



CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - CALLIA

How a Winnipeg Start-up is Disrupting the Florist Market

By Mark Howe



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In May of 2016, [Catherine Metrycki](#) came up with the idea for Callia when one of her friends got promoted and Catherine wanted to send flowers, as a congratulatory gift. Catherine says “I quickly realized that my options were to spend 15 minutes on the phone and spend \$100, or drive to the grocery store and buy subpar flowers”. Catherine adds, “I thought there must be a better way, but there wasn’t, so I came up with the idea for Callia”.

It was in August of 2016 that [Callia](#) was actually launched. The idea was simple. Provide clients (both the buyer and the recipient) with a better flower experience. The three pillars of the business model are: 1) the simplicity of online ordering in less than 6 clicks, 2) better quality ‘farm fresh’ flowers for less than \$50, and 3) branding through beautiful packaging - the excitement generated from Callia’s signature blue box.

Just three short months after founding Callia, Catherine participated in, and ended up winning Innovate Manitoba’s Pitch’Day competition, which took place in November of 2016. Catherine says “At that time we only had \$5,000 in sales, but winning Pitch’Day was the validation we needed to continue driving the business forward.” Catherine adds “Back in November of 2016 I was still putting stickers on boxes at home in the evening and personally doing the deliveries!”

Like any successful entrepreneur, Catherine trudged forward and in February 2017 Callia reached another significant milestone when they expanded into the Vancouver market. Just two months later, in April 2017 Callia expanded further, officially opening in the Edmonton market. The next significant milestone for Callia was winning Innovate Manitoba’s Venture’Challenge in May of 2017. Catherine adds “Winning Venture’Challenge was further validation, plus we landed some cash and received some in-kind legal support from TDS, which is where I first met my lawyer [Stefan Drew](#)”. Following Venture’Challenge, Callia expanded yet again, opening in the Calgary market in July of 2017.

Today Callia enjoys some impressive sales growth and client retention statistics. Two thirds of purchasers repeat orders with Callia within 6 months. The company has been growing at 40% month-over-month since August 2017 and they are on track in 2017 to have 23 times the volume of business as they experienced in 2016.

Now that December has arrived, Callia is getting ready for the busy Christmas rush, both with their personal market and corporate market segments. Catherine says “Some of our new offers include three and six month gift subscriptions for the personal market, and on the corporate side, a pre-buy program with a simple online ordering system that includes discounted pricing, within a ‘digital wallet’.

Callia is currently focusing on growth within their four key Canadian cities. They expect to be nation-wide in Canada within five years. Catherine adds “I’m a proud Winnipegger so I plan on staying in Winnipeg and keeping our head office here as we continue to grow and expand.” The Callia workforce continues to grow as well, with a diverse group of employees ranging from recent university and college grads, to retired people looking for part-time work.

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After expanding from coast to coast within Canada, Catherine has her sights on the U.S. market. Her long term vision is to have Callia be viewed as the number one brand experience for flower gifting. Catherine adds “We want to do to flowers, what Starbucks did to coffee.”

With the Christmas season approaching, Callia encourages current and future clients to [try the Callia flower experience](#) by accessing the promo code ‘TDSLAW’.

TDS congratulates Callia on their success. We are honoured to call them a client of our firm.

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Mark's responsibilities and primary functions include client relations initiatives related to client satisfaction, client retention and client service. Mark manages the Marketing and Client Relations Department and oversees all aspects of the TDS Law brand and marketing communications initiatives, and has direct responsibilities for business development planning, strategy and implementation, as well as professional development.

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