



REPORT : MEETING OF THE FLOWERTRIALS® PARTICIPANTS
DATE : Thursday 19th September 2019
VENUE : Schoneveld Breeding, Wilp (Netherlands)

Present

Board members : Gill Corless (Sakata), Markus Eiermann (Selecta one), Norman Cools (VWS), Frans-Peter Dechering (Schoneveld Breeding)
Absent with notice : Nico Boers (Jonge Planten Grünwald)
Secretariat/Minutes : Sally van der Horst, Ann Jennen, Mary Andringa, Ellen Hazenoot

Participants: ABZ Seeds, Anthura B.V., Decock Plants, Dümme Orange DE, Dümme Orange NL, Evanthis B.V., Florist Holland B.V., Hassinger Orchideen, Hendriks Young Plants, HilverdaKooij B.V., Künst Alstroemeria, Morel Diffusion, PanAmerican Seed Europe B.V., Prudac, Royal van Zanten, Sakata, Schoneveld Breeding, Selecta one NL, Selecta one DE, Syngenta Seeds, Takii Europe, Volmary GmbH, VWS Flowerbulbs

1. Opening

Gill Corless opened the meeting at 13.10 hours welcoming the participants and thanking host Schoneveld Breeding for their hospitality. After presenting the agenda, a suggestion was made to start with the applicant members in order to be able to share the results during the meeting. This was approved.

2. Presentation New members

Sally ran through the slides prepared by the applicants and referred to the information received from the applications and distributed with the agenda. After the presentations all members present were invited to vote. These votes were added to the votes already received via e-mail prior to the meeting.

3. Action list meeting of 23rd January 2019

All points on the action list of the meeting of 23rd January 2019 were either addressed or handled in the meeting. The following was noted:

- Promotion at retail level during visit Tuinbranche Nederland at Florensis – Unfortunately this meeting was rescheduled and held during FlowerTrials however Gill has had contact with the organisation and FlowerTrials has been on their agenda.
- MyWave Solutions – the meeting requested that such initiatives should not be presented during the January meeting since there is only little time.
- Location September meeting – Schoneveld Breeding was again thanked for offering their facilities. At the January meeting members will be asked to put forward a location for September 2020.

4. Updated Manifesto

The meeting agreed in January that the Manifesto should be updated to include the obligations when (temporarily) ceasing participation. The meeting voted by a show of hands to include the following clause in the 2020 Manifesto:

A participant who wishes to (temporarily) cease participation in any given year may do so but must pay the annual fee. Should a participant cancel completely, then they must officially re-apply to participate again in the future. In this case an entrance fee would then be due.'

5. Visitor statistics

Michel Sollié of Inforaction/Eventers presented an overview of the visitor statistics for 2019. FlowerTrials saw a decrease of 4% in the number of visitors, however, the number of actual member visits when multiplying visits times the number of companies exhibiting at a location increased by 5%. Visitors to Aalsmeer rose too while those in Westland saw a small decline. The German region also saw a decrease. Michel went on to

show that the pre-registered visitors reached an all-time high at almost 50% of the total. Furthermore, a cohort analysis was carried out to show how many of the visitors are returning visitors. A question was raised from the room if it was possible to show the returning visitors per category. Michel will investigate and provide feedback. The figures for visitors from each country are percentages of the totals and showed the risers and fallers. In some cases, we are talking about only one or two visitors so for some countries we do not need to take this too seriously. We do see that the visitors from Germany were less and this could certainly have been due to the Whit Monday holiday. The extreme wet weather earlier in the week may also have had an effect. The meeting was again referred to the complete report prepared and sent out earlier with the agenda.

6. Financial Report 2019

On behalf of the Board, Sally van der Horst of the Secretariat referred to the Financial Report prepared by the bookkeeper. She noted that the secretariat works to a budget prepared by the board and presented and accepted at the January meeting. Expenses are approved and paid according to this budget. Any exceptions are always approved by the Board to ensure full transparency. She proceeded to present the figures noting the following:

Income

The annual fee was EUR 3,400 and the entrance fee EUR 5,000. The total income for 2019 was EUR 229,600. There was a slight difference with the budget due to a free-fall from a past credit note.

Expenses

The final spend was EUR 218,051 versus a budget of EUR 236,318. The difference is explained by the reserve for rebranding which was not used and from the lower number of videos produced than were budgeted for. She showed the breakdown of all expenses for each of the marketing categories and for the overhead costs where it can be seen that most of the income is spent on Media and the Video Project. More details can be found in the financial information provided with the agenda.

Result

FlowerTrials is a "once per year" event. The FlowerTrials foundation wishes to fund activities yearly from the fees collected and not make a profit or hold a reserve. To cover eventualities there is a small reserve of EUR 23,240 which has been held as a buffer for many years. Any yearly profits are therefore allocated for activities or redistributed. This year the Board has allocated the total profit of EUR 11,513 together with the reserve for rebranding of EUR 13,513 from 2018 to the reserve for a marketing strategy review. This was clarified later in the meeting.

7. Marketing and Communication review

Banners

Gill showed a slide with the figures received from Elbee relating to the exposure of the online banners. It is clear that our two messages "Save the Date" which was used for the first half of the campaign and "Register Now" used later were more successful than the "more information" used in the past. Looking at the figures, it shows that the conversion rate is rather low. This is partly because this can only be measured if the registration is directly done after clicking, on the same device. We should therefore look at the costs per click rather than per registration. It seems sensible next year to split the campaign budget to give more weight to the second phase.

Retargeting

The meeting was advised that retargeting was added to the mix in 2019. Visitors to website were targeted with a FlowerTrials banner on other websites visited. Two messages were used during the retargeting period from April – June. In April a 'save the date' banner was shown, and in May and June a 'register now' banner. In addition, in the second phase simple algorithms were used to expand the target group. It was agreed that this is a good tool and we should keep experimenting with additional target groups to show advertisements at more relevant websites.

PR

Ann Jennen of the secretariat explained how media relations are a substantial part of the FlowerTrials communication strategy. Press articles are written by an objective source and therefore highly credible with the public. Furthermore, it is a very budget-friendly way of working as coverage is mainly free publicity and therefore free of charge. The first media wave goes from mid-March until mid-June and focusses on keeping FlowerTrials top of mind and convincing trade visitors to attend the event. Two press releases with general information have been sent out to the FlowerTrials international press database and resulted in a considerable

amount of online, print and social media coverage. Some advertorials were purchased to generate additional exposure in selected markets/magazines. In key markets The Netherlands and Germany, dedicated FlowerTrials specials were set up with the Vakblad voor de Bloemisterij, de Bloemenkrant en Taspo. The second media wave takes place after week 24 and aims at re-confirming FlowerTrials as a successful event. The press release with the visitor numbers was very well picked up by the international trade media. The key trade journalists visited the FlowerTrials and extensively reported on the main plant innovations, new concepts and exhibiting companies which resulted in international online, print and social media coverage from mid-June until the end of the year.

Newsletter

Gill 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 were sent to encourage attendance and pre-registration. It was noted that only highlights from within the formula are used in the newsletters. All participants were asked to make sure their website page is updated on time to be included in the Newsletters. All postings follow the content calendar which is sent out to all participants prior to the start of the campaign. The newsletters/invitations have almost 19,000 recipients and score an average CTR of 25% which is very high.

Social Media

The secretariat has successfully pushed forward with its social media activities in 2019. A pre, during and post event strategy has been continued. Highlights, pre- and post-event videos as well as images from the FlowerTrials week were used to reach an ever-growing number of followers. The number of followers on Instagram has increased most significantly. Paid social media was also part of the mix through both a British and Dutch blogger. The meeting was asked to inform the secretariat on ideas for other bloggers, particularly in Germany. We will also add LinkedIn to the mix for next year.

Trade shows

FlowerTrials was also present at key trade fairs in The Netherlands and Germany. At the IPM, each exhibitor received a floor sticker in front of his/her booth. Promotional banners announcing the 2019 date and exhibitors were displayed at the FloraHolland Trade and Seasonal Fairs in Aalsmeer (November) and Naaldwijk (March). In addition, the lifts at the entrance of the March Fair had FlowerTrials stickers on the inside/outside of the doors promoting week 24. The Fleuroselect stand at all three fairs had a dedicated FlowerTrials contact point to visually underline the organisation's role as the FlowerTrials Secretariat.

Maps

Maps were introduced this year with a fresh new look and handy size. The map included an overview map per region with all locations. It seems to be well received by the visitors and according to the survey it reached more visitors than the previous tabloid. The 'passport to the FlowerTrials' idea with an open space to stick the badge was used only sparsely. The maps were distributed as a supplement to Vakblad v.d. Bloemisterij and Taspo. Members received copies for their own use and each scan location received extra copies to be placed on the registration desk in a holder which was also considered to be very successful. The meeting was in favour of repeating the map for next year. Possible improvements include the option to unfold the map while attached to the key cord.

Video

Markus Eiermann reported on the video projects for 2019 sharing the statistics from the FlowerTrials VIMEO and Facebook channels. 30 preview videos of 30 seconds were produced prior to the event and 42 FlowerTrials videos, each of 90 seconds in length, were made during the FlowerTrials week. They were perceived as being of better quality than last year. A possibility for live tv was again investigated. Discussions were held with both Michael Perry and the Bobbleheads (USA), but a working and affordable solution was not found. Meanwhile our video production company offered to facilitate daily interviews free of charge as an extra due to some dissatisfaction with several videos in 2018. They employed TuinbouwTessa to carry out interviews in each region and published these short videos the next day in Dutch on the Goedemorgen Potplant channel. In addition, the videos were shared on our social media channels in English. While we were not happy with the English interviews, all in all it was a nice experiment with definite potential for further investigation.

Website

Michel Sollie of Inforaction/Eventers outlined the upgrades made to the website in 2019. These included a press mailing list where all registrations under the category 'press' are listed. For next year the registered press list will be available as a download for all participants. Furthermore, a social media sharing possibility has been added to all member pages and a possibility has been added to download the directions from the route planner. The meeting asked Michel if the PDF directions had been used. Is it nice to have or really useful

for visitors? Michel will investigate this. Most importantly, the GDPR/AVG cookie consent settings were all implemented in the four languages to bring us up to the legal requirements.

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 21%. It is interesting to see that the traffic to the website by display is a lot higher due to the use of retargeting. Also, the traffic through banners is higher, which shows that the banner campaign does attract a lot of website visits. A question was raised if other banner messages should be tested e.g. 'will you visit?' instead of 'register now'. Answering questions from the meeting Michel explained that all figures under 'newsletters' are e-mails/mailings from the FlowerTrials organisation itself. Figures under 'e-mail' are external e-mails such as invitations from participants to their customers. Michel was asked if he could investigate what the conversion rate is via invitations from participants. This information can be used in the planning for 2020.

8. Report of the rebranding committee

Gill advised the meeting that it was important to keep in mind that this was about rebranding and not reimagining. She reported on a brainstorming session held with Bert Koeze, Robert Zuyderwijk and Frans-Peter where it was discussed if the FlowerTrials formula needs expanding. Following this meeting, research was carried out individually amongst participants and the responses or lack of response showed that everyone is happy with the current formula. There is no interest to add cut flowers or woody perennials or to have a separate FlowerTrials for cut flowers. It was agreed that the current pot & bedding participants who do have cut flowers in their assortment may present their full assortment during FlowerTrials. However, pot & bedding should remain the focus and cut flowers may not be included in communication or added to the website as a highlight.

9. Review communication strategy

Within the Board the question was raised if we are exploiting our brand correctly. The Board has therefore approved a review of our communication strategy with the intention of investigating if our spend is well related to our goals. Frans-Peter will lead this project and research possible agencies, two sector-related and one from outside the business and present the results in the January meeting. Current candidates include the non-branch agency (Energize) and three branch agencies (Floramedia, Jeen, Flower Factory). Any other suggestions for agencies should be sent to Frans-Peter or the secretariat.

One of the tasks of the agencies will be to prepare a relevant questionnaire amongst the participating exhibitors. The total budget available for the review is the final result of EUR 25,062, which is the 2019 profit plus the reserve that was not used for rebranding. This budget will be split into research and execution, but may not be fully utilized.

10. Results of the voting

After the break the result of the counting was presented to the meeting as follows:

Accepted: Hortibreed, Lazzeri

Declined: Graines Voltz, H.M.Clause, Vitroflora

Particularly the vote for HM.Clause was extremely close failing by ½ percent.

The meeting went on to discuss the Quorum. As stated in the manifesto 60% of the votes are needed to have a valid vote, either by email or during the meeting. It was noted that in the past the intention had been to remove the quorum obligation and have the final say at the meeting. It was therefore agreed to adapt the manifesto as follows and this was approved via a show of hands at the meeting.

Admission of new participants: Admission of new participants requires ~~a quorum of 60% of all~~ a vote by members at the yearly September meeting, either in person or if absent via a pre-sent proxy. A 60% majority of votes cast is required for admission of each new member.

Following the results of the voting a discussion was raised to see why the three applicant members were rejected, since the board did feel they were eligible under the manifesto. All three have their own breeding, and the Board felt they would add value to FlowerTrials. Gill referred to the Board's conclusion that the two French participants may attract more French visitors while a Polish exhibitor may encourage Polish growers. The meeting noted that this specific information from the Board had not been provided. If so, this may have

changed the voting. From the ensuing discussions it seemed that most participants felt that breeding was not a core activity from the rejected applicants and that patio vegetables are not a crop which should be included.

The meeting was also asked to review again Planttipp. They were rejected as participant in 2019 which made them eligible to participate as a third party and they did so at the F.N. Kempen location. As a non-participant they are not allowed to use the logo or be included in promotion, but they promoted themselves significantly which made it look like they were a participant. It can be concluded that they enjoyed the many FlowerTrials benefits, without having to pay a fee. To halt this, the meeting was informed that the Board decided to see if Planttipp should be asked to re-apply and become a full FlowerTrials participant. Another option would be to change the manifesto to give a more detailed description of which companies are eligible to present themselves as a third party. A closed vote showed that 76% would vote 'no' if Planttipp was to re-apply.

The meeting was informed that Varinova has cancelled its participation and HilverdaKooij and Florist will now continue as one participant, HilverdaFlorist. Gediflora has indicated that they may be participating next year. In this case the new rule applies.

11. FlowerTrials Board

Gill referred to the current Board composition this year consisting of 5 people, with herself as Chair and Frans-Peter Dechering added in preparation to take over the Marketing/Communication. Her term as both member and Chair is now ending and she announced Norman Cools to the meeting as the new Chair. She added that the changeover will start now at the kick-off for next year. Gill went on to note that she has been a Board member for 6 years including the Chair for 4 years and that she is proud to have been a part of the progress made. She will moreover definitely stay as an active member. Sally thanked Gill for all her hard work reemphasizing the personal time and dedication Gill has put in to professionalising and furthering the FlowerTrials event. She was presented with flowers and an appropriate horticultural gift of a spade.

12. Start-up FlowerTrials 2020

Taking over the hammer, Norman reminded the meeting that all locations must be known at the January meeting ready for registrations to go live on 1st February. The website pages should be completed by 1st March at the latest in order to start the newsletter campaign.

13. Any other business

The following questions/comments were raised from the floor:

- Florensis mentioned that they will change location for 2020 only and will exhibit at their new facility opening next year in Dinteloord. This location has been accepted by the board.
- A question was raised on the FlowerTrials strategy relating to other events (e.g. GreenTech and Orchid inspiration days) that also take place in week 24. The board mentioned that we cannot forbid other events using week 24, but we do not allow them to refer to our event or use our logo. The meeting heard that the Orchid inspiration days may be re-considering their dates and GreenTech will take place from Monday thru Wednesday. In week 23 the Dutch Lily days will celebrate their 10th anniversary.

14. Close and date and place of next meeting

The meeting was closed at 16.10 hours. The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 29th January 2020 at the Atlantic Hotel, IPM Essen starting from 08.00 to 10.00 hours.

15. Action List

- Deadline for completion CMS is begin March.
- Suggestions for (German) bloggers to be send to the secretariat.
- Michel to provide numbers for PDF route planner.
- Michel to investigate conversion rate for invitations sent out by participants.