

Constant Reinvention

An Interview with Jim McCann,
 Founder and Executive Chairman, 1-800-FLOWERS.COM, Inc.



Harry & David Classic Moose Munch Gourmet Popcorn Tin

EDITORS' NOTE In 1976, Jim McCann bought his first of many retail flower shops in the New York metropolitan area. As his company expanded, McCann focused on innovation and being an early adopter of new technologies that enhanced customer engagement to grow his business. As a result, 1-800-FLOWERS.COM, Inc., was among the first to offer 24-hour service through an 800 phone number and to use the Internet for direct sales to customers, becoming AOL's first merchant partner of any kind in 1994.



Jim McCann

COMPANY BRIEF 1-800-FLOWERS.COM, Inc. is a leading provider of gifts for all celebratory occasions. For more than 40 years, 1-800-Flowers.com® has been delivering smiles to customers with a 100% Smile Guarantee® backing every gift. The 1-800-FLOWERS.COM, Inc. family of brands also includes everyday gifting and entertaining products from 1-800-Baskets.com®, Cheryl's Cookies®, FruitBouquets.com®, Harry & David®, Moose Munch®, The Popcorn Factory®, Wolferman's®, Personalization Universe®, Simply Chocolate®, and GoodseySM. Additionally, the company offers top-quality steaks and chops from Stock Yards®.

What are the keys to 1-800-FLOWERS.COM, Inc.'s growth and leadership in the industry?

One of the keys to our continued growth has been our commitment to evolving and reinventing ourselves as a company. In fact, our gourmet food business, consisting of all-star brands like Harry & David, Cheryl's Cookies and 1-800-Baskets.com, now accounts for the biggest share of our total revenue on an annual basis. We also believe that it's important to build relationships first and do business second. This has helped us in developing win-win partnerships as our business has evolved.

Will you discuss 1-800-FLOWERS.COM, Inc.'s focus on the customer experience?

We always say our number one product is the customer experience. We are continually looking for ways to make it even easier for customers to shop with us wherever, whenever and however they choose.

For example, we were early adopters of Google Assistant, Apple Business Chat, and Bots for Facebook Messenger which has enabled us to build personalized relationships with our customers, similar to in-store relationships, but at scale.

To deepen relationships with our customers, we offer our Celebrations Passport® loyalty program, which provides members with free standard shipping and no service charge on purchases for one full year across our family of brands. At the heart of everything we do for our customers is our caring team obsessed with service.

1-800-FLOWERS.COM, Inc. has continued to broaden its product offerings. Will you provide an overview of your newest offerings?

Over the past year, we've added three new brands to our celebratory ecosystem. Last November, we launched Personalization Universe, which offers distinctive customizable gifts and keepsakes, as well as Simply Chocolate, a destination for individuals to discover a curated assortment of gifts and join a passionate community celebrating the love of chocolate.

Most recently, we created Goodsey, which offers a selection of unique gifts across a broad spectrum of product categories, while providing a fun-filled experience of exploration, discovery and delight.

We're also introducing initiatives to provide customers with opportunities to engage more deeply with our brands. For example, we recently introduced our Harry & David Hosted Dinners program, through which we're partnering with local restaurants across the country to create unique dining experiences and custom menus using some of Harry & David's famous gourmet products. The response has been terrific, and we'll continue to look for ways to bring our brands to life through experiential offerings and innovative new products.

1-800-FLOWERS.COM, Inc. has a long commitment to giving back and supporting the community. How deeply ingrained is corporate responsibility in the culture of the company?

We believe in "doing good while doing business" within the communities we serve, which is illustrated by our ongoing support of non-profit organizations near our offices across the country. Whether it's establishing hurricane relief funds to help impacted florists, making product donations to support local food banks, or volunteering within the community to assist those in need, corporate responsibility is deeply ingrained in our culture.

Every year, right after Memorial Day, we host our Summer of a Million Smiles program, which encourages employee volunteerism and community involvement. The program has become a much anticipated enterprise-wide tradition in which employees identify and support local causes, groups and organizations. Examples include volunteering at soup kitchens and local animal shelters, teaching kids with autism how to surf and building greenhouses to help employees of Smile Farms, our signature philanthropic partner.

How did the idea of Smile Farms develop and what was your vision in creating the organization?

For adults with developmental disabilities, like my brother Kevin, the sense of fulfillment that comes with having a job is something they may never experience, as over 80 percent of adults with developmental disabilities are unemployed. This troubling statistic was the driving force behind my family's decision to establish Smile Farms, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing meaningful work opportunities in agricultural settings to adults with developmental disabilities. In 2015, we funded a year-round greenhouse operation to create much needed jobs for Kevin and 29 of his fellow residents and friends at Independent Group Home Living (IGHL). We're thrilled by the positive impact the jobs have had on the lives of these adults. Today, Smile Farms operates seven campuses and employs 110 developmentally disabled adults while serving over 300 adults and children with disabilities.

Did you always know that you had an entrepreneurial spirit and the desire to create your own business?

I've always had the desire to create. As a bartender at age 26, a patron told me about his struggling flower shop and I thought "that sounds interesting," so I bought it – despite being in way over my head – and transformed it into the company it is today. In 2016, I proudly passed the reigns of the company to my brother Chris, so now while he runs the day-to-day operations of the business, I can continue to pursue my entrepreneurial passion more fully. I network extensively and always look out for what's next. I recently established Clarim, a private holding company that expands market opportunities for clients by providing capital along with an attractive network of support partners. Through a targeted set of verticals, Clarim's network provides services essential to privately held, founder and family-led companies. I'm having a lot of fun with it. ●