

# Flowerspot blossoms into a destination store

Depth of range creates loyal customers

BY GILLIAN HURST

**F**lowerspot is a great deal more than its name suggests. It is a one-stop-shop for anyone searching for a gift, planning a function, or simply just wanting to add colour to his or her home.

In the past, many of the product lines, now stocked in-store, were only available from suppliers and had to be ordered out of catalogues. What makes Flowerspot so



*Flowerspot in Woodmead has grown into a 3000m<sup>2</sup> destination store.*

unique is that the store offers such a broad product line, an enormous range within each line and provides everything to the public at wholesale prices.

The Duarte family opened the store in 1995 with the aim of bringing fresh cut

flowers to the public at wholesale prices. What was a simple 600m<sup>2</sup> flower store has grown to a 3000m<sup>2</sup> destination store with a depth of product range and services that has to be seen to be believed. The store offers everything for function décor, gifting and associated accessories, craft supplies, fruit, snacks and of course flowers.

## Huge depth of range

Dennis Duarte has explored every avenue of his product lines. For example, the store's candle offering ranges from tiny tea candles, to thin elaborately patterned ones and further to large centrepiece candles in a variety of shapes. Another example is the napkin range, which takes up both sides of an aisle and offers every colour, pattern and theme imaginable.

He has taken each range as far as they can go in order to offer his customers the widest choice, no matter the size of their budget. Gift boxes range from those made from recycled paper at the bottom of the price range, to ornate wooden boxes with brass fittings, which are obviously more expensive. It is exactly this huge depth of



*Customers are greeted with banks of flowers upon entering the store.*

range that keeps customers coming back – they know they will find everything they need for a party, be it for their children’s party, corporate function or elegant dinner party.

## Capitalising on convenience and choice

The general public, mostly from the Northern suburbs, coming in for their weekly fresh flowers comprise 90% of Flowerspot’s business. These affluent customers have money to spare, and come in loyally each week to buy their flowers and even if they are not planning a function, they invariably end up buying bits and pieces from the store. A shopper can enter the store to buy fresh flowers, stock up on crisp fruit and vegetables, outfits for the kids dress up parties or events such as Halloween, purchase any gifts she needs, and paper or boxes to wrap them, restock her craft supply and finally relax with a cup of coffee in the in-store café.

## A family affair

Flowerspot is a family business. Duarte’s sister, Michelle Davis runs a very popular wedding planning service. On a Saturday morning, the in-store café is the popular meeting place for Davis and prospective brides, where they pore over catalogues and samples. Flowerspot has its own catalogue of not just bridal bouquets, but pew decorations, church arrangements and function décor.



*A state of the art cold room keeps flowers, fruit and vegetables in top condition.*

## Flowers front and centre

Flowers take centre stage in the store. When walking into Flowerspot, you are immediately confronted with buckets of fresh, bright flowers and beyond them, a glass fronted, well lit cold room with an even bigger selection of flowers, plants and crisp fruit and vegetables. Even though flowers only constitute 25% of sales, it is frequently the flowers that bring people into the store. Duarte says that he has a large number of housewives that make a weekly trip to the shop to buy their flowers.

## Adding fruit and coffee to the mix

The store was expanded to include the state of the art cold room for flowers and vegetables and the in-store café. While one function of the fruit and vegetable offering is to provide convenience for his busy customers, this department is primarily a convenience to the store itself as a source of quality produce for the popular hampers made up on site. The café pays for itself as shoppers use it to relax and it’s a good place from which to plan functions, as the products are all close at hand, making

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*Floral arrangements and centrepieces are displayed to inspire customers and boost sales ahead of Christmas.*



*A large selection of Halloween products are ready for the October rush.*

planning and budgeting simple.

### Inspiration drive sales

Sales are also driven by offering inspiration to customers in the form of unique flower displays and centrepieces at the 'inspiration station' that is immediately visible when entering the store. Duarte is aware that many people struggle to visualise the final product, and to this end, he has employed a number of florists who create innovative centrepieces and arrangements using products available in-store.

This not only motivates customers to make purchases of products that they see in the arrangements, it also leads

to large orders by wedding planners, interior designers and corporates for their functions. For example, with Christmas fast approaching and the wedding season in full swing, the counter is full of Christmas and bridal centrepieces.

### The reliable choice for corporates

The remaining 10% of Flowerspot's market is made up of florists, interior decorators and corporate clients. This is because they know that they will have of a wide range of gift boxes and gift-wrapping accessories to choose from in-store and that these will be available in the quantities they require. They

are prepared to pay a little extra for this convenience.

Corporates also purchase hampers as gifts and have contracts for weekly flower deliveries to their offices. Flowerspot covers all the bases and also sells an impressive range of pot plants which can be delivered.

Flowerspot runs a fleet of 10 trucks that deliver anywhere from Honeydew to Midrand. The delivery service offers another level of convenience, especially to corporate clients and the small florists the store services.

### Suggestive selling

Flowerspot does not have conventional till



*A small selection of Flowerspots fresh flower range.*



*Candles for any occasion and budget.*



A small sample of the gift box range.

points. The tills are situated towards the middle of the store and there is a simple reason for this. Customers frequently ask advice on everything from which flowers to choose, right down to what is in stock to decorate their tables to match. For the most part, customers arrive with only an idea of what they want. For example, they may arrive knowing that they want flowers for a party, but then once selected, their flowers must be bunched and perhaps put in a vase. In addition, they may need table décor and so it goes on. This is where the art of suggestive selling - a vital part of the store's business - comes into play.

Staff play a big part in advising shoppers because they have the knowledge of what is in-store. Such a huge variety can be overwhelming to a customer, but the staff members know exactly what napkins, candles and vases for example, are available. The customer gets one-on-one attention and the potential to grow



Napkins in every conceivable colour, pattern and theme fill both sides of an entire aisle.

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*The fruit and veg offering in the new cold room.*

sales is vast. If the store had regular till points, these conversations between staff and customers would be greatly curtailed and sales would definitely be adversely affected.

### Keeping track

40 000 product lines means a great deal of data to be captured and controlled. Duarte prints his own barcodes in-store using both a Digi GP-460 and a Zebra LP-2824. Both printers are easily integrated into a wide range of applications, are simple to use and rugged enough to survive the amount of printing that needs to be done with such a large and ever-changing product line.

### Flexibility in focus pays

When Flowerspot opened its doors as a dedicated flower shop in 1995, it owned 600m<sup>2</sup> of floor space and Woodmead was simply an expanse of undeveloped veldt. 15 years later, the store has grown to 3000m<sup>2</sup>, carries over 40 000 line items and Woodmead is now a thriving commercial centre. In light of this, it's interesting to discover that 15 years later, only 25% of Flowerspot's turnover comes from its original product line – flowers and hampers. The market has changed over time and Duarte has adjusted his focus accordingly.

“The website offers hampers, bouquets and cakes that can be delivered as well as a breakdown of products available in-store.”

### Consolidation before expansion

When asked about expansion plans for Flowerspot, Duarte is adamant that he will perfect this store before moving onto anything else. His focus is on ensuring every aspect of the shop is running 100% correctly and efficiently before he even thinks about franchising or expanding.

### The Web is the way to go!

The aspect of the store that definitely will be expanding in the near future is its website. Press and below-the-line advertising have offered disappointing results and as a result the focus is now on the Internet, which has proved successful as a marketing tool. The website offers hampers, bouquets and cakes that can be delivered as well as a breakdown of products available in-store.

A total redesign of the store's site is in the pipeline and is expected to offer customers a really comprehensive shopping experience.

Creating a vast width and depth of range, has given the store a deserved reputation as the one-stop shop for flowers, gifting, party and function planning. If the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour, the future looks very bright for Flowerspot.



*Unconventional till points allow for suggestive selling. Customers frequently need advice on purchases and rely on the focused attention of staff.*