



Lazy Flora

The business

Claire Ransom from Nottinghamshire had always dreamed of having a gorgeous garden. One day she would find a home with an outdoor space and create a tranquil garden filled with beautiful plants. But when she finally moved into a flat with a balcony in 2015 she found it hard to realise her dream. Living in London without a car made it difficult to get the plants and equipment home.

"I'd been dreaming of having this gorgeous oasis, like an extra room outdoors that I could enjoy," says Claire. "But when I finally got a balcony I realised how difficult it is to get plants on there if you haven't got a car. I used to take the bus to the garden centre but the quality of the plants was terrible, the choice was terrible and I always came away disappointed."

Around this time, online subscription services like Hello Fresh had started to take off, so Claire googled plant subscription services in the hope that she could get plants and garden sundries delivered to her door. To her surprise, there was no such thing as a plant subscription service in the UK – so she decided to create one. *"I thought it was a really good business idea, but it was too big and too scary so I didn't do anything about it for a couple of years. Eventually the niggle got too great to ignore so I quit my job in publishing at Penguin Random House and launched Lazy Flora using Shopify as the online platform."*

"Lazy Flora is a plant subscription service. We make gardening and plant ownership hassle free. We started out selling outdoor plants and now we also sell houseplants and edible plants. We launched five years ago but it really took off last year, thanks to a combination of good marketing and Covid-19. Our sales grew tenfold in the space of six weeks and our customer acquisition costs went through the floor, so we decided to jump on the opportunity and expand as quickly as we could. Inside five days at the start of the first lockdown around Easter 2020 we went from a two-room unit in a business centre in Arnold to a 7,000 square foot warehouse in Basford, which is where we still are today."

The problem

Lazy Flora was thriving, but a dark cloud was looming on the horizon: Brexit. Claire imports a lot of her plants and items such as pots and compost from the Netherlands and other European countries, and she had no idea what the implications of Britain's exit from the EU would be.

"Brexit was a headache for us, and it was very stressful," she said. "No-one in our business was familiar with international shipping arrangements, what type of arrangements we had to agree with suppliers and so on. We also had to decide what to do about VAT, which was another big issue, and we had to deal with the new extra paperwork that had been introduced for plant imports on top of all the Brexit red tape.

"Since Brexit things have got a lot more difficult for importers like us. What used to take two or three days now takes two weeks, and there are three or four rounds of paperwork to complete to do with plant health. There are checks before the goods reach the border and more checks at our depot, which we had to register as an import location. It's very complex."



Claire Ransom, Lazy Flora

The solution

Claire knew about the business support and advice offered by the **D2N2 Growth Hub**, so she went to the website and saw an ad for a free consultation to help with Brexit and international trade issues. In autumn 2020 she booked herself a free half-hour session. *"That connected me with Andrea Collins, International Trade Specialist and Managing Director at Global Trade Department in Swindon, who became our advisor. She gave us all the information we needed on how to get plants in and out of the UK. We were so lucky – she was just amazing! You're never sure with these free consultations what you're going to get out of it, and whether you're actually going to be sold to instead of helped. But Andrea instantly got into the detail of our business and offered helpful solutions immediately.*

"And all this really high-quality advice was completely free. Andrea probably gave us four or five hours of free consultation, including several one-to-one sessions over Zoom as this was during lockdown. She wrote lengthy emails and summaries which were completely tailored to our business and not just off the shelf.

"We don't need her help so much now but we're still in touch with Andrea, and if we needed her advice I wouldn't hesitate to get in contact with her. Without her help we would have floundered and I'd definitely recommend her to anyone else who's looking for help with international trade."

About Global Trade Department

A business management consultancy specialising in International Trade, Compliance, Sustainability Planning, Business Resilience, and Growth.

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