

IBM Smarter Planet Customer Reference

1-800-Flowers.com

Interviewee: Nachiket Desai, VP of Business Intelligence and Enterprise Architecture, 1-800-FLOWERS.COM

As Produced Transcript

3/15/10

TEXT: Smart is...knowing what makes your customers **smile**

Nachiket Desai: Having a roadmap is very important, and not just having a roadmap, revisiting that roadmap every three months or every four months is more important. So, the whole part of the program that we call "Agile" was that for purpose that we take a status check every three months and make sure that we are on the right track.

1-800-Flowers fundamentally started off as a flowers company. Over the years we have acquired many brands which range from chocolate cookies, wines, and this year, we launched our own gift basket brand. From a technology perspective, we are not centralized, we do operate as 16 brands.

The time to market was something that was hurting business a lot because of the disparate systems.

My CIO says, we are in the business of connecting people and we really cannot do an effective job when our information is disparate and we are hoping that we bring the information centrally and we can connect better with customers.

We started defining the roadmap as a business problem as what business needs to do to achieve certain goals. My job was to define the technology vision to break the silos between all the brands, bring all the information in central place so that we can fundamentally enhance the customer experience.

The message itself was very easy. It was getting the details down to figure out how can we implement the technology roadmap where business does not have to wait for a huge period of time to start getting benefits of all the phases that we are rolling out. They want to make sure that that gives them faster time-to-market. So what we have done is that we essentially for every leg of the project, we establish ROIs and strong returns that business gets.

We had very strong business sponsorship at the leadership level so President of the company Chris McCann backed this vision very strongly that made the problem a little easy. But it was definitely a challenge to bring all the brands together on the enterprise vision.

We did take a lot of time in educating our business and making sure that they understand what they are investing into and that's where IBM was great.

What they bring to us is best practices from the retail industry. So they have really helped us influence our businesses to think better and leverage these systems in a much more efficient way.

So we have gathered a lot of data and information across our brands and every brand has couple of channels so that's a lot of data that we have across in the brands.

What we hope to provide by this program is a single view of our company to our customer. When the view is single, now you can build upon that.

Fundamentally we like to get all our customer data and kind of nurture it as a living breathing entity so that we understand through all the different stages they go through in their lives. So we have customer segmentations that we use from our analytics and we identify who is our best customer and then we try to appeal to customers who want to be like our best customers.

The technology will help us understand them better as to what they want, how to drive customer satisfaction in all aspects of shopping with us.

1-800-Flowers is really in the business of making people happy which is emotions which is much more than just going to a shop and making a purchase. So we really try to use or process our data to really understand our customers and their emotions

I truly think it's transformational and that's what excites me.