



Ordered. Delivered. Smooth order processing at Interflora thanks to Retarus Managed Cloud Fax Services.

Interflora's aim was to make the successful transition from using an internal fax server to employing a service provider which can handle both incoming and outgoing orders with no restrictions on availability and make the ordering process absolutely secure. Thanks to Retarus' Cloud Fax Services, Interflora will now be benefiting from almost unlimited sending and receiving capacity and will be assured of total security as far as business transactions are concerned.

Max Hübner (1866-1946), the owner of a flower shop in Berlin, was renowned for having the most beautiful and exquisite flowers, many of which he imported from the Riviera and forwarded to customers as far away as Russia. In 1908, all too aware of the difficulties of transporting these perishable goods, he hit on the idea of sending orders for flowers to dependable florists located closer to the customer. That same year, Fleurop was launched – with 98 shops. Interflora then came into being a global brand in 1946. France formed its own SFTF (Société Française de Transmissions Florales), which has exclusive rights to Interflora's dispatch and marketing operations in that country. The activities of this service company are geared primarily to the nationwide distribution of flowers, flower arrangements and bouquets. The goods are not physically transported: the orders are simply interchanged within a network of florists. The flower shop which is linked up to this system and located nearest to the recipient takes the order, assembles the requested bouquet and delivers it to the address indicated. In order to meet customers' wishes in all parts of the country, the SFTF has to maintain a full-scale network of partner florists which satisfy Interflora's extremely high standards of quality.

Since 1993, Interflora has been processing its orders by fax, whether florist-to-florist or transactions received by call centers and forwarded via dedicated fax servers. The creation of online ordering services in the internet rapidly burst the capacity limits imposed by the existing fax server solution. In order to improve performance and speed up order processing, Interflora began to look for a partner to transmit large volumes of fax communications speedily and securely. It also needed a solution which would help trim distribution costs substantially and fit seamlessly into Interflora's IT landscape, based on IBM's AS400/iSeries. Only Retarus and its partner Toolmaker, a solutions provider for IBM iSeries platforms, were able to offer these services for both inbound and outbound fax messages.



“We send more than a million faxes every year. We were looking for a service provider that could handle our fax volume reliably even at peak times, such as Mother’s Day. Retarus was able to meet these requirements in full.”

Marc Ober, IT Director, Interflora France

A special challenge: peak times

Interflora initially worked with an internal fax server solution for orders between florists and for orders forwarded by the call center. At the time that the company was looking for an external solution, close to one million faxes were being transmitted via its inhouse infrastructure each year. The challenge for the service provider was not only to handle this volume, but also to come up with a solution for the huge volumes of orders at certain times of year. On the Saturday prior to Mother’s Day, for example, tens of thousands of fax messages have to be sent to florists. Significant peaks also occur on certain other days, including Valentine’s Day and the “Fête des grand-mères”, a special day in France to honor the country’s grandmothers. Aside from that, Interflora undertakes to deliver the goods very soon after an order has been placed. It guarantees same-morning delivery for online orders received before 10 a.m. These requirements call for high-speed delivery of the order faxes on the one hand and quick feedback on the success of the transmission on the other, so that an immediate action can be taken if a problem arises.

Efficient, transparent processes

Retarus was able to fulfill all these requirements. The Retarus Faxolution for Applications interface, which is directly integrated into the DirectFax Toolmaker software, allows immediate access to Retarus’ fax infrastructure, which is one of the most powerful in Europe. Interflora thus has a transmission capacity of more than 5,000 fax messages per minute. During the week before Mother’s Day over 110,000 faxes are sent. Thanks to the high fax receiving capacity provided by Retarus, more than 20,000 orders can be received without any delays. The service used for this is Fax-to-FTP: the Toolmaker DirectFax module retrieves the incoming faxes from Retarus in Tagged Image File Format (TIFF) and makes them available to the Interflora IBM iSeries application for further processing.

Why Retarus?

In the past, the Interflora solution with its own fax servers (and their foibles) was very complex and costly. The company had to find a unified solution that would simplify everyday use, cut costs and boost overall efficiency.

FastFacts

- **Maximum availability at all times**
- **No bottlenecks in fax communications, whether incoming or outgoing**
- **Seamless transaction security**
- **Detailed reporting**
- **Perfect integration of iSeries application and Cloud Fax Services**
- **Significant reduction in hardware and software costs**
- **No outlay on administration or maintenance**

Since Interflora was looking for a solution based on the IBM AS400/iSeries for integration into the existing applications, Retarus took part in the call for bids along with its partner Toolmaker, which took care of the special modifications for the iSeries and for the applications developed by Interflora. Retarus contributed its lengthy experience in the transaction fax sector to ensure smooth migration to its Cloud Fax Services. Following a trial period, during which the old and new solutions were operated in parallel, Interflora decided in the second half of 2009 to use Retarus services exclusively and to phase out its own infrastructure components.