

Case Study

Flowergram



How Technology Management used Microsoft Dynamics NAV to overhaul a Stourbridge-based floral delivery service's call centre and accounting systems to allow them to grow profitably.

The brief

Flowergram is a Stourbridge-based floral delivery service that started in 1998. To get an idea of what they do you need only think of their main competitors, Inter-flora and Teleflorist. They are a family-owned business, employing 26 people at their head office.

were paper-based and the company used two databases for member data and Flowergram's accounts. With such a fragmented system, information was often slow to process, duplicated, incorrect or incompatible.

The approach

Guided by Technology Management, Flowergram sought a more integrated, scalable solution. Choosing a Microsoft system was important to Flowergram because they felt confident they would have stability and longevity; a platform for future growth.

Flowergram's business works as a membership scheme, with florists paying to join. There are currently around 1000 member florist shops in the UK, with overseas partners allowing them to offer an international service. Flowergram members take orders from local customers and arrange to have them delivered hundreds of miles away. Using Flowergram's member directory, florists talk to each other to pass orders on.

After an appraisal had examined all aspects of Flowergram's operations, a plan was formulated to change the way the company worked. The new system also had to take into account the technological limitations of their members - the florists - and how they could process orders, too.

Flowergram's role in the transaction is to act as a kind of clearing house for the money that changes hands. A challenge for Flowergram's system is in processing each party's commission. Flowergram's second role is to generate its own independent orders, taken at its call centre in Stourbridge and through its website (www.flowergram.co.uk).

Over a six-month period a new system was introduced so Flowergram could continue on its high growth curve, without the need for extra resources.



Focus	Service B2C E-commerce
Software	Microsoft Dynamics NAV
Hardware	4 IBM xSeries Servers
Users	9

By 2000, it was apparent that their existing system could no longer handle the growing number of transactions. Their accounting software that was designed to buy and sell goods just wasn't suitable. Many of their systems

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Proposed solution

With the same transaction hitting both the sales and purchase ledgers (the shop that sold the flowers and the shop that delivered them), everything had to be entered twice onto Flowergram's previous accounting system. Microsoft Dynamics NAV was used to solve Flowergram's duplication and accounting difficulties.

With an inefficient paper-based system, Technology Management made changes to speed the process up. Today a customised call handling application integrates seamlessly with the company's system. Links with Flowergram's website and their new telephone and fax systems ensure orders are processed quickly.

Now, members are notified automatically of new orders. The order process time was reduced further using postcode checking software. Callers now only have to provide the postcode and house number, with the software providing the rest. This has saved time and reduced the number of data input errors. Also, because the system integrates with Flowergram's website, it checks the accuracy of the addresses customers are providing online.

During e-commerce's infancy, Flowergram's original website only took about five orders a day — an easy amount to process by hand. But as flowers established themselves as one of the most successful products sold on the web, Flowergram needed a reliable, scalable presence. Technology Management's response was to build a site integrated with Microsoft Dynamics NAV.

This took only two months to complete, yet it has provided Flowergram with a flexible, powerful selling tool.

Solution benefits

As business has blossomed for Flowergram, their new systems have enabled them to continue offering good service. Simon Dimmock, Flowergram's chief executive adds: 'Without implementing Microsoft Dynamics NAV it wouldn't be possible to handle the volume of business we're handling now. We have increased the level of business by 50 per cent in the time since Dynamics NAV has been implemented. Our staffing levels haven't increased at all'.

In recognition of the progress they made with their call centre, Flowergram were short listed for the 2003 Customer Contact Centre Award.

With the addition of a customised transaction entry journal, data inputting was halved. The solution also automatically deducts commissions and charity payments. In all, the time savings have been huge.

The investment and foresight in e-commerce has paid off for Flowergram. The site is profitable and has already taken nearly ten thousand orders worth over £250,000. The site was the West Midlands' regional winner of the UK Online for Business E-Commerce awards, and has attracted national media attention from the likes of GMTV.

Real-time reporting from Microsoft Dynamics NAV allows Flowergram to respond to trends quickly. The simple integration between Microsoft Dynamics NAV and their web site makes it simple for their staff to change offers and products on their site without any technical knowledge.

Simon has been impressed with the partnership, adding: 'Without the new systems we would have drowned under a sea of paper. Instead we have been able to concentrate on driving the company forward. We know we can rely on them - they are a partner worth having'.

Future challenges

Leading up to Mothers Day this year — the busiest time of year for florists — sales were up 16 per cent. Faced with an overwhelming number of website orders, Flowergram took the step of switching their website off to ensure they could fulfil everything!

Flowergram is now established as a favourite way of sending flowers and gifts. And with a lean system processing 500,000 transactions a year, Flowergram can concentrate on taking the business forward with confidence. Simon concludes: 'I'm a firm believer that if you stand still you go backwards, and to enable us to grow we do need a scalable solution that will grow with us. We're absolutely 100 per cent confident that Microsoft Dynamics NAV is that product'.



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