



REPORT : MEETING OF THE FLOWERTRIALS® PARTICIPANTS
DATE : Thursday 13th September 2018
VENUE : P vd Haak, 's-Gravenzande

Present

Board members : Markus Eiermann (Selecta one), Norman Cools (VWS), Nico Boers (Jonge Planten Grünewald)
Absent with notice (illness) : Gill Corless (Sakata)
Secretariat/Minutes : Sally van der Horst, Ann Jennen, Ellen Hazenoot

Participants: ABZ Seeds, Agriom, Beekenkamp Plants, Bio Bock Science, Butterfly Garden, D.H.M.I., Dümmer Orange DE, Dümmer Orange NL, Elsner pac Vertriebsgesellschaft, Ernst Benary Samenzucht, Evanthia, Florensis, Florist Holland, Grünewald, Gruppo Padana, Hassinger Orchideen, Hendriks Young Plants, HilverdaKooij, Imperial Plants/Danziger, MNP flowers, Morel Diffusion, P. vd Haak, PanAmerican Seed, Prudac, Queen Genetics, Royal van Zanten, Schneider, Selecta one NL, Selecta one DE, Sion, Syngenta, Takii, Van den Bos Flowerbulbs, Varinova, VWS Flowerbulbs

1. Opening

Norman Cools opened the meeting at 13.15 hours welcoming the participants and introducing himself as the chairman of the meeting. He informed the meeting that the FlowerTrials Chairman, Gill Corless, could not be present due to a recent minor surgery.

2. Action list meeting of 24th January 2018

All points on the action list of the meeting of 24th January 2018 were addressed. The following was noted:

- CMS completion – The deadline for completion is begin March after which all information will be used for the Tabloid and the Newsletters. Members are encouraged to start updating information as soon as possible for use in marketing and communication.
- Strategic rebranding pitches – This will be further addressed during the meeting.
- Board position – members are still invited to express their interest in a board position.
- Location September meeting – P vd Haak offered their facilities and were thanked. At the January meeting members will be asked to put forward a location for September 2019.

3. FlowerTrials Board

Norman advised the meeting that the current Board consists of Chairman Gill Corless (Sakata), Norman Cools (VWS), Nico Boers (Jonge Planten Grünewald) and Markus Eiermann (Selecta one DE). He pointed out that the Chairman's term will end in January 2019. The members are therefore invited to inform the Chairman or the secretariat if they are interested in joining the Board or applying for the position of Chairman. Norman noted that if there are no candidates for Chairman, Gill is willing to stay on for another term.

4. Visitor statistics

Michel Sollie of Inforaction/Eventers presented an overview of the visitor statistics for 2018. FlowerTrials saw an increase of 2% in both the number of visitors and the number of actual visits. The number of visits per visitor remained the same at 4.98. Michel went on to show that the pre-registered visitors also reached an all-time high at almost 50% of the total.

A question was raised from the room if it was possible to establish the number of visits per visitor for visitors from Germany and the Netherlands. Michel investigated this after the meeting and provided the following:

- Average visits per Dutch visitor: 3.68
- Average visits per German visitor: 5.59

Eventers recommendations for 2019:

- Software test and preparation
Always participate in the software test to prevent from registration issues on the first day
- Visitor data quality
Use the Quick Registration Screen for on-site registration
Required fields for sector, function and country
Keep promoting re-registration
- Evaluate marketing campaigns and channels
Evaluate marketing campaigns in terms of visibility, response and conversion:
Try to make all campaigns measurable

Market survey

Michel advised the meeting that the market survey conducted immediately after the FlowerTrials achieved a 14.4% response (542 participants). This was an improvement over previous years as a Dutch version had been added. The general rating went slightly down, but is still very good with 94% being satisfied or very satisfied. The number of participants receiving the Tabloid has increased with 18%, but this might be due to the clearer wording of the question which now mentions 'printed tabloid' instead of just Tabloid. 90% of visitors indicated that the event met with their expectations. The feedback on the Route planner and online registration was positive. Full details of the analysis can be found in and the Eventers' report and the presentation.

5. Financial Report 2018

On behalf of the Board, Sally van der Horst of the Secretariat referred to the Financial Report prepared by the bookkeeper. She proceeded to present the figures noting the following:

Income

The annual fee was raised to EUR 3,200 since there were fewer new members last year paying the entry fee of EUR 5,000. The total income for 2018 was EUR 207,000.

Expenses

The final spend was EUR 202,644 versus a budget of EUR 209,092. Most income is spent on publicity with the highest amounts going to advertising and the video project. As agreed funds were spent on promoting FlowerTrials at other events including contact points at various trade fairs, advertising in the lifts at shows and an own booth at Horticonact. Floor stickers were again produced for each individual stand and the main walkways at the IPM. These activities will all be evaluated again for next year. The meeting was reminded that almost all of the Secretariat hours are spent on PR and Marketing activities.

Result

FlowerTrials continues to maintain a capital of EUR 23,240 as a buffer. Any profits are now allocated for activities or redistributed. Part of last year's profit was added to the video project and the rest refunded to the members. This year the Board has allocated the total profit of EUR 13,513 to the rebranding.

Fee 2019

The chairman informed the meeting that the new fee will be announced at the January meeting. It will be approx. EUR 3,000, depending on the number of new members voted is as these bring in additional revenue, each contributing a EUR 5000 entrance fee.

6. Marketing and Communication review

New Face

This year FlowerTrials used a second new female face for the marketing campaign. This continued the theme 'where plants meet people'. The chairman informed the meeting that this will be evaluated again for next year.

Website

Michel Sollie of Inforaction/Eventers outlined the upgrades made to the website in 2018. These included GDPR/AVG compliance, addition of member teaser videos to the individual pages and addition of member content in the address list. Improvements were made to the route planner including the addition of hotels.

Website Traffic Analysis

Michel showed the statistics relating to the sessions by Channel and by Campaign. The total traffic showed an upward trend, but the average session duration went down by 12%. This is interesting to see, but not a cause for concern. A question from the room was raised how this compares to other websites as a general trend

seems to be a decline. Michel explained that there may be several reasons: the website is clearer, people are more familiar with it and know where to find the information they are looking for etc.

A few questions were raised from the room:

1. How can the frequency of the newsletter be lowered, but still include all the highlights? It was agreed that the format of the newsletters is up for review. This will be investigated.
2. What is the explanation for the low conversion rate on the banner campaign? Michel indicated that after clicking on the banners the viewer lands on the home page, and not the registration page. Sally noted that it is important to keep in mind that the goal of the banner campaign is also about visibility and information and not just about converting into registration. It was agreed that next year we should try different types of banners and measure effectivity.

Website upgrades

Michel recommended the following:

- User engagement
 - More content and services on the website
 - More attention to press
 - Tailor newsletters to subject and frequency preferences
- Online visibility
 - Keyword analysis and content optimization for search engines
- Extended route planner / map functionality: Offline directions, detailed printable map, add custom (home/hotel) location(s) to routes
- Separate newsletter subscription for press (also during registration)
- Visitor subject and frequency preferences for newsletters
- Evaluate highlights newsletter format
- Remarketing: Retarget visitors that didn't convert into registration

He again recommended looking at a FlowerTrials App.

Media buying

Sally van der Horst of the secretariat informed the meeting that she and the Chairman had carried out a review and major overhaul of the media buying to bring it up to date. The total spend was €71,379 (excluding placement tabloids) in Europe, Turkey, India, Israel, Middle East and U.S.A. This included the paid advertorials. The advertisement texts remained unchanged, with only a change to the face.

Banner campaign

Banners were placed on 35 websites and newsletters. Feedback on the banner campaigns from the various publishers continues to remain difficult to obtain. Only 19 could share the results, showing that in total 523,534 impressions (views) and 1,191 clicks were reached. It was agreed that it is important that we try again to obtain more information in order to measure effectivity. A suggestion from the room came to place banners on web shops for instance at Waterdrinker and Lemkes, to target other groups. This was met with enthusiasm.

PR

Ann Jennen who is responsible for the PR reported on a very successful year, with FlowerTrials maintaining its position as one of the most covered events in the industry. She noted the close relationship between the secretariat and journalists/magazines which allows for custom-made solutions. Three press releases were sent out in four languages prior and post event. Ann noted that when writing the press releases a general voice is used to promote the event and neither specific companies nor highlights are mentioned. The press releases are taken up in their entirety or used as background information by journalists for their own articles. Paid promotion via specially written advertorials was increased. These are perceived as more objective than advertisements. In addition, several "specials" were published also covering various aspects of the FlowerTrials in Taspo, Vakblad v.d. Bloemisterij and Bloemenkrant. A question from the room was raised if journalists complain about wanting more paid advertisements. Ann explained that it is a package, including some free coverage and some paid advertisements. The press appreciates the importance of the event and know they are obliged to cover it.

Newsletter

Norman continued the review by reporting on the newsletters and invitation. 5 newsletters were sent out covering the highlights from the website and 3 invitations/reminders, the invitation being given a new more interactive look. It was noted that only new information/highlights are used. The newsletters/invitations have 14,000 recipients and score an average CTR of 29% which is very high considering 10-15% is an average.

Social Media

The secretariat successfully pushed forward with its social media activities in 2018. A pre, during and post event strategy was put in place. Highlights, pre-and post-event videos as well as images from the FlowerTrials

week were used to reach an ever-growing number of followers. Facebook has the most followers rising from 1179 to the current 1567. Paid social media was also part of the mix through both a British and Dutch blogger. The chairman encouraged the members to become more active on Social Media. With 60 participating companies, there is far more room for engagement and for post sharing.

Tabloid

The main use of the tabloid is probably during the FlowerTrials week for visitors to find the different addresses and locations. This year it was again printed in English and German and distributed as a supplement to Vakblad v.d. Bloemisterij and Taspo. Members received copies for their own use. A suggestion was made to improve the maps in the tabloid and make a more distinct difference between the different regions by for example having different coloured maps matching the address on the same coloured background.

Trade shows

In addition to the contact points at IPM and the FloraHolland trade fairs a strong presence was realised at HortiContact with a FlowerTrials booth with Sally, Gill, Ann and Norman sharing the manning. The effectiveness will be evaluated again for next year.

Video

Markus Eiermann reported on the video projects for 2018 sharing the statistics from the FlowerTrials VIMEO and Facebook channels. 36 excellent 30-second preview videos were produced prior to the event. Moving pictures attract, so members were encouraged to use these in e-mail invitations etc. 47 FlowerTrials videos, each of 90 seconds in length, were made during the FlowerTrials week and were perceived being of better quality than last year. As agreed, Live TV was also investigated and Stokvis was approached as contracted partner with Michael Perry as presenter. A pilot 'Daily video magazine' was set up with the video shoot during the day and editing and production done immediately so the video would be distributed the same evening. Unfortunately, due to the costs, €3000 per video, only two parties were interested and the project was abandoned. It was agreed to investigate this again for next year. A report per location with cost-sharing could be an option.

Geofencing

Again, Geofencing was tried which resulted in 546,980 impressions at a cost of €2,500. CTR was only 0.14% maybe due to the fact that the registrations were not yet online. A question from the room was raised concerning the target of the geofencing. Sally replied that it was used around Horticontact to target an audience of potentially Dutch growers.

7. Report of the rebranding committee

Regina Dinkla presented the report of the rebranding committee whose member also include Petra Dubbel, Erwin Giezen and Gill Corless as the board representative. While the original idea had been to have pitches prepared for the meeting, the group had not met until August and then only once, so this had not been realised. The profit of €13,513 from 2018 has now been allocated for the rebranding exercise. The committee first defined the goals for the exercise:

- To trigger quality visitors to visit the FlowerTrials
- Show innovation of the FlowerTrials organisation and the products of the exhibitors

And the target groups:

1. Growers NL/D
2. Growers Worldwide
3. Trade
4. Retail
5. Other

Regina explained that it is important to evaluate the current situation and then set objectives. The general feeling of the committee is that FlowerTrials works with a variety of suppliers which is chaotic. Elbee for instance which is the media buyer and ad designer lacks creativity. The committee therefore formulated questions for each of the areas of marketing communication to be used as a basis. Their general recommendation is to work with a full-service bureau and where this may not cover all requirements, find additional specialists. A proposed list of full-service bureaus was presented, and the members were asked to also provide suggestions. The committee is looking for two Dutch companies and one international company to prepare pitches and the plan is to roll-out the rebranding operation over 2-3 years.

After the presentation, questions and suggestions were raised from the room. These referred more to strategic planning and not necessarily to re-branding. The chairman and Regina both pointed out that this had not been the mandate given to the committee which following the January meeting had been given the task of investigating the logo, slogan, artwork etc.

It was therefore recommended that a strategic planning exercise be carried out before starting on the rebranding. A questionnaire containing 5-6 questions will be circulated to the members as input. Various questions put to meeting were:

Where do we want to be in 5 years?

Do we want to expand in a different direction?

Do we want a FlowerTrials for cut flowers?

8. New members

Sally ran through the slides prepared by the applicants. The presentation from Plantipp raised some questions concerning the size etc. of the breeders they represent. It was pointed out that should Plantipp be accepted, only their name should be quoted in all publicity and not the names of the individual breeders. After the presentations all members present were invited to vote. As some votes were still pending via email, the meeting was advised that the result would be announced later together with the minutes. The following mutations for 2019 were then announced:

- Thomas & Morgan will not be exhibiting next year. They have not indicated if this will be permanent, so we will ask them once more again next year as was the case with Cultivaris.
- Cultivaris who opted out of exhibiting last year have not yet indicated if they will exhibit in 2019.
- Kientzler has requested a second location in the Netherlands. The meeting was advised that this has been approved already by the Board and no vote is required. As with Selecta and Dümmer Orange, they will pay a second participation fee. They will exhibit at a new location FN Kempen which has also been approved by the board.

9. Start-up FlowerTrials 2019

All locations must be known by the end of January. Registrations will open by 1st February and the Chairman encouraged everyone to start filling their website pages now.

10. Any other business

The following questions/comments were raised from the floor:

- Next year FlowerTrials will be in the week following the Whit weekend so in most of Europe the Monday is a public holiday. Should we for example add Saturday to compensate? The Board replied that since FlowerTrials is not officially open on Monday it will only influence pre-event logistics. There need be no change to the official days.
- Should opening hours be open for discussion? The consensus of the meeting was that the opening hours should remain unchanged. If an individual company wishes to open outside the official hours they are free of course to do so, but this will not be communicated by the organisation.
- With the growing concern of more locations should the maximum number of participants per location be raised to 7 or 8? Fewer locations with more exhibitors per location will mean less travelling for the visitor. The chairman explained that this point was discussed thoroughly last year, and there is still plenty of room at current locations before we need to increase the maximum number of participants per location. The overview of locations and participants which was presented last year will be sent with the minutes.
- What should be the nature of the locations. Should this be limited to Floriculture companies, growers etc.? It was agreed that FlowerTrials was originally set up started so visitors could see plants in greenhouses/nurseries and not in a trade fair set up. The meeting was concluded that a location should have a link to floriculture, but does not necessarily have to be a grower/nursery/producer etc.

11. Close and date and place of next meeting

The meeting was closed at 15.30 hours. The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 23rd January 2019 at the Atlantic Hotel, IPM Essen starting from 08.00 to 10.00 hours. The chairman thanked the P vd Haak company for their hospitality in hosting the meeting.

12. Action List

- Deadline for completion CMS is begin March.
- All members should advise the Board or the secretariat if they wish to apply for a board position
- Michel to advise number of visits per visitor with Dutch or German nationality.
- Different banner messages to be used and efficiency measured
- Banner placement at Waterdrinker, Lemkes and web shops to be investigated.
- Tabloid format to include colour coding per region
- 'Daily video magazine' to be re-investigated for options on cost-sharing.
- Suggestions for full service bureaus to be passed to rebranding committee via secretariat.
- Overview of cluster locations to be distributed with the minutes.
- General member enquiry as basis for FlowerTrials strategic planning to be prepared and distributed