

How email enabled NetFlorist to pivot and drive innovation during lockdown

Issued by [Everlytic](#) 17 Nov 2020

A highly customised email campaign boosted visibility and online sales of new service despite a difficult economic environment.

As South Africa's largest same-day gift and flower delivery e-commerce provider, [NetFlorist](#) is arguably one of the country's most innovative – and beloved – homegrown brands. With a large and highly loyal base of customers, the company has been able to respond to user feedback and continually improve its service delivery, as well as the vibrant and personalised brand communications that have become synonymous with NetFlorist. When the national lockdown was announced in response to the global pandemic, and Level 5 restrictions forced many businesses to close their doors, NetFlorist drew on its core DNA: agility, innovation and world-class customer service – to not only sustain revenue but to provide fresh fruit and vegetables (along with other essential items) to customers during the crisis.

"When the lockdown was announced, we quickly identified the opportunity to leverage our existing infrastructure to start delivering fresh produce," explained Thalissa Pillay, marketing manager at NetFlorist. "There was a clear need for next-day delivery, and ideally same-day delivery, as most retailers were only able to deliver orders within a two-week period. We already had an existing relationship with Fruitspot, which is nationwide and normally delivers to restaurants. With restaurants forced to close, Fruitspot had extra produce – so there was a great symbiosis in fulfilling both business and customer needs during this 21-day period."

Given the negative economic impact and sense of uncertainty invoked by the lockdown, the primary challenge for NetFlorist's ambition of growing same-day fresh produce delivery was the question of how to market the new service without spending money on expensive acquisitions. The company had halted spending on various channels, including AdWords and social media marketing. Instinctively, the company turned to one of the fundamental pillars of its existing (and popular with their audience) marketing channel: email. With a database of over 1.6 million engaged customers, email represented a highly cost-effective, direct and powerful link with their audience – who were going online far more frequently because they were forced indoors.

"We also knew that we could depend on our long-term partnership with [Everlytic](#), which provides us with the software that enables the team to create timely, multi-channel digital messages. Using this software, we were able to get the email campaign up and running with very little lead time," added Pillay.

Simplicity and personalisation

By drawing on the established NetFlorist expertise and experience, the company was able to send customised emails out almost every day from 2 April onwards. The service initially rolled out in Johannesburg to fix any teething problems before expanding to the rest of the country. Importantly, the team had to communicate that NetFlorist could no longer sell flowers during this time, but fresh produce and household items such as laundry detergent – and this required simple messaging and a subtle change in tone from the usual tongue-in-cheek approach. In addition, personalisation was key, and the team made sure to segment customer bases to target specific audiences – while also optimising the customer experience for mobile phone users. Along with using catchy subject lines, the timing of each email was important, with the morning often being the ideal time to send out emails. NetFlorist also provided the occasional exclusive offer to generate additional value and reward customers for their loyalty.

"The results of the email campaign really spoke for themselves, with a whopping 170% year on year increase in mobile email traffic – with email very clearly the top contributor to our overall traffic and site activity, even outside of specific campaigns," said Pillay. "When we analysed the percentage of total sales revenue generated by each marketing activity in April 2020, including email, SEO, direct sales, Google Search, etc., email consistently delivered a significant portion of total revenue."



Hellen Ndebele

Hellen Ndebele, relationship manager at Everlytic, noted that the email campaign was highly successful, in large part, because of the technical expertise within the NetFlorist team.

“The execution of their campaigns is meticulous and consistently downright perfect,” said Ndebele. “The email designs, segmentation of data, use of personalisation and the use of our email staggering feature are key factors for their success. In addition, our long-standing relationship is a key strength for both companies. We have learned to collaborate and check in with each other to ensure that none of us drop the ball in terms of key deliverables. Ultimately, this campaign demonstrates how powerful a targeted email campaign can be in the all-important indicator: ROI.”

For NetFlorist, a key part of the ongoing success of their email campaigns is the enhanced visibility provided by the Everlytic platform, which provides detailed insights into campaign performance – enabling NetFlorist to continually tweak and perfect email campaigns from every angle.

“Without a doubt, our email campaign was the reason we survived the strict 21-day lockdown, and were able to pivot as seamlessly as we did,” added Pillay.

About Everlytic

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