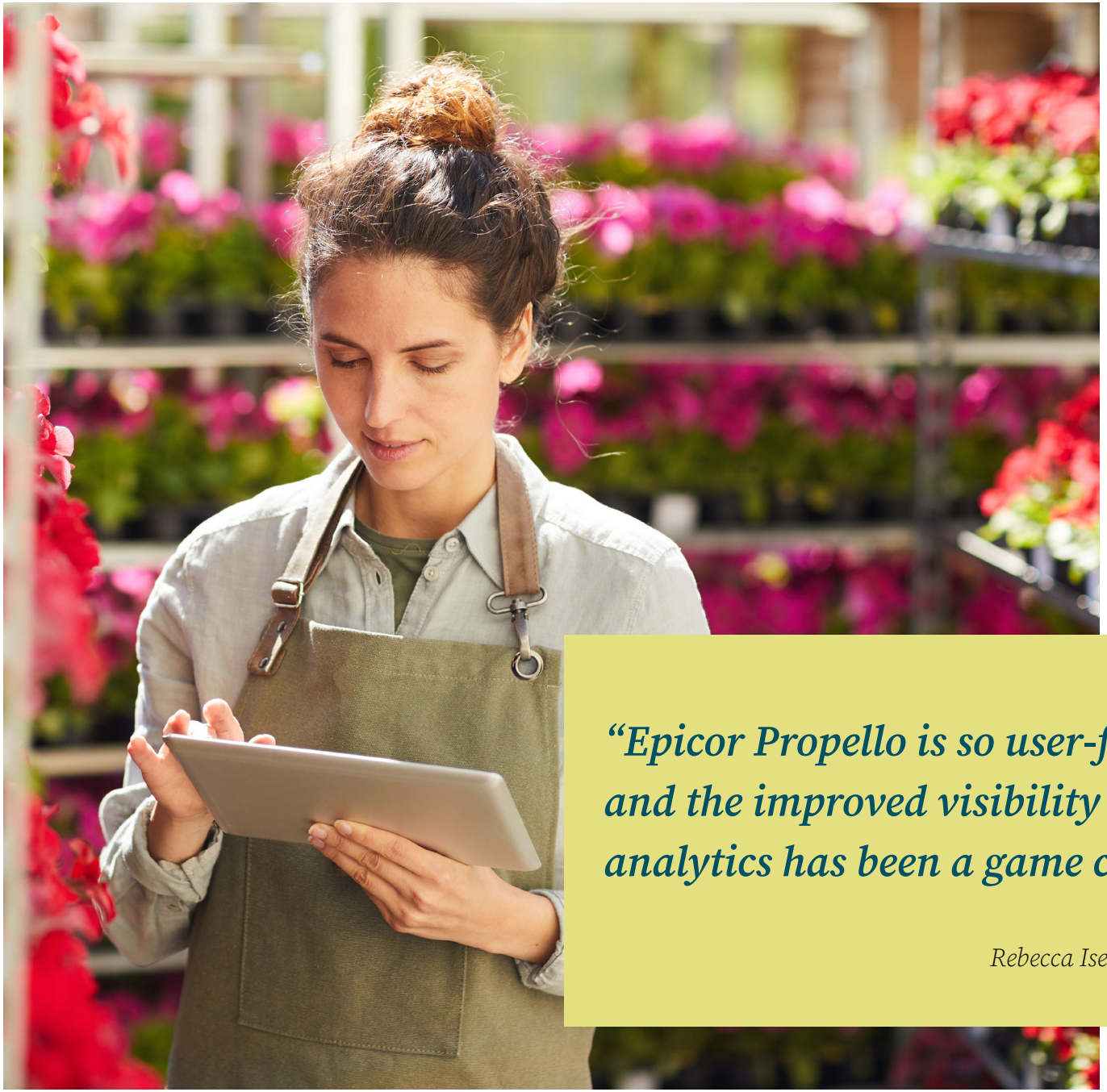
With Kalleco's large number and variety of product lines, inventory management was a challenge.

"It's very easy to lose track of inventory," explains Rebecca. "If just one box of shovels arrives and it doesn't get counted, it doesn't take long for your inventory to snowball out of control."

Kalleco selected Propello for better inventory management and point of sale capabilities to streamline inventory management. More efficient labeling, counting, and pricing is helping goods move more quickly, while making the customer experience smooth and satisfactory.

"Epicor Propello is so user-friendly and modern, and the improved visibility of inventory, plus business analytics has been a game changer," Rebecca says.

In real time, the Kalleco team can now track sales, identify their best-selling products, and check when the next order is arriving on any item.



Building Customer Loyalty

Optimized and automated processes give Kalleco's employees more time to build customer loyalty, too. They can get to know every repeat customer and use Propello's customer view to see all critical customer information in one place.

"We can create different customer profiles and accounts, and the system allows us to offer customers to purchase items on account and pay later," Rebecca explains. "There are just so many features that can help with different areas of the business."

Propello also empowers Kalleco's staff with the ability to enter detailed notes about products that employees can easily access, whether it's the length of a pipe or the weight of a stone. It's helping to create a better customer experience.

"Epicor Propello is so user-friendly and modern, and the improved visibility of inventory, plus business analytics has been a game changer."

Rebecca Iseldyke, Administrative Assistant | Kalleco Nursery

Pine Hills Nursery

A Family-Owned Horticulture and Landscaping Destination

Evolving an Established Family Business

Pine Hills Nursery is a family owned and operated business that offers high quality products. It's a Pass Christian, Mississippi, destination that can help make any landscape flourish. From trees and plants to fertilizers and ceramics.

Rachel Bond is taking on the role of running the business, stepping into the shoes of her grandmother and mother who founded the business in 1986. She's inspired by more than 30 years of success as well as keen to modernize the nursery's technology.

"It's an exciting time for Pine Hills," Rachel proclaims. "The Covid-19 pandemic ignited a new appreciation for outside spaces and inspired many people to become first-time gardeners and connect with nature," she says. "My family has created a wonderful retail environment, but I needed a new way to oversee all the elements of the business."

Modernizing the POS Experience

Epicor Propello created a browser-based and streamlined way for Rachel to manage the nursery business, which is also positively impacting customer experience.

Prior to implementing Propello, prices were entered manually into the cash register, with no way to correlate the item purchased with the sale. Stock checks were also carried out manually and relied on the knowledge of Rachel's aunt and mother for what—and when—to order inventory.

Thousands of plants, ceramics, and décor items were entered into Propello and now every sale automatically updates key business information, including stock levels and revenue.

"We pride ourselves on our customer service. Having stock and sales information in Propello has enhanced the quality of the customer experience we offer," Rachel says. "Our team used to spend a lot of time running around our large site checking on products for customers. Now, they can see what we have in an instant."

Accessing Essential Information in the Cloud

The browser-based Propello applications give Rachel the flexibility to check on the health of the business any time and from anywhere. And powerful reporting capabilities gives her key metrics, such as sales and profitability.

"At-a-glance, I have an accurate view of what's selling, what's not, and where I should focus our efforts for customer offers and promotions," Rachel explains. "Running a business is a 24-hour job, so being able to access key information on my cell phone or laptop is extremely useful."

> ***"Having stock and sales information in Propello has enhanced the quality of the customer experience we offer."***
>
> *Rachel Bond, Owner | Pine Hills Nursery*

Remote access to the nursery's business system also gives Rachel's mother more flexibility to monitor stock levels from home.

"My mom has been running our ordering for decades, so I worried about how she would view the change, but she loves Propello and the organization it brings," Rachel says. "The solution is user-friendly, and she's picked everything up really quickly."

Forest Lake Greenhouses

Wholesale Nursery Offering Blooming Annuals and Exceptional Customer Service

Where Great Gardens Begin

Florence, South Carolina-based Forest Lake Greenhouses' is a locally owned and operated retail garden center and wholesale nursery whose mission is to cultivate growth and happiness by connecting people to the beautiful offerings of the natural world through horticulture.

While the business is proud to offer an inspiring environment to shop and enjoy the natural world, eCommerce is firmly on the list of strategic priorities as the retailer grows.

"In spring 2020, many people were looking to collect their orders via curbside pickup," explains Luke Venable, the company's General Manager. "That was very challenging as we were spending a lot of time on the phone with customers confirming stock and availability, while also offering customer support to the customers in the store," he adds. "We wanted to create a seamless online experience that would ease the workload for our staff and improve the customer experience."

Reducing Manual Entry for a Seamless Experience

Using Propello, Forest Lake Greenhouses removed a number of manual processes from its operations. They're also realizing significant improvements in inventory management, the point of sale (POS) system, and expanded eCommerce checkout capabilities. The system was also able to significantly reduce customer wait times in the store by opening new and integrated registers.

"Moving from cash registers to Propello has been a huge positive change," Luke says. "We used to have separate card terminals that weren't linked to our registers but now we've reduced a lot of manual entry associated with card processing—and saved money in the process."

Luke and the team are looking to further streamline the checkout process by adding barcodes to at least 90% of their products. These incremental improvements are taking the pressure off cashiers, improving the staff's experience and aiding retention.

Automation and Analytics

Propello's analytical tools are also built into key functions like inventory, sales tracking, and customer management. The data insights are helping Luke make smarter decisions on merchandising, pricing, and promotions.

Forest Lake Greenhouses also moved to QuickBooks online accounting that integrates with Propello, thus automating a large part of their payroll function.

> ***"Removing manual processes and streamlining our operation means we're in a strong position to grow our business."***
>
> *Luke Venable, General Manager*
> *Forest Lake Greenhouses*

"Being able to capture data and view analytics for our business has been a big game changer," Luke shares. "Removing manual processes and streamlining our operation means we're in a strong position to grow our business both in-store and through eCommerce."

Amaton Baby Imports

How a Family-Run Store Simplified Everyday Tasks

A Local Success Story

Amaton Baby Imports is a family-owned business in Dallas, Texas, that sells party goods for weddings, baby showers, and special occasions.

Managed by Rafael Amaton and Stephanie Amaton, they took over running the store from their parents. The store has a strong customer base, particularly with the local Hispanic community.

"Our independence helps us stay competitive and in sync with local demand. We offer items that can't be found elsewhere, bulk buys at really competitive prices, and discounts to local customers," Rafael explains.

Keen to expand the store's appeal, they have plans to diversify by adding more crafting and do-it-yourself products, running new offers and, in the longer term, adding eCommerce.

Keeping up With Demand

The pandemic stalled their growth plans in 2020, forcing the store to close for four months in 2020. Foot traffic was also impacted due to subsequent in-store social distancing.

However, business picked up considerably in 2021. Their biggest challenge is keeping up with customer demand during supply chain disruptions and finding new employees to expand the team.

Rafael and Stephanie spend their time running the store day-to-day, managing inventory, serving customers—leaving little time to introduce new product lines or move sales online.

"Logistics companies are understaffed and affected by rising fuel prices, resulting in delays. Our suppliers can't keep up with our growing demand," said Rafael.

> ***"Our independence helps us stay competitive and in sync with local demand."***
>
> *Rafael Amaton, Manager | Amaton Baby Imports*

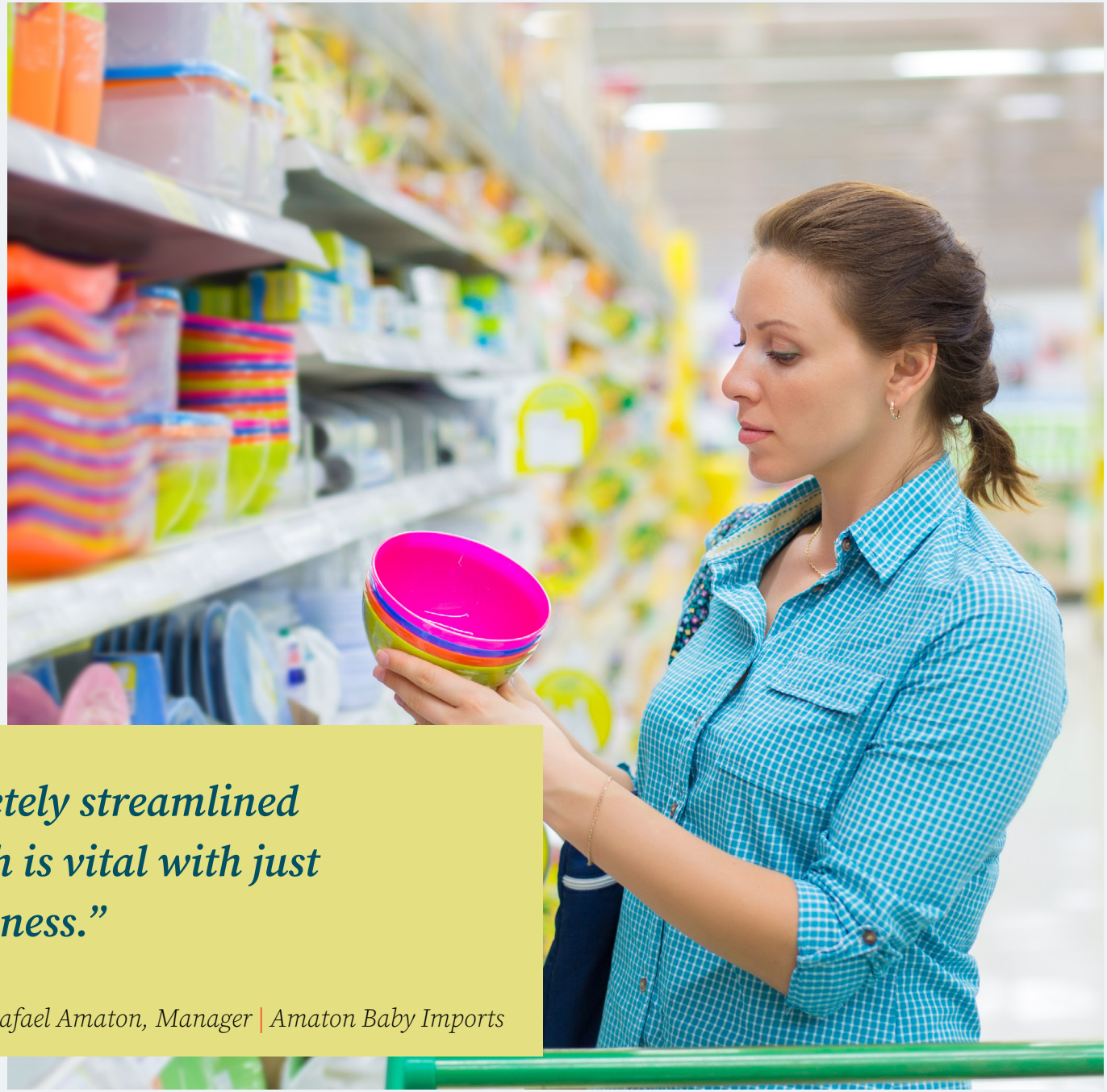
Streamlining Operations to Drive Growth

The introduction of Epicor Propello to run the store's operations gave Amaton a 360° view of inventory levels, sales, and pricing with reports available in just a few clicks.

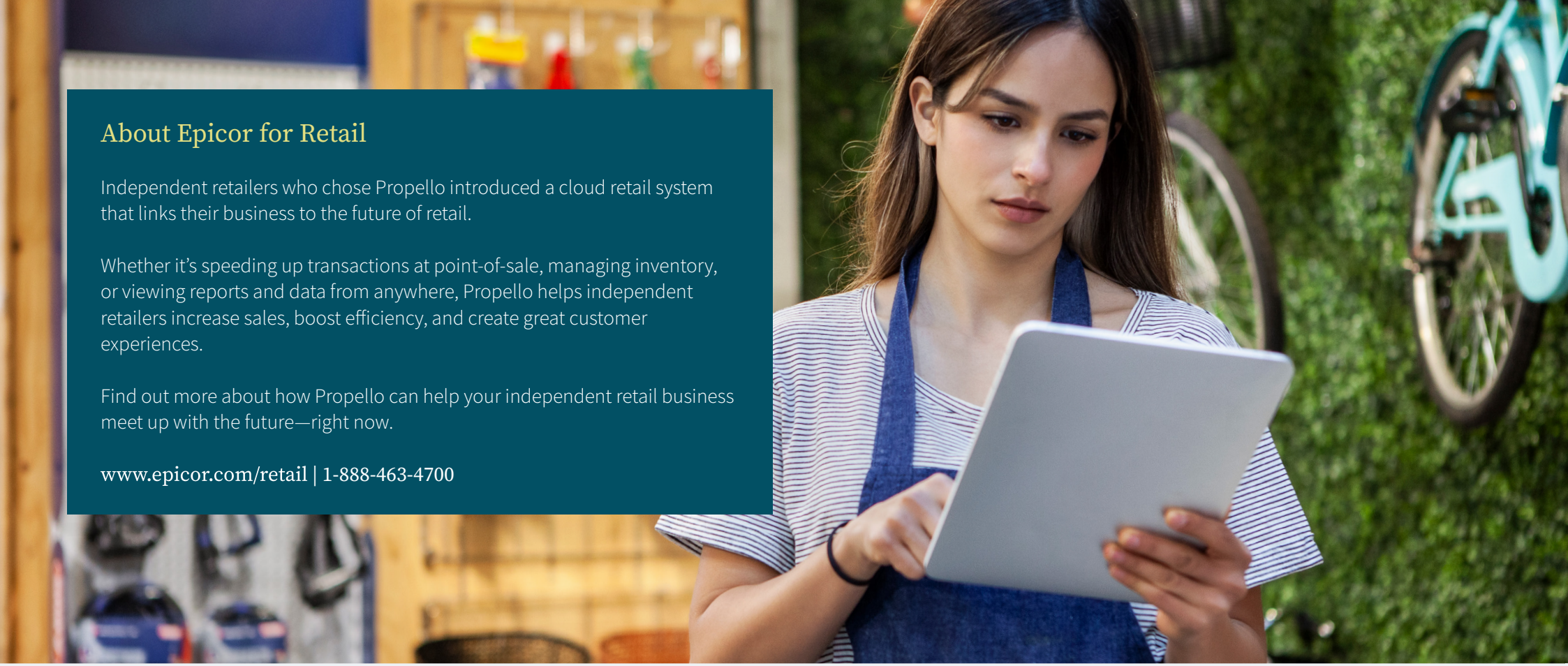
"We can scan and see everything we need to know about every one of our 15,000 different products, saving trips to the stockroom and removing manual work," Rafael explains. "For example, we can update the prices for our 200 ribbon styles in just two minutes."

These insights help to optimize inventory management, ensuring they can adjust promotions, update pricing, and fast-track new inventory orders in line with supply chain and customer demand changes.

They have a positive outlook for the future of the business: "Epicor Propello has completely streamlined how we run our store, which is vital with just two people running the business," Rafael says. "We can make quick decisions based on live data, so we can meet customer demand and take advantage of the opportunity to grow our business."



> ***"Epicor Propello has completely streamlined how we run our store, which is vital with just two people running the business."***
>
> *Rafael Amaton, Manager | Amaton Baby Imports*



About Epicor for Retail

Independent retailers who chose Propello introduced a cloud retail system that links their business to the future of retail.

Whether it's speeding up transactions at point-of-sale, managing inventory, or viewing reports and data from anywhere, Propello helps independent retailers increase sales, boost efficiency, and create great customer experiences.

Find out more about how Propello can help your independent retail business meet up with the future—right now.

www.epicor.com/retail | 1-888-463-4700

EPICOR

We're here for the hard-working businesses that keep the world turning. They're the companies that make, move, and sell the things we all need. They trust Epicor to help them do business better. Their industries are our industries, and we understand them better than anyone. By working hand-in-hand with our customers, we get to know their business almost as well as they do. Our innovative solution sets are carefully curated to fit their needs and built to respond flexibly to their fast-changing reality. We accelerate every customer's ambitions, whether to grow and transform, or to simply become more productive and effective. That's what makes us the essential partners for the world's most essential businesses.

Contact Us Today: info@epicor.com | www.epicor.com

The contents of this document are for informational purposes only and are subject to change without notice. Epicor Software Corporation makes no guarantee, representations, or warranties with regard to the enclosed information and specifically disclaims, to the full extent of the law, any applicable implied warranties, such as fitness for a particular purpose, merchantability, satisfactory quality, or reasonable skill and care. This document and its contents, including the viewpoints, dates, and functional content expressed herein are believed to be accurate as of its date of publication, April 2024 The usage of any Epicor software shall be pursuant to the applicable end user license agreement and the performance of any consulting services by Epicor personnel shall be pursuant to applicable standard services terms and conditions. Usage of the solution(s) described in this document with other Epicor software or third-party products may require the purchase of licenses for such other products. Epicor, the Epicor logo, and Propello are trademarks or registered trademarks of Epicor Software Corporation, registered in the United States, certain other countries, and/or the EU. All other trademarks mentioned are the property of their respective owners. Copyright © 2024 Epicor Software Corporation. All rights reserved.