

# BUSINESS IS BLOOMING

## Interflora needed a reliable and resilient network to meet growing customer demand

Interflora is the world's largest flower delivery network with 58,000 florists serving more than 140 countries. Once virtually the only option for people in the UK to send flowers at a distance; today the competition is fierce.

The company realised that its existing systems – involving member florists in manual dial-up and dial-back connections – was insufficient. To meet customer expectations it would need to change its order processing application and the enabling infrastructure.

Mike Heath, head of support at Interflora, explains: 'In order to meet market demand for flowers within hours, we needed to move order information much more quickly between our central systems and member florists.'

### NO HASSLE: APPLICATION HOSTING AND SUPPORT

Orders via Interflora's main sales channels – at its florists, through a central contact centre or, increasingly, over the internet – go through a central processing system, making systems reliability critical. Scalability is also an issue as a significant proportion of the florists' business is transacted over three key periods – Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and Christmas – requiring a platform capable of processing up to 100,000 transactions per day.

Interflora selected the Oracle 11i e-business application as the core of its new systems. It also decided to partner with a company offering application hosting and support.

After consulting various application hosting vendors, Interflora selected BT. Heath says: 'We were looking for a UK-based company that could provide us with a scalable integrated hosting and connectivity solution. BT has a good reputation here and it could meet all our requirements, which made the decision easy.'

BT now provides hosting services for Interflora's application and database servers, with 24/7 monitoring

and maintenance. This also includes the provision and management of firewalls, daily back up routines to provide high-level security and resilience, plus management of the Windows 2000 operating system to ensure the latest patches and security updates are deployed.

Network connectivity from the BT data centre in Hertfordshire to the Interflora head office in Lincolnshire is achieved through the BT EquiP service while a similar connection links the head office to the Nottingham contact centre, enabling the direct input of telephone orders into the system.

Implementation was completed on schedule in just four months. 'This was a complex project that involved the complete transformation of our business processes,' says Heath. 'It went without a hitch.'

### FASTER FOR CUSTOMERS, BETTER FOR BUSINESS

BT's large-scale secure hosting platform has revolutionised business. The accelerated information flow means member florists' screens are now updated virtually in real time, enabling a more responsive delivery service and providing a platform from which Interflora can grow.

Interflora is already seeing sustained revenue growth and is in discussion with BT to enhance disaster recovery arrangements. An Interflora-branded broadband service to members is also being considered. 'BT provides a first class service with access to highly specialised technical skills,' says Heath. 'This frees up our IT team to concentrate on development, rather than running the network.'

### Tech spec

BT's solution used Sun 480, 880 and 1280 database and application servers with the Oracle 11i e-business application, plus two servers for testing, development and back-up. BT EquiP is a virtual private network

for a pure IP environment. It utilises BT's multiprotocol label switching (MPLS) network, giving high levels of resilience and security. It incorporates fully managed access routers serving its head office and contact centre.

WWW.CHRISPRICEFLOWERS.CO.UK PHOTOGRAPHY: DAVID WOOLFALL

### COMPANY PROFILE

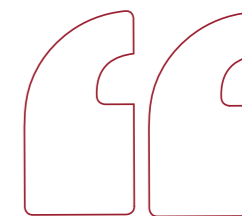
Company: Interflora

Location: Outlets in 140 countries worldwide

Established: 1920

Business need: To meet demand and combat intense competition, order information needed to move faster between central systems and member florists

Solution: BT provides application hosting and support. Improved reliability, increased speed of the order information process, and a platform capable of processing up to 100,000 transactions a day underpin the basis for growth



This complex project involved the complete transformation of our business processes. It went without a hitch

Mike Heath, head of support, Interflora

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