



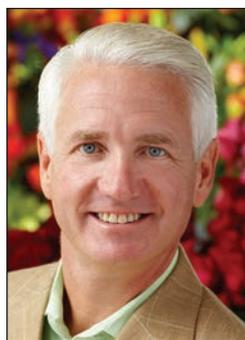
## SoLoMo

An Interview with Christopher G. McCann,  
President, 1-800-FLOWERS.COM



**EDITORS' NOTE** Chris McCann is President of 1-800-FLOWERS.COM. He is a member of the board of trustees of Marist College.

**COMPANY BRIEF** Carle Place, New York-based 1-800-FLOWERS.COM is now one of the most recognized brands in gift retailing providing flowers, plants, gourmet foods, chocolates, gift baskets, balloons, and more to customers around the world via the Internet ([www.1800flowers.com](http://www.1800flowers.com)), telephone, retail and franchise stores, and a network of franchise and independent professional florists. The company's family of brands are among the best known in gifting, including 1-800-FLOWERS.COM, Fannie May, The Popcorn Factory, Cheryl's, WineTasting.com, and 1-800-Baskets.com.



Christopher G. McCann

### How critical to the brand is exploring the SoLoMo (Social, Local, Mobile media) space and what do you envision for the future?

There have been four waves that have affected how our business has grown: the first was brick-and-mortar retail. We take the lessons learned from that and constantly apply them to other channels of growth.

Jim (Chairman and CEO) and I still talk about what we learned from customers starting with that first flower shop in New York City and how we were part of the community – members of the community would come in to chat with us even if they weren't making a purchase.

The second wave of growth was telephonic commerce and the emergence of the 1-800 service. We tried to make our customer interaction personal to recreate the local flower shop experience.

The third wave was online/e-commerce, where we applied what we had learned from the retail and telephone business to our e-commerce channel, always with the goal of developing that one-to-one relationship with our customers.

The fourth wave is social commerce and mobile is playing a critical role in that. As we've interacted with our consumers in this area over the past several years, we've learned that "local" is a critical component of this wave as well.

So we see the web is being re-architected around people. This is giving us some great capabilities to continue to do what we do best, which is engage with our customers and help them create smiles. We're proud that we got

involved in SoLoMo early on. We didn't know what would emerge from it but knew that we had to be involved to learn along with the consumer.

We're now a recognized leader in social and mobile commerce. As the local aspect becomes more important, we're well positioned because we still have our retail flower shops through our franchise organization and BloomNet wire service. Local florists have increasingly recognized the need to be part of a brand that is on the forefront of technology and behavior changing tech-

nologies for the consumer, so more flower shops are becoming franchises of ours. That enhances our ability to be local.

### Is there merit to the idea that the experience of walking into a flower shop will be lost?

No. Local commerce is coming back and many pure e-commerce companies are trying to become more local, even if only in their distribution capabilities.

Brick-and-mortar retailers are utilizing mobile capabilities to drive interactions with their customers on a localized basis.

There are elements of the floral business that e-commerce companies like us don't participate in as much: weddings, for example; sympathy is a growing part of our business and it's a very big part of the local flower shop business.

We look at the purchasing behavior of our customers and, in order for us to service them, we have to be a true multichannel retailer; it's the best way our brand can service all of our customer needs.

### In each of these segments, you're quick to test new ideas. Is that a part of your culture?

It's an important part of our culture and one that attracts talent to our company. People know when they work here, they'll not only have the opportunity to experiment but will be expected to.

The consumer is constantly changing and if we're not changing with them, we'll be left behind.

### Is your full offering well understood and how do you get your message across?

We constantly focus on communicating all the capabilities we have to our existing customer base, be that the range of our product line from entry-level to high-end styled floral designs or to the expanded product lines such as gift baskets, Fannie May chocolates, WineTasting.com, and Cheryl's cookies and brownies.

We do a good job with our existing customer base as evidenced by 1-800-Baskets; we're coming up on two years since we've launched this business and it's very successful and growing rapidly. The only way we raised awareness about it was by making it visible to the customers of 1-800-FLOWERS.COM.

### How have you been so effective at providing a consistently high level of service?

Our team focuses on making sure that we never forget what made us successful to begin with. In addition to our wonderful products, what makes this company successful is the caring people who are obsessed with service.

Getting them here starts with the hiring and training, but it's constantly reinforced. I do monthly video conferences with our sales and service specialists. In each of those sessions, I celebrate the stories I hear from our customers about our people who go above and beyond to deliver excellent service.

Our job is to deliver smiles on behalf of our customers and that is what our people take pride in.

### Are there other opportunities to extend the brand?

We are always in dialogue with our customers to determine what would help them in their celebratory lives. We then look to extend into product categories that our customers tell us they're utilizing as well as to extend our content and information offerings, which are so important in this world of SoLoMo.

So our Celebrations.com brand, for example, is all about how to celebrate and throw a party. It offers recipes and information, and fosters our customer base sharing information with each other. That is another level of engagement that we're developing with our customers.

### In the beginning, did you imagine this business becoming so successful?

It sometimes surprises me, but the vision that my brother brings to the table always exceeded mine, which helps us work so well as a team.

We have always learned from the customer where growth opportunities are. We're still in a difficult economic environment, but I look at our business and still see so many opportunities that I'm as energized today as I was when I joined the company in 1984.

When we come to work, we know we're making thousands of people smile. Growth will come naturally the more we do this. ●

1-800-FLOWERS.COM a-DOG-able (left) and Happy Hour (right) arrangements