

SA Florist revealed the deal behind the deal at Tech4Africa

Tech4Africa is about disruption, upsetting trends and breaking the rules. Above all, it's about content that gets people talking and talking they did after SA Florist presented one of the most captivating stories at this year's event.



werner22brigitte via pixabay.com

Taming dragons and the third wave of internet

Founders Nicholas Wallander and Fraser Black wowed the audience with their intriguing story. It started with Wallander's mom, an independent florist who had to shut down her business, and grew to the crescendo where they secured the biggest investment of the first series of Dragons' Den South Africa.

Titled, 'The Deal behind the Deal', the audience was told how SA Florist tamed all five Dragons including SA Internet entrepreneur Vinny Lingham, who also joined for a live Q&A via Skype from Silicon Valley.

The underlying theme was the effect of the internet on business. Black pointed to the three waves of the internet, showing how the internet has grown from about one billion users in the 1990's to two billion in 2000 to an unknown number today.

He says the third wave, also called "The Internet of Things", is where everything is connected via the internet including tablets, cars, security systems, TVs, homes and watches.

What it means for e-commerce

"So what does this mean for e-commerce? With the increase in access to online retail and the speed and ease with which transactions can now take place, what demands does this put on the supply chain? And demands for instant gratification are at an all-time high," he explained.

With sufficient capital and valuable advice from the Dragons, SA Florist can now expand rapidly to keep pace with future trends. Wallander says modern business needs to think out-of-the-box when it comes to distribution. "Why limit customers to a specific product range or have conditions for same day delivery? The customer doesn't want to be told what he can buy and when it can be delivered."

"Why should customers wait more than two hours for their flowers, particularly if they are prepared to pay a premium? Is same day still same day if there's a cut off at 12:00 and shouldn't same day be all day?" he stressed.

It's about more than just flowers

He says decentralisation of the industry and connecting florists with customers in their area is making waves all over the world. "Ask the customer where the product is going and immediately geo-locate them and their nearest florists. Show the customer who services that specific area and show each florist's unique range of products. Ask the customer how soon they want it and execute the order."

"By no longer providing a national catalogue, but instead allowing vendors to show their best products at the best prices, in real-time and being able to deliver within a very short time due to their geo-location, relative to the customer. So we moved from a pure online retailer to a marketplace where the vendors and clients drive the range, price and delivery," he explains.

Through the same e-commerce model and delivery system, SA Florist will soon be able to deliver perishable products to consumers. It has already moved beyond just selling flowers, now supplying various artisanal products including wine and chocolate.

Since the investment, SA Florist has already more than doubled its valuation. The company is also now starting to realise the true benefits of the Dragon's involvement and influence. Its online corporate tool is fast gaining interest and SA Florist is also entering other verticals and looking at international expansion.

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