



## IMPROVING BUSINESS CONTINUITY WITH ESKER CLOUD FAX SERVICES

1-800-FLOWERS.COM leverages Esker's scalable fax order communication service to accommodate key seasonal spikes in demand while avoiding unnecessary capacity expenditures

### Challenge

1-800-FLOWERS.COM, established in 1976, is a web and telephone-based floral retailer with 100 brick and mortar locations in the United States.

For years, 1-800-FLOWERS.COM relied on labour-intensive processes for order communication to the appropriate partner as well as confirmations to its customers. However, this was a highly inefficient process. Each page took up to a minute to transfer, and during big holidays there simply wasn't enough time, fax machines or phone lines. Lags in order distribution resulted in delayed deliveries and a challenge to customer satisfaction.

#### Keeping up with company growth

In 2000, the company responded by replacing its traditional fax machines with Esker VSI-FAX, a comprehensive, multi-platform fax software, that enables document faxing from a large number of applications. With Esker's help, 1-800-FLOWERS.COM was able to create a workflow process that automatically linked Esker VSI-FAX with its order process. With seven modems handling traffic and fax machines no longer needing to be manually attended, each document was transmitted at a much higher speed. As a result, the company was able to significantly increase its capacity while reducing the burden to in-house staff.

The company continued to grow. In 2004, 1-800-FLOWERS.COM began a highly successful initiative that significantly increased order volumes. It launched BloomNet, a network of more than 9,000 florists who fulfill orders placed through the company's website, affiliate network, partners, or a toll-free number. As the network quickly grew, it became a key underpinning of the 1-800-FLOWERS.COM business, and transaction volume rose along with the BloomNet network's prominence in the industry. Some of the smaller partners within the BloomNet network, often "Mom & Pop" shops, however, were not ready to invest in the high-speed computer lines necessary for the BloomNet application. Esker VSI-FAX allowed an accommodation so these smaller shops' order traffic was routed through fax.

#### Handling peak demand periods

While Esker VSI-FAX could handle the average day's traffic of about 300 faxes, there were times at which delays would again take hold. The company faces major surges in orders during several key times each year, notably leading up to holidays

such as Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Christmas and Easter. During these peak demand periods, the daily volume of orders can increase as much as 10 times over the company's average day. As a result, during periods of high volume getting all the faxes out in a timely manner was a challenge.

To address this problem, the company initially considered purchasing additional fax boards to accommodate increased holiday traffic. 1-800-FLOWERS.COM's internal IT team, led by Marc Grzeskowiak, Director of Logistics Services, determined that it would need to increase its use of modems from seven to 25 in order to accommodate the spike in traffic around the major holidays. The expense of this hardware investment was deemed potentially prohibitive, especially given the fact that the company would not likely utilise the added capacity outside a few key periods each year.

1-800-FLOWERS.COM had been pleased with the performance of Esker VSI-FAX – the capacity issues it was having were more a result of increased order volume fueled by the company's quick growth. That is why initially, it sought to simply add more servers within its headquarters on Long Island in Carle Place, NY.

1-800-FLOWERS.COM needed to get a solution to the problem in place quickly – and certainly in time for Mother's Day, one of the company's key holidays.



Esker resources were a huge help in getting things up and running.

Marc Grzeskowiak – Director of Logistics Services



### Solution

Esker presented 1-800-FLOWERS.COM with another alternative – one that didn't require the company to purchase a single additional piece of hardware or overhaul its communications infrastructure – called Esker Cloud Fax Services.

#### About Esker Cloud Fax Services

Esker Cloud Fax Services is a scalable service that helps users send documents directly from enterprise and desktop applications by routing documents to a network of outsourced facilities, where they are processed and faxed to recipients.

Flexible pay-as-you-go payment options allow organisations to pay only for what they use on a per-fax basis.

When combined with on-premises Esker offerings like Esker VSI-FAX, Esker Cloud Fax Services serves as a failover option during periods of high demand. Once capacity thresholds have been reached, usually indicated by a predetermined limit to the amount of time it takes for any fax order to be deployed, additional fax requests are instantly electronically routed to the outsourced facilities, from which they are automatically sent.

**Seamless solution integration**

With an upgrade to the latest edition of Esker VSI-FAX and the use of the included Fax on Demand Connector, the implementation would prove to be seamless and require no new hardware.

*"We were a bit wary at first, about taking what we saw as a bit of a chance on outsourcing. But we just couldn't have another sluggish holiday," stressed Grzeskowiak. "Esker also made it a safe bet because they were willing to extend their service level agreement to guarantee that all our faxes would be delivered within 40 minutes, even during peak times, and that the solution would handle the ongoing process for scaling up and back without us having to change anything on our side."*

In mid-April 2005, 1-800-FLOWERS.COM signed a deal with Esker to upgrade to Esker VSI-FAX and integrate Esker Cloud Fax Services. The Esker team went to work quickly and assured the implementation would be complete by the time Mother's Day arrived in May.

During the Valentine's Day holiday period, thousands of faxes per day were moving through 1-800-FLOWERS.COM's system. During the Mother's Day period after the implementation was completed, nearly double the amount of faxes were processed per day, without a delay.

Faxes were dispatched 96% quicker during the Mother's Day holiday than during the Valentine's Day holiday.

*"The vast majority of the faxes were delivered in less than 2-3 minutes," said Grzeskowiak. "In the past there would have been no way we would have gotten them all out on time. With Esker Cloud Fax Services in place by Mother's Day, we delivered a record number of faxes, in record time."*



It was just plug and go – it leveraged everything that was already in place.

Marc Grzeskowiak – Director of Logistics Services

In addition to providing the capacity to meet demand peaks, the implementation also helped support 1-800-FLOWERS.COM's functional redundancy initiative. Esker VSI-FAX also offers the ability to fax via (XML-based) web services, which represents another method by which to access the fax servers at Esker's on-demand facilities, without utilising the Fax on Demand connector. This redundancy adds another measure of business continuity protection for the company.

**Benefits**

*"The ability to provide an efficient communication process for all of our customers and florists is absolutely crucial to our business," summarised Grzeskowiak. "And the fact that we did not have to invest in additional hardware or phone lines just to accommodate peak periods makes it that much more of a value."*

- Maximised revenue by ability to meet peak order demand
- Fixed cost savings as ability to scale on-demand eliminates need for additional equipment
- Quicker document delivery turnaround
- Improved monitoring of transmission status
- Business continuity assurance

**About 1800-FLOWERS.COM**

1-800-FLOWERS.COM, Inc. is the world's leading florist and gift shop. For more than 35 years, 1-800-FLOWERS has been helping deliver smiles for its customers with gifts for every occasion, including fresh flowers and the finest selection of plants, gift baskets, etc. It is involved in a broad range of corporate social responsibility initiatives including continuous expansion and enhancement of its environmentally-friendly "green" programs as well as various philanthropic and charitable efforts. 1-800-FLOWERS.COM is headquartered in Carle Place (Long Island), New York, with shares traded on the NASDAQ Global Select Market.

[www.1800flowers.com](http://www.1800flowers.com)

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