

Flamingo Flowers embarks on a journey of Digital Transformation.

The flower industry is dynamic and ever-changing, staying ahead of the game involves being faster than your competition and consistently delivering the highest quality goods. Any delay in the supply chain has an impact on the product's quality, freshness and ultimately, the bottom line.

By standardizing, automating and organising processes more efficiently, Flamingo Flowers and Equeep have reduced logistics expenses while also eliminating unnecessary manual operations. Thanks to clever system integrations, the right information is also readily available within IFS, making export documentation quick and straightforward to compile.

The Challenge

Each year, Flamingo Flowers enters into thousands of purchasing agreements with its growers. Much of this process was done by hand. From placing and confirming an order by mail or phone to receiving, verifying and processing the information within IFS.

"I quickly discovered that we were still doing everything by hand, rather than leveraging all of the available IT systems and connections that exist with the Dutch flower suppliers. This was also one of our toughest hurdles; connecting our business to the digital opportunities that are out there," says Richard van Duijn, Finance Director at Flamingo Flowers.

"As part of our Digital Transformation efforts, we approached Equeep in June 2019 to automate and digitize all of our manual operations in the Netherlands. In preparation for Brexit, we are working closely to automatically generate the necessary export documents in IFS."

About Flamingo Flowers

FLAMINGO FLOWERS BV is part of the FLAMINGO HORTICULTURE GROUP in the United Kingdom; active in the cultivation, processing, marketing and distribution of sustainably produced flowers and premium vegetables.

From the heart of the Dutch flower trade, located right next to the Flora Holland flower auction, Flamingo Flowers operates as a service provider for its African fair-trade nurseries where it employs around 10,000 people.

Flamingo Flowers processes, sells and ships cut flowers from its African nurseries directly to retailers and specialized stores across Europe. Their sibling firm in the UK, which serves the country's top retail chains, accounts for a considerable portion of their revenue.

www.flamingo.net/flamingo-flowers-bv



The Solution

In order to remove unnecessary manual operations from this process and make use of what is already digitally recorded, Flamingo Flowers had an API link made by Egeep between IFS and the flower system. This link is used to exchange information with the growers regarding goods.

The data between the two systems are linked by a number of fields, so that any discrepancies in pricing, quantities, or other data are automatically adjusted. It is possible to check whether the quantities and pricing are right, and that everything is supplied as promised, even before the items arrive. Purchase orders and delivery notices are also visible in IFS.

“We can now see directly in IFS what goods have been transported, in what packing unit, what quantities, what pricing, the origin, and other features; not only has this saved us a lot of time processing this information, but we can now be confident that we have the right information accessible in IFS.”

As a result of the Brexit, Flamingo Flowers also had to deal with changing (export) legislation and documentation requirements.

“Starting July 2022, in addition to plant shipments, also flower shipments will be required to undergo physical inspections; this will incur costs, but it will also lengthen the lead time, as an inspector will have to visit first before a truck can take to the road.”

It proved challenging to get all of the necessary information ready in time for the inspection since it had to come from various sources. Egeep has created several live connections in IFS so that this information is now available in real time and straight within IFS. Important fields such as country of origin and VBN code are automatically populated, allowing Flamingo Flowers to prepare the export documentation faster and easier.

“As a result, our Goods-In team don't have to fill out the receipt references because they are automatically generated from the delivery notifications.” The only thing Goods-In personnel have to do is physically confirm that the goods match what is entered in IFS. After that, they will be able to close the booking process much faster and easier.

The finance team also greatly benefits from this as well, as the receipt references are included on the invoices we receive. This is also the foundation for realizing automatic invoice processing. This is something we are now working on as well; keeping the invoices we receive digital.”

Benefits seen with the help of Egeep

- Process standardization
- Increase in efficiency
- A foundation for automation
- Better insights and reliable data
- Time savings for employees
- Reduction of logistical costs
- More data-driven



How to achieve growth in challenging times

Despite the covid pandemic of the last two years, Flamingo Flowers was able to sell more flowers throughout this period, resulting in significant revenue increase. And while growth is typically beneficial, it also carries with it (new) obstacles.

Because the question is: how can you sustain such long-term growth while maintaining basically the same workforce and capacity?

“The way to achieve this is through standardization, automation, working smarter and designing processes more efficiently to be able to reduce logistics costs, among other things. That is why we are always searching for new methods to transform our obstacles into opportunities and grow as a result.”

- Richard van Duijn,
Financial Director at Flamingo Flowers.

Future outlook

Flamingo Flowers still sees plenty of opportunities to further boost the ROI and profitability of the IFS system in the future.

“We’ve been basically using IFS since the beginning, but only use about 15% to 20% of its potential. Thanks to Egeep, we are now able to use IFS more effectively, enabling us to enhance the return and efficiency of our system. We also work less manually today, which saves time and results in higher quality data.

My goal in the near future is to be able to view what’s going on in real time with the press of a button. But you’ll need a certain way of working for this; that when you look at the numbers, they’re actually reliable thanks to proper data management.

From here, we will work more and more to get not just real-time insight into what is occurring today, but also insight into what is in store for us in six months or a year from now. This will help us to better assess what purchase arrangements we need to make with growers. I see the next step in this being that we will move our purchasing contracts to IFS so that we can begin using the ‘Supplier Agreements’ module and manage our purchasing from there with potential API connections to Floriday, the digital contract solution of Royal Flora Holland.”



“My goal is to make sure we continue to do what we do best; work efficiently, but using digital tools and a data-driven mindset rather than acting on gut feelings. Together with Egeep we are increasingly advancing towards this goal.”

Flamingo Flowers not only saves its employees precious time by reducing tedious and repetitive tasks, but it also boosts job satisfaction at the same time. Employees are now able to focus on more meaningful work.

“Thanks to EqEEP, we have been able to decrease the amount of human input necessary to manage our operations. We have also been able to improve data quality while decreasing the margin for errors and delays. EqEEP has ensured that our processes within IFS are set up in the most efficient way possible, allowing us to get the information we want quicker and easier.”

The implementation

“With the support of a project manager and a team of dedicated and skilled consultants, EqEEP guided us throughout the project and ensured we stayed on course. Our staff were also provided with the IFS training they needed to operate the system effectively.”

“EqEEP is always ready to help”

“Even though we lacked knowledge in several areas of the IFS system, EqEEP provided advice and assistance to ensure the project’s success.

No matter what part of the IFS system, EqEEP always has the right people with the necessary skills and background to get the job done.”

Even throughout this difficult time with Covid, EqEEP’s experts were always ready to engage with us and ensure that the projects were designed and executed properly.”

Advice from Flamingo Flowers

- Make it clear what you want to achieve ahead of time.
- Make a thorough analysis of your current situation.
- Make a list of the changes you wish to make and the impact they will have on your data and systems.
- Make sure there is adequate capacity in individuals to execute this.
- Have clear timelines and a step-by-step strategy.

“I value EqEEP’s candor and sincerity, as well as the fact that crucial questions are posed to help us think about how to approach and design specific challenges and processes.”



About EqEEP

EqEEP is an IT service provider that advises and supports companies in their digital transformation journey.

We are certified Gold Service and Channel Partner and the most experienced system integrator in the BeNeLux for IFS. We specialize in implementing, integrating, and maintaining ERP and FSM solutions, as well as optimizing business processes with technologies such as Process Mining, Digital Twins and Data Management solutions.

We have a strong European presence and serve customers in a range of industries including logistics, manufacturing, and services.

www.eqeep.com

