



CASE STUDY:

# Royal FloraHolland's document management blossoms with digital workflows



**Royal  
Flora  
Holland**

Royal FloraHolland selects cloud-based DocuWare document management to cut costs, improve customer service, and ensure compliance.

## COMPANY PROFILE

Founded in 1911, Royal FloraHolland in The Netherlands is the world's largest flower and plants auctioneer. The company handles over 11 billion flowers and plants annually, employs more than 2,700 people, and generates over €4.6 billion in sales.

The company is a co-operative, composed of 3,700 growers, with almost 2,500 registered buyers. Royal FloraHolland's largest export markets include Belgium, France, Germany, Poland, and the UK. From more than 23,000 flower and plant species sold at Royal FloraHolland's auctions, roses, tulips, and chrysanthemums are the most popular.

As an international auctioneer and wholesaler of plants and cut flowers, Royal FloraHolland manages millions of contract documents, sale agreements, delivery notes and more – many of which must be retained for years. As older IT systems reached end-of-life with a fixed date for termination, how could Royal FloraHolland rapidly develop and execute a new strategy to resolve its document management and compliance challenges?

"It was critical to rethink our approach to ensure we had the ability to manage millions of documents for growers and meet our compliance goals."

Tom van der Zee, Business Technology Manager, Royal FloraHolland



## OBJECTIVES

Royal FloraHolland embodies a fine tradition of flower and plant auctions; starting at 6:00am the company sells around 30 million plants and flowers each day, using the world-famous Dutch clock auction system.

Behind these colourful scenes, Royal FloraHolland stores and manages millions of transaction documents, often with seven-year legal storage requirements, and in some cases longer. In many ways the stored documents, which include contracts, delivery notes, and sale agreements, are the grower's business records. The archives are therefore in constant use, as the company responds to calls and emails to answer enquiries from growers and related partners such as buyers and logistics operators.

In total, Royal FloraHolland's archive holds 169 million items, growing at around 100,000 transactions daily. The original archive solution was hosted on-premises, along with many other business systems. As part of a larger drive to improve IT efficiency, Royal FloraHolland started a programme to retire its on-premises server estate, and move to cloud-based services. In the transformation, third-party service and support agreements would expire at the end of March 2021.

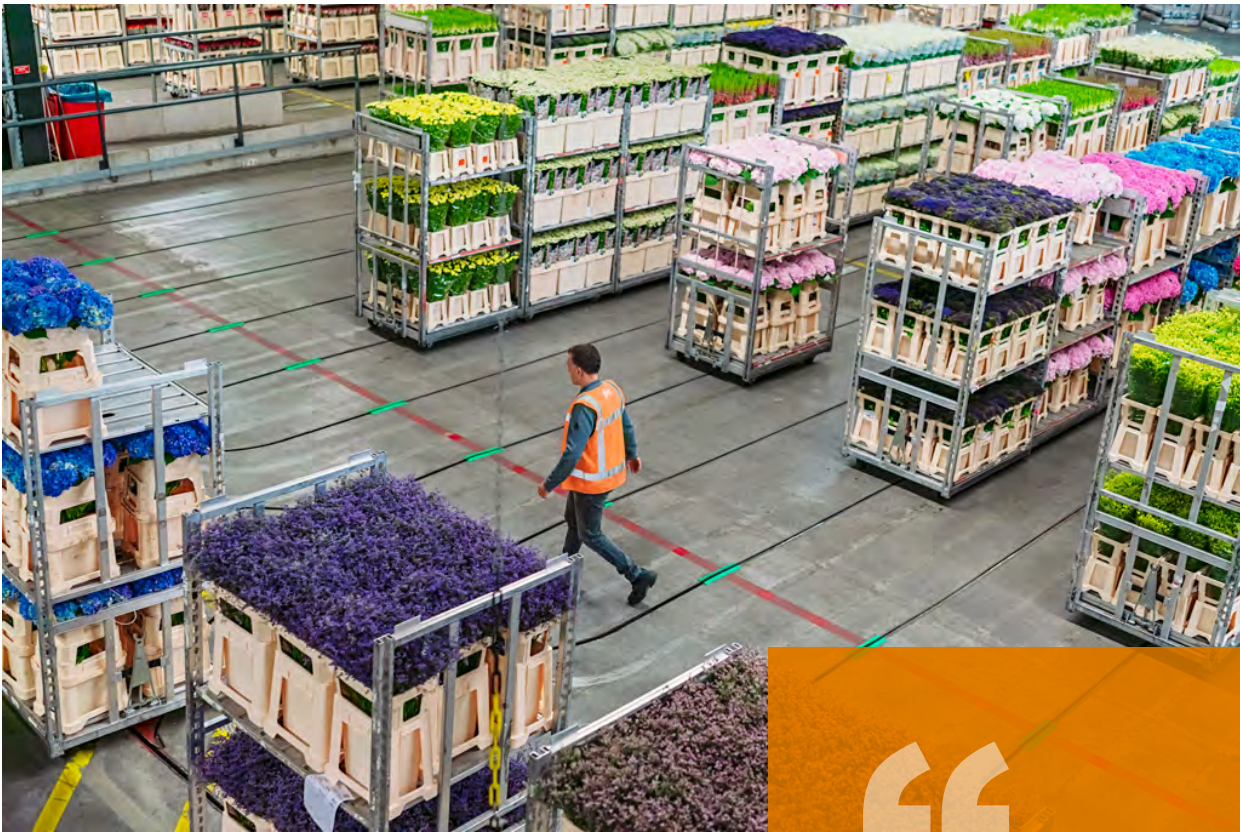
If any on-premises systems continued beyond the cut-off date, then the entire service contract would renew.

One-by-one, systems were successfully transitioned to cloud operations. Naturally, attention then started to focus on the handful of solutions remaining on-premises, one of which was document archiving.

With the clock ticking, Tom van der Zee joined Royal FloraHolland as Business Technology Manager, Business Support. He comments, "Initially, the Royal FloraHolland team had planned to migrate to self-developed software running in AWS Cloud. But it soon became clear that the development project struggled to deliver good system functionality, and that it was unlikely to meet the timelines."

He continues, "If we missed the deadline for any system, then we faced significant costs, perhaps more than €500,000. With a clear, unmovable cut-off date fast approaching, it was critical to rethink our approach to ensure we had the ability to manage millions of documents for growers and meet our compliance goals."





## SOLUTIONS

With the change of strategy in place, Royal FloraHolland issued RFPs to major vendors, aiming to deploy a new cloud-based document archive solution and migrate every document within five months. Nancy Wichers, Project Lead, comments, "Royal FloraHolland chose DocuWare because it offers complete archiving, comprehensive search, and full compliance functionality, delivered as Software-as-a-Service."

She continues, "We engaged the Ricoh team for urgent implementation within very tight timescales, and to help us plan and manage document migration. Ricoh moved very quickly, remaining focused on the objective. Even as contracts were being signed Ricoh removed administrative and operational barriers, started work, and mapped out our path to success."

Most of the time was devoted to locating and migrating existing documents from the former system to DocuWare. Ricoh developed new tools to automate and accelerate the migration, and solved technical issues inherited from the legacy platforms. Nancy Wichers remarks, "We 'sold' the move to DocuWare as technical migration only, to deal with the end-of-life server estate without promising revolutionary new capabilities. In practice, users immediately saw business benefits, because DocuWare offers greater, and more mature, capabilities than the previous solution. DocuWare is easy to use, always reliable, and very fast – query response, even with 169 million documents, is sub-second."



Ricoh took a shoulder-to-shoulder approach and took full ownership of the implementation. Royal FloraHolland and Ricoh developed a real partnership, and the Ricoh team did not let administration or excuses deflect them from delivering on the objective – a welcome and positive approach.

*Tom van der Zee, Business  
Technology Manager, Royal  
FloraHolland*





DocuWare helps us respond very quickly and accurately to growers, the owners of the business, as well as ensure their business records are properly stored in full legal compliance.

*Nancy Wichers, Project Lead, Royal FloraHolland*



## BENEFITS

Royal FloraHolland completed the transition in mid-March, two weeks ahead of schedule, and Nancy Wichers affirms, "The Ricoh and DocuWare project implementation and strategy was a great success."

Unlike many organizations that have archiving systems running purely as background tasks, Royal FloraHolland makes constant, active use of the DocuWare solutions. Customers and growers expect near-instant answers to their email and phone questions, and the team searches the archive almost continuously.

Nancy Wichers comments, "Even after implementation, Ricoh was able to improve response further, and we are delighted with DocuWare's performance. DocuWare helps us respond very quickly and accurately to growers, the owners of the business, as well as ensure their business records are properly stored in full legal compliance."

With the solution in place, Royal FloraHolland is now looking at local disk storage and SharePoint stores, and switching these to DocuWare. Users have quickly become familiar with the intuitive DocuWare interface, and consolidation of these multiple systems would bring both compliance and cost benefits.

Tom van der Zee remarks, "Reviewing the project, I think we knew at the start that with Ricoh it would be successful. The combination of trust, ownership, and partnership gave us the confidence to under-promise and over-deliver. We now consider this as much more than a technical migration, and users now talk with me about further uses for DocuWare because of the solution's higher maturity and capability."

Concluding, Tom van der Zee says, "Royal FloraHolland is a company on the move, where we are keen to use new technology to make a difference. Here, we have a can-do mentality that creates an attractive place to work, and offers a thriving market for growers and buyers, and the project with Ricoh and DocuWare captured that spirit."

## ABOUT RICOH

Ricoh is empowering digital workplaces using innovative technologies and services, thus enabling individuals to work smarter.

With cultivated knowledge and organizational capabilities nurtured over its 85-years history, Ricoh is a leading provider of document management solutions, IT services, communications services, commercial and industrial printing, digital cameras, and industrial systems.

Headquartered in Tokyo, Ricoh Group has major operations throughout the world and its products and services now reach customers in approximately 200 countries and regions. In the financial year ended March 2021, Ricoh Group had worldwide sales of 1,682 billion yen (approx. 15.1 billion USD).

For further information, please visit [www.ricoh-europe.com](http://www.ricoh-europe.com)