

Edible Blooms

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Kelly Baker-Jamieson [Owner]



CASE STUDY



A total IT Support Solution for a rapidly growing Small Business

In the world of small business innovation thrives and, in the case of Edible Blooms, literally. The company, which was founded in September 2005 by Kelly Baker-Jamieson, blends floral arrangements and sweet tooth appeal, offering a range of gourmet chocolate bouquets and flowers. Essentially, a company that through innovation has carved for itself a market niche in which to grow and succeed – a growth company sustained and supported by Information Technology (IT).

The Small Business Understanding

For Kelly, it was crucial to the business and her approach to running the business that Edible Blooms IT be supplied, implemented, managed and supported by a third-party. "Our internal focus is on the core business," she explains. "And it's important that things that don't fall within our core competencies are outsourced. That means accounting, human resources and IT."

The challenge, though, lay in identifying a provider with a strong understanding of small business needs and a demonstrated track record in providing one-stop IT support to small businesses.

It was during an extensive on-line research program to identify such a provider that Kelly happened across a case study detailing how another similarly sized business was gaining precisely what she was looking for through a partnership with itro. "It gave me the assurance I needed to contact itro and talk to them about the business and discover what itro consultants could deliver."

Avoiding the IT Tech Talk

From the very start, itro's primary goal was to provide Edible Blooms with an IT solution that was fully relevant to the company, its staff and business expansion plans. But rather than move forward with a 'big bang' approach, itro opted to design an adaptable solution that:

- made use of as much of Edible Blooms' existing equipment as possible;
- could be easily and quickly scaled up to meet business growth;
- ensured optimum levels of email and data security; and
- provided a best match with the company's business model.

At the heart of the proposed solution was Microsoft Small Business Server (SBS), an enterprise-strength and featured server system that has been refined and priced for small businesses with up to 75 users.

"One of the things that continues to impress about itro is that everyone there has always been able to discuss IT matters with me without all the confusing IT tech talk," Kelly states.

"So when we started talking about SBS and all its features – email, remote access, backups and networking – I understood fully what was being discussed and how it related to my business."

Commenting on itro's push to make use of existing equipment, Kelly says: "Budget was a big issue from day one, so it was important for us that itro made the effort to look at all the equipment we had at that time, and go ahead only with new equipment and software that was absolutely crucial.

"If we'd had a bigger budget, it would have been nice to do a complete clean sweep, but small business is small business and you have to make things work for you as best you can with the budget on hand."

A Business and Lifestyle Fit

With the implementation of SBS at Edible Blooms' Melbourne headquarters, massive improvements in time management, email access, and data security were immediate. Kelly explains: "itro's experience in developing similar solutions for small business was obvious right from the start. The consultant who worked us had taken the time to understand our business and ensured that SBS was set up to meet our needs."

Key among those needs was ensuring the SBS mail and calendaring services were available to authorised staff members on an 'anywhere and anytime' basis. This meant configuring the solution to enable direct access to the server via the internet. This was particularly important for Kelly who, with the business headquartered in Melbourne and offices located in Adelaide, Brisbane and Sydney, spends a great deal of her time in South Australia caring for her son.

"itro set things up so that all I have to do is click on an icon on my laptop and I'm immediately connected to the server in Melbourne," Kelly explains. "That way, I have access to all my files, email and group calendaring just as if I was actually in the Melbourne office. It also means that regardless of where we have offices and staff, everyone is able to take advantage of the server's facilities."

At a data security level, and with an enormous amount of data flowing in to Edible Blooms from on-line orders via email, itro's introduction of an SBS-based data backup and security solution is affording optimum levels of protection. Where emails, which are the very lifeblood of Edible Blooms, were previously stored locally on each computer, itro's SBS configuration now has every email regularly and securely backed up.

"I've been through the horrors of losing data and emails before," Kelly states. "And it's something – especially with the business growing so rapidly – that I never want to experience again. What itro has delivered is a big business solution at a small business budget."

A Total IT Service

On the issues of "a big business solution", Kelly speaks again from experience, having worked in a corporate environment prior to starting Edible Blooms. "One of the things I missed was having an

on-demand IT help desk and support team who could answer pretty well any question or get problems fixed right away," she says.

"But when we started working with itro, that was precisely what we ended up with; and it's something that would be totally impractical and unaffordable if we were to attempt it using internal staff."

Taking advantage of itro's extensive supply, support and service capabilities, Edible Blooms has a single point of contact for the company's entire IT requirements. A single phone call, for example, can result in an itro specialist logging in remotely to the Edible Blooms server or any one of the company's PCs throughout Australia, and having a problem fixed within a matter of minutes.

Further to that, regardless of whether a new computer is required, additional software has to be installed or a review of the Edible Blooms IT strategy to support expansion is needed, itro has become the integral yet outsourced Edible Blooms IT department.

"itro has proven itself to be the best possible IT support company for our business," Kelly states.

"We have an IT infrastructure designed for our immediate and long-term needs – which means we're able to minimise expenditure – and every staff member knows that whenever they have any IT question or problem, it's a single phone call.

"Ultimately, it boils down to working with a company that understands and delivers on the needs of small business IT."