



FTD's pioneering journey from traditional floristry to tech-enabled gifting



The Genesis

A century ago the founding of FTD (Florists' Telegraph Delivery) in 1910 marked the dawn of a novel era in the floral industry. This innovative organization was a trailblazer, using the then-advanced telegraph technology to send orders, revolutionizing how people bought and sent flowers.

Further solidifying its reputation as a pioneer, FTD became one of the inaugural floral companies to embrace the digital age by selling flowers online. The company is now globally acknowledged for its comprehensive network of local florists, a community that tirelessly collaborates to deliver fresh, beautiful flower arrangements straight to your doorstep, wherever in the world that might be.

The Evolution

However, like many time-honored companies, FTD reached a crossroads where reinvention was not just an option but a necessity. It stood at the precipice of a rapidly changing market, needing to redefine its identity and vision.

With an unyielding commitment to supporting small businesses, FTD transitioned from its roots as a traditional floral company to emerge as a best-in-class technology company for gifting. FTD's vision was to level the playing field to equip small business owners with the cutting-edge technology and strategic tools they needed to compete - and triumph - in their local markets.

In a world where the Goliaths often overshadow the Davids, FTD has transformed itself into a technological slingshot, providing the smaller players with the necessary firepower to win their local battles. Their story is an ongoing testament to innovation, adaptation, and the relentless pursuit of empowering local business owners.



Navigating the Challenge: From Vision to Reality

FTD faced a daunting challenge: the need for extreme flexibility in supporting its multifaceted e-commerce model, where a vast network of florists worldwide would be empowered to craft their own website experiences. These experiences would be tailored to their local deliveries, stock, and seasonal variations, all while enhancing website performance and optimizing developer efficiency and workflows.

At the helm, FTD's Chief Technology Officer, Matt Powell, focused on distinguishing FTD in the crowded digital space. He sought to ensure that the company utilized technology that was not just current but uniquely suited to its expansive needs. This posed a significant hurdle: FTD's technology stack was entirely proprietary and built in-house, requiring a considerable shift toward modernization.

Reimagining a legacy commerce technology stack required identifying potential vendors and deciding which specific solutions and functionalities would best address FTD's distinct use cases. Matt envisioned a blend of flexibility and consistency - the power of composability coupled with the simplicity of an integrated platform. He aspired for a digital ecosystem where developers could work in a consistent, predictable environment across the e-commerce landscape. Equally, he wanted business users to be free to choose the tools they desired, with the added capability of abstracting data from them at any point.

In Matt's words, the critical question was not, "How do you go headless?" but rather, "How do you platform?" His perspective underscored the importance of strategic alignment: "Your strategy should dictate your tech stack, not the other way around."

FTD first set out to find a solution for a page builder and front-end governance. The search included solutions from industry stalwarts like Fabric, Commercetools and Adobe — however, none of these vendors aligned with FTD's visionary outlook. The search for a solution that resonated with FTD's unique use case and future-focused approach continued.

The Turning Point: Embracing Nacelle

After thoroughly exploring potential solutions, the team at FTD found its match in Nacelle. This partnership offered a resolution to the complexities faced by their developers, providing a unified API that streamlined access to their extensive product, collection, and content data. Nacelle effectively created a common integrated environment, weaving disparate datasets into a cohesive digital tapestry for the team to interact with.



Had FTD chosen a different path, it would have been burdened with the arduous task of creating an infrastructure within its Progressive Web Application (PWA) to fetch products from Shopify, collections from Salsify, and content data from Contentful. Nacelle's composable commerce platform, however, deftly circumvented this labyrinth of tasks, simplifying the process and significantly reducing the resources needed to properly compose its tech stack.

This strategic partnership with Nacelle was pivotal in FTD's tech-transformation journey. The team could now focus on what mattered most - creating unique, localized web experiences for their florists and offering the best to their customers worldwide. FTD reaffirmed its commitment to effective and efficient solutions tailored to its unique business model and broader strategic vision by choosing Nacelle.

Integration and Innovation: FTD and Nacelle

The flexibility of Nacelle, which can function as a standalone or supplemental commerce platform, made it an ideal fit for FTD. This adaptability enabled FTD to seamlessly integrate Nacelle with other components of its tech stack. Nacelle provides FTD with a unified, easy-to-manage platform that integrates disparate solutions and streamlines data flow across the technology stack. Nacelle ingests product and commerce content from Salsify, Contentful, and Shopify, allowing FTD to repurpose content effortlessly.



In the future, Nacelle will also transform and index this data, publishing it in real-time across multiple storefronts, apps, and channels. This dynamic operation will ensure that FTD's offerings are always up-to-date and accessible across its digital footprint.

FTD's specific requirements also included a complex search functionality, necessitating real-time data based on delivery location, time, date, and product availability. Paired with Algolia and React, Nacelle effortlessly handled this challenge, producing real-time results in an impressively performant manner. This integration optimized search results and enriched the user experience, providing customers with accurate, instant product listing content that is tailored to their specific needs.

The successful integration of Nacelle into FTD's tech stack showcases the immense potential of this partnership. By combining Nacelle's versatility with FTD's unique business requirements, they've created a potent synergy that pushes the boundaries of what's possible in the realm of e-commerce.

Assessing Impact: The Success Metrics

While site speed improvement is often a key benefit of partnering with Nacelle, for FTD, it wasn't the primary focus. Instead, FTD prioritized developer efficiency and experience. The question at the heart of their evaluation was, "How much longer would it take to accomplish the same tasks without Nacelle?" The results spoke volumes.

Upon launching with Nacelle, FTD noticed immediate gains, delivering several hundred basis points of improvement in one of their most important metrics — conversion rate. Further optimization led to additional increases in conversion rate, average order value and NPS. The new platform was faster, led to higher conversions, scored far better on Core Vitals and, most importantly, allowed the technical teams to accomplish more in less time.

The focus shifted from learning other solution APIs and worrying about upgrades to building their own bespoke application. From a technical standpoint, quality improved significantly. Automated test coverage expanded to 80% +, 90% of all content is controlled by the CMS and the team was able to quickly and efficiently run dozens of UI/UX experiments, ensuring a system for continuous improvement.

The emphasis was on delivering the things that matter and enabling SCRUM teams to accelerate their work. The reality of a composable framework meant less effort was spent on maintenance, freeing the team to focus on value creation and innovation. In essence, FTD was able to do more with less.

Envisioning FTD's Future

So, what's next for FTD, and how will they leverage Nacelle to achieve future objectives?

FTD is set to metamorphose from a predominantly floral company to a multifaceted gifting platform, thus significantly expanding its offerings. This category expansion will allow FTD to sell a diverse array of products to its existing audience, creating an 'endless aisle' of gifting possibilities.



In addition, FTD plans to delve into the realm of mobile apps, further enhancing the convenience for its customers. Not stopping at digital innovation, FTD also plans to reinvent in-store experiences, merging the traditional with the cutting-edge to provide an unparalleled gifting experience.

With Nacelle as its tech partner, FTD stands poised to usher in a new era in gifting, redefining its market presence and setting new standards in customer experience. This union is set to catalyze FTD's transformation into a multifaceted, real-time gifting platform.



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Matt Powell
Chief Technology Officer

Get in touch
to find out more



Nacelle is a composable commerce platform provider that allows brands and retailers to syndicate commerce and content data to multiple heads, endpoints and channels by transforming, storing and reindexing data in real-time. With Nacelle, companies can future-proof their business by composing the commerce stack they want — giving them the agility needed to build unique and dynamic shopping experiences, while optimizing business operations for growth. For more information, go to nacelle.com