

FROM THE SOURCE: Kelly Jamieson, Edible Blooms

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COMPANY PROFILE: Edible Blooms

In 2005, Jamieson and her sister Abbey Baker launched Edible Blooms, an online store selling fresh bouquets of fruit and chocolate across Australia. The business hit \$1 million in its first full financial year and now employs 50 staff across the country and New Zealand. The multi-award-winning company is a former Telstra Australian Small Business of the Year and Jamieson was also named South Australian Telstra Business Woman of the Year in 2009.

Now, an Edible Bloom product is delivered every two minutes in Australia and New Zealand. The business also recently extended its global footprint with flagship stores in Switzerland and London (under new brand Gift Rebellion).



Inside Retail Weekly: Edible Blooms launched into the UK recently. Would you say that was one of the major highlights from the past year?

KJ: The last two years have been probably the two more challenging years I've had in business, where I feel like the landscape we're working in has changed a lot. Consumers have changed in the way you talk to them and their expectations, so I feel like we did a lot of changing as a company in the last two years, which has been exciting.

2017 was a big year for us, because we opened our London and Geneva offices, which was huge. Then we were named the number one online florist for Australia by Canstar, which was super exciting because it officially put us in the online florist category. Before that, we were a niche player in the online gifting space, we've always felt we're an alternative to fresh flowers. Last year was the first year we were included in the Canstar research, and that was at our request, because we wanted to find out how we measured against online florists.

It's been one of the most exciting wins we've had, but at the same time, we've stuck our neck out and said we're an online florist, so it'll be interesting to see how we go. It felt so good because we were competing against some amazing businesses. We felt it was a true win because of the calibre of the companies we were measured against. Canstar sends out the survey to the general public.

Then Canstar shared the data with us around nine subsets on reliability, range of product and value for money. There are a lot of different metrics you're measured against, not just your overall score, and they tell you how you shaped up, against all the criteria – you can see the parts the people of Australia are saying you could improve on. It gives you a chance to keep improving.

We've always been meticulous about customer experience with our NPS scores – we do that monthly and per location around Australia, that's our benchmark of knowing how each store is going. We usually get 83 as a blended score for our NPS each month, which is pretty good. If someone gets a 6 or below, we follow them up and find out how we can do better and put processes in place to improve.

We were building on all those things in 2017, but apart from the Geneva and London office openings, there's been nothing massive that we've changed in the last two years. We did lots of small things, we just kept changing and listening and we've had a great start to 2018 – sales were amazing and I think it's because of all those little things which have added up.

I studied at Oxford last year as well which was cool. It was a high performing leadership program. I got a scholarship which was funded through the industry leaders fund, in South Australia and the strong message I got from it was it's not about making massive changes, it's about doing lots of small things. Don't just launch

a brand new thing into your team – slowly start working towards it. That resonated a lot with me.

We were the only female-led business in the Canstar florist category, which is crazy, because all the customers are women. We have the largest store network in Australia and we're trying to leverage that. A lot of other online gifting companies will take an order, then dropship it – they'll send it to someone else to fulfil it for them. I think that's why we get such great NPS scores, because we can control the end process.

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IRW: Speaking of which, what are you guys doing in the delivery space at the moment?

KJ: Delivery's the hardest part of any online retail journey, because you're trusting a third party company to do that for you, so we try to view them as partners. They're not just suppliers, we try to work with them and we give them feedback on their performance and vice versa so we can improve.

We went live last year with Deliveroo and Ubereats, so you can order Edible Blooms all day for \$5 and get it delivered within the hour. That's pretty cool. We're looking at different channels so we can get to customers faster. We do it with Sherpa in all the cities, so we can do three-hour delivery windows.

We're becoming a lot faster through all of these great companies. We didn't need to invent all the tech, we can leverage their expertise and get to customers faster. At the end of the day, we've got a perishable product, we need to get it to customers quickly.

IRW: Would you ever consider investing in your own fleet of delivery vehicles like a lot of florists?

KJ: In my very early days, I wanted to have my own courier vehicles everywhere, but it's a whole other business. Those logistics are complex [in terms of] the number of staff you're supervising, the flow of deliveries, all those things. Also, we're very seasonal and some times of the year are busier than others, so you'd need to manage those logistics and the highs and lows.

It's about knowing our capacity and what we can do well and we feel we can do better by using third parties to do that delivery component, but we work closely with them.

We're building a dashboard at the moment with another partner – it's consolidating all our delivery partners on one dashboard, so we can see deliveries minute to minute. Technology allows us to merge lots of different suppliers and at different viewpoints.

IRW: Tell me about what it was like launching your new brand, Gift Rebellion, into the UK.

KJ: My sister and I both did working holidays over there in our early 20s and loved it, but it's been an interesting journey. I still feel like

we have our L plates in that market. We're still adjusting our offering and getting our messaging right. We're only in month three now, but we're getting sales every day.

We're delivering all over Europe now. We delivered to Barcelona at Christmas, Paris and Italy, too – it was super fun and the logistics over there are amazing. Because Europe has a much more concentrated population, you can choose your delivery time before 10.30, before midday, early afternoon, early evening...Then when you book it in, if you change your mind, you don't have to ring us, you can just log onto your account with that logistics company and just change it. It's amazing. It puts a lot of control in customers' hands. It's a dream – it's a part of our business that's complicated over here, but is simple over there.

We've launched under a new brand moniker, Gift Rebellion. My sister Abbey has relocated to London. That's the only thing I'm sad about – she's away all year, but she's enjoying it and it's a great city. She's having a great time over there. The UK is a big step for us, because from that one office, we want to test distribution to Europe, with the view to open more European locations. It's a different market and price points are different to Australia, labour costs are different. Everything is different. It's a learning experience, but it's got a huge amount of potential to grow for us.

We launched Edible Blooms in Geneva last year. New Zealand and Switzerland are both licensed businesses, they're more like business partners. We work closely with them. We didn't approach Geneva, they came to us and we felt they were a great fit. She's ►



Last year, Edible Blooms won the online florist category in the Canstar Blue Awards.

Australian and he's English. They've been in Geneva for quite a few years and they love it and it seems to be a good gap in the market for it. It's been exciting.

The reason we launched as Gift Rebellion in the UK was we

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wanted it to be used all through Europe but the Swiss market is very conservative, so they went with Edible Blooms – they could choose to be either and that was the right fit for them.

But we're excited about Gift Rebellion, because we're seeing Edible Blooms, which started as a niche player in Australia, evolving into a much broader mainstream gifting company. So we have plans to start the brand Gift Rebellion in Australia as well, which will happen later this year.

We'll have two brands. Edible Blooms will always exist, but Gift Rebellion will be its sister brand and it's still evolving, so watch this space. I'm super excited about it and we've been doing a lot of research and feel it's the right time. We've got a big customer database, it's really leveraging all the assets we have to become a much bigger gifting company. We still have Green Thumb Gifts, which is a smaller, niche business which will part of the Gift Rebellion offering and then we have our hampers, too.

We're still finalising all the brand assets and things and how it will fit together, but it's an evolution of Edible Blooms growing into a bigger group.

We had a really strong start to 2018 for Edible Blooms. We'll be in

our 13th year of business this year and it's nice to know that there's growth this year – you know how you can get to a point where you plateau? In the last two years, we haven't grown as much.

I always find that with the growth of our business, we get some strong growth, and then we consolidate, then we grow again. The last two years for us in many ways have been a consolidation period and now we're seeing all those things we did in consolidation start to pay off.

We've been working with an amazing brand consultant. One thing we determined was we're about gifting differently – we're not about the old bunch of flowers or the traditional hamper, it's about wowing customers. The interesting thing about where we're heading is being a brand-led business, making sure its about being brand first, which drags product development with it.

I never used to like spending on brand development, because I found it didn't convert instantly into sales, but I'm finding a lot more importance for online players to build brand. It's really powerful for growth, because we were finding our growth was slowing.

It's about embracing the combination of strong brand, technology and the fact we can get things delivered very fast. In every capital city, people can technically get something within an hour, whether it's through Deliveroo or Uber or it's free next day, as long as you spend more than \$99. We offer a lot of options for people with different budgets and needs and as we have control of when people order with us, we're controlling the quality process as well. It's important, because when there are so many hands that catch the transactions, there's not much value left in the product at the end of the day.

We centralise all our customer service from the Adelaide head office and because efficiency is important, we think about questions customer ask us regularly and how we we can make answers clearer and manage the process. We just started doing SMS delivery notifications, which we should have done earlier, but because of our tech, some things are easy with our platforms and other things take a custom-build. It's reduced a lot of phone traffic.

IRW: There's a lot happening in the online gifting category at the moment – now you can send cocktail sets, cakes and balloon bouquets to loved ones. It also seems like you'd be dealing

with customers who put a lot of emotion into their transactions, too. What's it like to work in the gifting category?

KJ: We're dealing with customers who are highly emotionally charged, they've put a lot of thought into their gifts. So 13 years on, the challenge for us is to keep reminding staff who have been with us for a long time that every bouquet they're making, that's from someone thanking their mum or saying 'I love you' to someone. It's important we get it delivered right and it appears like it does on the website. On the whole, we're pretty good at it, but we try to get better.

When a customer sends us a nice note about their experience with us, that store gets that feedback. Likewise, when someone gives us an NPS score and they say 'It arrived late' or 'It was no good', we follow it up with the customer, and the store that made [the gift] will call them up. That's the best way we can make sure the store doesn't repeat the same thing, because it's not fun to have to ring a customer and apologise when it goes wrong.

The bigger you get, the smaller you have to think. Initially, we centralised our customer service to South Australia and we took all the pressure off our production stores so they could just get products out.

But over time, we found that when they didn't have any customer touchpoints, there was less care taken. Then we took just one component back of our customer care, which is our NPS follow-ups, so if we had a score of 6 or lower, it went back to the store [that the customer came from]. We immediately saw a lift in our NPS again.

As you grow and you're automating your stores and making them more productive and you're streamlining, people need a touchpoint with their customers. If you lose that connection with the customer, you definitely see service levels drop. I think that's the great thing with any business – recognising that wasn't a great thing to do, let's fix it this way. It's always something that's strong in our business culture, we're never the best. Yes, we had the Canstar win. But now we have to defend that for the next year – how can we be better?

It's a highly competitive category because it's easy for someone to enter the market. In the last 13 years, I've noticed that to maintain our customer size and grow, we have to be so much better than a year ago, because we're in a competitive space and we have to put more emphasis on our productive developments.

In the last 12 months, we rolled out donuts and confetti balloons. We're continually doing new things, because customers want to get excited that there's something new from us.

I think [the competition] gives us more fire in our belly to be better. Where we'll always have a strength is our ability to deliver fast and a reliable service, so things like the Canstar win are important for us because it gives people confidence that their gift will actually arrive.

You hear so many stories about people ordering things online, then it gets delayed for a week. We're growing into a trusted player in our category, which is important to the customer. As long as we keep increasing our product offering, we see a lot of growth potential for us. We're in a good space, but in a highly competitive category. **IRW**



"We're dealing with customers who are highly emotionally charged, they've put a lot of thought into their gifts," explains Jamieson.

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