

4 WAYS COVID-19 WILL CHANGE GROCERY MERCHANDISING

Do you have the right visual merchandising and space planning tools to meet new demands?

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GROCCERS have adapted with lightning speed to the new challenges of the pandemic. Supply chain upheaval, new fulfillment models, social distancing requirements and compliance issues are just a few of the obstacles that have emerged since March.

Out of the public eye, visual merchandising and space planning processes were significantly disrupted across the spectrum from assortment planning to in-store execution. Compliance suffered as team members scrambled to get products on the shelves in any capacity, without necessarily following the prescribed plan.

And this isn't going to change any time soon. New customer behaviors that began during the crisis will lead to permanent changes in how grocery stores operate. Retailers and brands that survive and thrive will need the right technology to **communicate merchandising plans quickly and accurately** so they can keep shelves stocked according to plan and not sacrifice extra labor hours as a result. Even more importantly, information must continue to flow between stores and the head office to provide leaders the visibility they need on progress.

I've identified four trends impacting grocers right now that I foresee continuing.



4 Ways COVID-19 Will Change Grocery Merchandising

1 Category managers pivoted from their typical merchandising calendars to short-term planning of SKU assortments.

When the country went into lockdown and businesses shuttered, grocery stores stayed open. Panic shopping set in and the hoarding mindset took over. Shortages of toilet paper, disinfectant and other staples led to empty shelves and a scramble in supply chain. Stores needed to adapt fast.

For visual merchandisers and space planners, the weekly calendar that was planned a year in advance was abandoned as short-term assortment needs became the focus. As the cadence of planograms changed, the ability to make quick decisions and **communicate updated merchandising plans to each store tailored to their footprint** became more critical than ever. Retailers will likely continue to operate this way because of the fluidity of the crisis and changes local and federal governments make on a weekly basis.



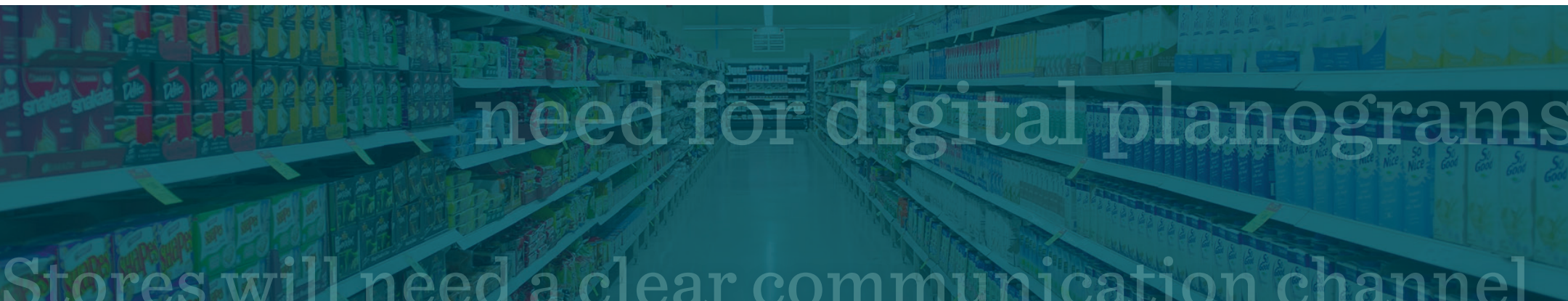
2 Floorplans, signage and space allocation were upended. Communicating changes to stores is critical.

Plexiglass barriers at the checkout. One-way aisles. “Face masks required” signage. Coolers in front of stores for curbside pickup. Directional arrows on floors. Queue management. Grocery stores made rapid changes in how space was allocated and managed because of social distancing requirements. More than ever, stores will need a clear communication channel for all these important – often government-mandated – points of communication that revolve around floorplans.

Sending instructions to your stores through static PDF documents posted to SharePoint portals or sent via email leaves a lot of

room for error by the store associates who are tasked with installing new fixtures and signage. Overburdening store teams with information that’s not relevant to their floorplan also leads to mistakes in setting up – and eventually taking down – temporary installations.

Now is a critical time to break down all barriers that face store teams in connecting the dots of their merchandising plans. Retailers should be looking to eliminate the silos of flat files on SharePoints and Excel and **digitally connect floorplan and planogram details** through a single user experience.

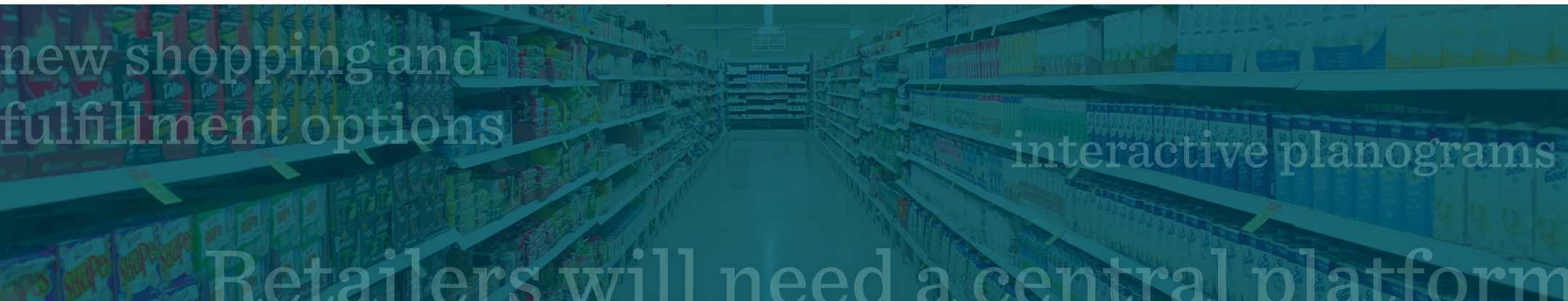


3 Online orders, curbside pickup and third-party shopping services are on the rise. And they're here to stay!

Online grocery shopping skyrocketed as a result of COVID-19. Customers wishing to avoid stores turned to other options like BOPIS (Buy Online/Pickup in Store) and third-party home delivery services such as Instacart and Shipt, which were already beginning to ramp up and have surged in popularity.

Curbside pickup is the latest omnichannel fulfillment service to gain steam in the grocery sector, and it will remain an integral part of grocery retail into the future.

All these new shopping and fulfillment options can further complicate merchandising processes. Retailers will need a central platform that houses all relevant information so that planograms are accurate both for an off-the-shelf shopping experience and back-room fulfillment. That's why it's vital to upend the historical model of relying on black-and-white schematic planograms with product lists underneath them and transform them into **interactive planograms** to ensure products are in their planned positions for both pickers and customers.



4 The flurry to get shelves stocked hurt in-store execution and compliance.

The amped-up energy to get products on the shelf as expeditiously as possible not only hurt the quality of execution, but also in-store compliance during the initial chaos of the pandemic.

Even in normal times, grocery stores must be able to validate that products are merchandised, promotions are set, and fixtures are installed correctly. During the lockdown when vendors and third-party audit firms weren't necessarily able to enter stores to check compliance, that job fell to store teams.

HQ and field leaders need visibility into the progress of merchandising work as it takes place without a third-party audit. A robust **compliance platform that includes surveys, photos and associate engagement** is a critical tool in the executional feedback loop. Having compliance in real-time gives employees access to help as problems arise. Ultimately, it ensures that all executional information gets back to HQ, where it can be analyzed, measured and leveraged in the planning process to maximize store performance.

validate that products are merchandised

real-time compliance

Time to Rethink Your Merchandising Processes

Now is the time for retailers to ensure that their merchandising process is keeping up with the rate of transformation in their stores. If retailers don't adapt, they will suffer from lost sales opportunities and increased labor costs.



One Door is focused on communicating merchandising plans to stores through real-time, interactive merchandising instructions. Merchandising Cloud gives grocery retailers the tools to pivot quickly, execute accurately and communicate with confidence. With a cloud-based platform that knows the exact floorplan of each and every store, store teams can get the right product on the right shelf every time. Want to learn more? [Schedule a demo today.](#)