

Netflorist gets the pick of the bunch

For some businesses, trading online seems to create more hard work and headaches than sales. However, thanks to the Safeshop suite of e-commerce products, there is one online retailer that can afford to stop and smell the roses ...

As the largest flower and gifting supplier in the country, NetFlorist describes itself as being "in the business of delivering emotion". And deliver it does. In the past decade, the company has distributed in excess of 900 000 gift and flower packages through its preferred network of florists across South Africa and the world.

The majority of these sales are channelled through its online shopping site, www.netflorist.co.za, which was launched when the company was formed in 1999. Customers can also place orders telephonically or via email.

Today, the NetFlorist site processes in the region of [170 000 transactions a year, comprising around [80%] of the company's total annual sales.

"When we launched the company, we wanted to provide our customers with a secure, redundant payment solution for buying flowers and gifts online," explains Ryan Bacher, NetFlorist managing director.

"However, we had some concerns regarding the reliability of our existing Internet service provider, specifically with regard to Telkom-based connections to the banks. We then approached MWEB Business and, using their Safeshop e-commerce platform, designed a 'staged orders' facility that would batch any orders that did not reach the banks and then run that communication through when the Telkom line came up again.

"In this way, we removed any inconvenience that our customers were experiencing. The facility went live in early 2002, and we still run it today with great effect."

The MWEB Business Safeshop platform is currently regarded as one of the most comprehensive and secure e-commerce systems available in South Africa, with more than 50% of all local online transactions using this platform. It provides all the tools a business needs to manage and analyse sales online, and offers complete fraud protection through 3D secure – a technology developed by MasterCard and Visa as a means to reduced online credit card fraud.

“The security of our customer data is obviously a top priority for us,” points out Bacher. “Safeshop’s encryption, firewall security and VeriSign certification were all important considerations.”

NetFlorist was one of the first retailers to sign up as a mimoney partner when Standard Bank rolled out the system in December 2009. Coupled with the Safeshop payment gateway, this gives NetFlorist the flexibility it needs to share its online sales service with the broadest possible market.

Another advantage, adds Bacher, is that Safeshop currently caters for more payment methods than any other South African e-commerce platform. This includes mimoney - an electronic voucher payment system for people who want to shop online but do not have a credit card, or do not wish to submit their credit card details over the Internet.

“We are able to offer our customers a reliable, multi-payment facility via our website and this is largely as a result of the services we receive from Safeshop,” says Bacher.

“Furthermore, there is no limit to the volume that we can put through the system. This is a big advantage on occasions like Valentine’s and Mother’s Day, when our volumes skyrocket. With Safeshop, there is no disruption of service and capacity is unlimited.

“We have been very happy with Safeshop and particularly the staged order functionality since inception.”

For more information on Safeshop from MWEB Business , please call MWEB Business on 011 340 8400 or send an email to business@mweb.com.

