

# florist2florist - revolutionising relay



Having captured the imagination, and custom for that matter, of florists across the length and breadth of the UK with their forward-thinking, tailor made software package for florists, the time has now come for **florist2florist** (f2f) to concentrate on the grassroots of their business – relay. That means, with father and son team **Simon** and **John Stirling** busily working away behind the scenes, that innovation and new ideas are never far away.

Take, for instance, their belief that, in order to compete with the multiples, florists must be able to offer the best possible value for money, service and quality, for both their own orders and for relay. This belief, after much consideration and careful thought, has led to the introduction of what Simon enthusiastically announces as free relay.

After paying the small monthly 'service' charge of just £40 (which incidentally is only open to florists using the company's broadband software), members are able to transmit as many UK orders as they want without incurring any further charges, whilst international orders are charged at £3 per order, a figure that the customer pays anyway when placing their order. There's also no charge for receiving orders.

"We believe the £40 per month contract is a groundbreaking way for florists to pay a fixed cost for the relay service," says Simon. "A single manageable payment to f2f each month will save busy florists hundreds of pounds each month in charges. For the that fee we provide service support, back up, software and the ability to send unlimited volume of orders."

But why not cash in and keep a percentage of every order like other relays do?

"It's straightforward," explains Simon. "We're not interested in taking money because by attracting busy florists it will increase the volume of orders going through florist2florist which will in turn attract more members. For florists, lower relay costs means higher executing values and that means better value for money for the customer. This will help florists fight back against the aggressive supermarkets and other boxed delivery companies, which even includes relay companies such as Interflora and Flowers Direct now."

Simon continues: "In order to win the battle against supermarkets (how long will it be before Tesco take a half/full page adverts in every Yellow Pages?) florists must offer the best value for money, service and quality. By not charging the service fee for each order – we offer a USP to the consumer and the highest executing values in the industry. The flower money is split 20% – 80% between sending and delivering shop and with no relay fee

paid that means this is the best value and fairest split out there."

Much of the success of f2f and the ability to offer 'free' relay has to be put down to the phenomenal success of the broadband software launched last year, not least because it provides the company with the platform to provide service without high costs.

Never ones to stand still, Simon and John are excitedly launching **f2f Version 2** in the next two or three months, which includes breakthrough technology that, as the service grows, will allow florists to actually view one another's screens in real time – enabling florists to send orders with confidence. "You will view their work, their prices and be able to show customers on screen!" adds Simon. "Broadband has enabled the florist2florist model to become even more real than we at first ever imagined."

Other standard features in the programme already available include: order taking, customer recognition, customer databasing, postcode address matching, onscreen selection guide (enter your own pictures), invoicing and statements, marketing and, of course, order sending and receiving within the network. "It really is the complete florist management system for your business! And if you are already in another relay service you can now select your own relay company so orders do not go through the f2f network," enthuses Simon.

"It's all about freedom for florists," he continues. "As a florist, you choose your flower supplier, your floristry style, you get the benefits of pre-paid orders, the lowest costs in the industry, the highest executing values, the leading florist management software and the back up of the f2f team. You can choose between "pay as you go" (no monthly or annual fees with a payment of £3 per order) or "contract" which offers attractive options to suit florists of all sizes. And, because we realise not everyone wants to use computers, you can still fax and phone orders when using the pay as you go system.

"For the first time since we launched, members from more established services are now joining us, which is great news," says Simon. "This tells me our message and model is the right one – and it's getting through. We believe that for florists to fight back against Tesco etc, every expense has to be scrutinised and for many florists it's their relay company that sends the heaviest bills... can that be right? Relay is also about sharing business. We believe we provide the fairest, lowest cost solution that provides the best value for money to the customer. And after all, it's got to be about the customer being pleased with the florist. That's why our plans are to launch a general public web site that puts the customer directly in touch with the f2f member in the area and send them all the money."

Watch this space!

