



CASE STUDY: Gifts of Course !

<http://www.giftsofcourse.com>

FACT FILE				
Company name	Gifts of Course !			
Business Activity	Online Gift Retailer			
Region	Flanders, Belgium			
Business Range	Local	Regional	National	International
				X
Description of market / client /target group	High-Medium yield, professionals and businesses			
Description activities / products / services	fruit, flowers, chocolates, cookies, sweets, delicacies, Belgian Linen, and special gifts for Newborn, Wedding and Romantic occasions			

CASE DESCRIPTION:

The business

Fruit of Course ! was a startup on-line enterprise of the Frucon company in Flanders (Flemish Belgium). It started in 1994 as an alternative to sending flowers, and quickly established a telephone order line whose volume of trade encouraged a foray into Web Commerce. The original store from which it emerged was and still is known as Mandjevol. As Mandjevol became more popular with local people, businesses and individuals located farther and farther from the store began ordering their products by phone, requesting delivery all over Belgium and Europe. The first foray into Internet commerce was Fruit of Course ! (www.fruitofcourse.com) and only 10 months after launch was voted one of the top 5 Belgian e-commerce sites. The clear evidence that on-line alternatives to flowers (Fruit of Course !) were popular encouraged them to expand into the wider gift market.

Introduction of e-business

The Fruit-of-Course site was housed on a MS IIS server with MS SQL database facilities, and hosted by EUNET who support the security needed for transactions. The company set up its initial operation for around EUR 12,000, and had around 10% of its turnover via the web in less than one year. GiftsOfCourse is the expanded version of the original site, featuring an expanded product line, more services for corporate customers, and constant improvements to site design. It now provides fruit, flowers, chocolates, cookies, sweets, delicacies, Belgian Linen, and special gifts for Newborn, Wedding and Romantic occasions. Customers can build an order, select a delivery area, check order pricing, and make secure payments. Fruit is delivered fresh in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. Other gifts are delivered world-wide.

GiftsOfCourse was named best Belgian e-commerce practice by the EU Kite Project. The site supports English, Dutch, French and German language, and takes credit card sales on-line.

Lessons Learnt

The Gifts-of-Course enterprise started as a single fruit shop with telephone order facilities. Its rapid expansion and continued success is entirely due to two things. On the one hand, the customer demand for more variety in gifts than just flowers. On the other, the commitment and energy of the operators that continues to innovate and respond to customer demand. For businesses, they now are providing new interactive services - customized corporate gift sites - corporate gift certificates - product launch support programs - distributor incentive programs - and new features keep appearing. Their apparent aim is to keep on providing new and exciting gift opportunities to both retain and expand their customer base.

Key Issues:

- Attracting visitors with new buying opportunities.
- Maintaining quality control in a distributed fulfilment network.
- Using trusted fulfilment partners across Europe and US.