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Business blooms for floral service - International florist, gift



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Business blooms for floral service

The tradition of giving fresh flowers and the large number of Australians with family and friends overseas has led to a blossoming trade for a Northern New South Wales company. Based in Armidale, Petals Network is one of only three international floral relay services in the world, which allow buyers to send fresh flowers overnight to just about anywhere in the world.



"We currently export to 70 countries but our main order volume is to the United Kingdom, Holland, Germany, the United States and Canada," Chief Executive Officer, Scott Williams said.

Petals Network has grown to include 1,000 florists around Australia and over 40,000 internationally. Australian florists take orders from local customers for Australian and overseas destinations, who then send the order to Petals Network to find florists in Australia and overseas able to fill the orders. Petals Network also receives orders from overseas florists requiring Australian florists to fill orders. In addition to this, Petals Network acts as a financial clearinghouse for orders, ensuring all florists receive payment in their own currency.

Petals Network was founded in 1992 by Mr Williams with business partner and trained florist, Bobbi Ballas. While looking to establish a florist business in Armidale they saw an opportunity to start a new more service-oriented floral relay service for Australian florists. Petals Network was the first floral relay service in Australia for 40 years and the first to do business over the Internet. The company now employs 11 full time staff and is growing at around 30 per cent a year.

To ensure the company continues to grow, Petals Network is looking to increase its market share in the United Kingdom and expand into Europe. The company has also purchased an English floral relay service and moved it to The Netherlands, where they have a second service.

"It pays to be involved in a larger market even if you've got a smaller share," Mr Williams said.

"A 10 per cent market share in the UK would be bigger than the Australian market as a whole. There are 2,500 florists in Australia, while there are 40,000 to 50,000 in Europe."

Petals Network received their first Export Market Development Grant (EMDG) this year, which will help cover costs incurred in marketing the company overseas. Mr Williams said his company also received help from Austrade's Milan post when they undertook feasibility studies in Europe. The Austrade post in Paris also provided a French interpreter when Petals Network was considering acquiring a florist in Marseille.

Petals Network has also claimed its fair share of awards in recent years, and have been named four times in BRW's annual Top 100 Fastest Growing Companies List. In 2000 the company was also named New South Wales Regional Exporter of the Year.

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