

# A cause close to the family's heart

Why 1-800-Flowers.com displays its philanthropy to the world



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## Jim McCann

- Company: 1-800-Flowers.com
- Title: Founder and Chairman
- Industry: Retail – florals and gifts
- Founded: 1976
- Family generation: First
- Turnover in 2019: 1270 million euro

## 4 big takeaways

Choose a cause close to your heart



If an issue resonates strongly with you and your family, consider making it your philanthropic passion. Because if it means something to you emotionally, you're more likely to do all you can to make the biggest-possible difference.

Shout it from the rooftops



Don't hide your philanthropy away. Get the word out to the world. You'll get back much more than you expected in a stronger brand and culture, loyal customers and new connections. And all will combine to unlock new opportunities for your philanthropy and business.

Call on the experts



However good you are in your role, no one can possibly be an expert at everything. So when setting up your philanthropy, don't be afraid to reach out to people who have done it before and know how to make it work. You'll find people are more than willing to help.

Unite the family



Setting up a philanthropic organization can be the glue that keeps your family together. Gathering everyone around a cause is a great way to share values and unify the family across generations.

## Background

1-800-Flowers.com is a US floral and foods gift retailer and distribution company with a clear mission – to ‘deliver smiles’. While the company is publicly owned and traded, it’s still very family focused. In 2014, the business acquired food and gift producer and retailer, Harry & David.

Harry and David ran a not-for-profit foundation that helped agricultural workers in the community. Its work inspired Jim McCann and his brother, Chris, to do something similar. “Harry & David staff volunteer their time, and we were amazed at the wonderful things they do,” said Jim. “We wanted to put our time, talent and energy into a charity that’s special and important to us.”

But which cause would they choose? “Our brother, Kevin, was born with developmental disabilities and, at that time, there was very little support. He now lives in a wonderful group home, run by Independent Group Home Living (IGHL), a Long Island-based organization. Its executive director, Walter Stockton, told us about the trouble many developmentally disabled people have finding jobs.”

That was the eureka moment. The McCann family would set up a philanthropic organization to support, train and employ people like their brother, Kevin.

## Challenges

Jim and his family had never set up anything like this before. But help was at hand. IGHL, partner agencies and volunteers rallied round to get the initiative off the ground – and ‘Smile Farms’ launched in 2015.

In the early days, 1-800-Flowers.com wasn’t sure how public it should be about Smile Farms, and why it was so close to the family’s heart. Should they shout about the project from the rooftops? Or let it run quietly behind the scenes?

## The solution

Over time, 1-800-Flowers.com warmed to the idea of putting Smile Farms and the family’s commitments to the fore: “What’s really changed is our perception of what our community and customers want and expect from us. So we presented our work to the public.”

Going public ignited more opportunities than the business could have imagined. New partners and backers got in touch, sparking new projects. And a stronger culture of good and loyalty blossomed among customers and staff: “I wish we’d been more open earlier about our commitments. We didn’t realize the benefits that would come from this.”

Smile Farms enjoys the support of experts who help bring its mission to life: “We work with around ten partner agencies. They’ve provided the expertise we needed to design and launch a new training program for our people.”

Today, Smile Farms has grown to ten campuses, offering employment, training and education to 250 people with developmental disabilities. And it’s brought the family closer together:

“It’s been a glue. The next generation is very involved, and we’ve been able to share our values, and appreciate the importance of staying connected.”

“What’s really changed is our perception of what our community and customers want and expect from us.”