

Zipline

A Guide to Digital Innovation for Grocery:

How to Leverage Technology and Emotion with Your Omnichannel Strategy





When COVID-19 hit the U.S. in March 2020, it resulted in an unprecedented health and economic crisis. Unlike other retail categories who had to close or saw foot traffic vastly diminish, grocery retailers fulfilled the essential role of keeping food on our tables and cleaning supplies in our hands. In many ways, grocers were, and still are, the heroes of the pandemic.

In light of what the country has been through, grocery retailers are looking to expand their omnichannel offerings and make connections and touch points that have not been contemplated before. Customers' lives are in constant motion, and they're trying to find more convenience, value and ease in their shopping experience. In the digital world, these two roads meet to provide a roadmap to personalization, and when pushed, can carve out additional ways to individualize customer experience to increase brand loyalty. For grocery retailing, there is a real opportunity to build an omnichannel environment that uniquely serves local communities and creates memorable shopping experiences - all while keeping employees engaged and safe.

To help navigate your omnichannel journey, Zipline has put together this easy to reference guide, touching on the technological, as well as the emotional, needs to stay competitive today.



Community is Key

Successful grocery chains address retention by directly connecting workers with the brand and the mission. Grocery stores are part of the fabric of our towns. They are the first stop when celebrating holidays, family milestones and sporting events. Grocers often offer lifelines to the underserved and, in partnership with local food banks and charities, provide sustenance and supplies to the homeless and those that need an extra hand. Many kids get their first jobs at these stores stocking shelves and bagging groceries. When employees are directly tied into the bigger reason for being - to serve the community - they understand the company's purpose, are fully aware of their role in the mission, and can execute to brand standards.

Grocers that are winning with hiring and retention are also investing in stores teams and showing a commitment to their success. It's a practice of serving a company's internal community. By providing ample training for employees, grocers receive a return on their investment through a more engaged workforce, higher recruitment rates, and lower turnover. By giving individuals better learning opportunities, higher education is more attainable and the company benefits from successful diversity, equity, and inclusion programs. To establish a culture of learning and empowerment, a strong communications infrastructure is essential. Task management platforms drive better execution by letting your teams know how their work supports the larger picture. The technology also provides important context that enables employees to be better store leaders, resulting in a higher rate of engagement and reduced turnover.



Customer Spotlight

A Leading Grocer Tripled Store Execution with Zipline

At the end of 2020, the management team of a leading grocery chain took a closer look at its technology and processes and realized they were ill-equipped to engage their 11,000 field employees. Email was simply not cutting it. So, they began their search for a modern solution to streamline communications between Store Support and the Field and standardize the way communications, projects and tasks are rolled out to store teams. The goal was to find a one-stop-shop for store teams that provided everything they needed to get their jobs done.

Just months into the full rollout, the grocer has:

- Streamlined all communication and task force management efforts through one source for Field Leaders
- Created one centralized dashboard to allow Store Support and Field Leaders enhanced visibility into monitoring completion of important tasks
- Transitioned away from desktop or paper communications to a completely mobile environment, allowing Store Teams more time on the sales floor to deliver impeccable guest experiences
- Increased Team Member engagement around company initiatives, announcements, and events
- Achieved 90% adoption of the platform
- Tripled store execution to more than 90%



Humanize Technology

Industry experts believe the pandemic accelerated digital innovation by at least seven years. Many grocers were able to roll out new initiatives like curbside pick up and delivery faster than they could have ever imagined. And, 75% of consumers who tried online ordering during the pandemic realized it was much easier than they expected.

In order to maintain a cohesive customer experience when contracting with third-party shopping and delivery partners, grocers need to invest heavily in associate training and communications. Empowering every employee to be able to answer customers' questions about deliveries (instead of forcing them into taking a “not my problem” approach) is the difference between a great shopping experience and a terrible one. “The aim is to give department and store leaders tools that provide them liberty to lead and run their stores effectively, without technology getting in the way,” says Jeremy Baker, CTO and Co-founder of Zipline.

Leaning into the expertise of your grocery staff is also a means to supply your customers with a sense of community and your employees with a feeling of value and loyalty. Some team members bring distinctive experience and extensive expertise to work every day. The produce manager who grew up on a farm. The seafood counter staffer who comes from three generations of fishermen. They are more than staff doing tasks — they are opportunities to make human connections with customers. Encourage them to bring their full selves to work. In doing so, your frontline feels valued and motivated to provide an exceptional shopping experience.



Focus On Empathy, Drive Execution

It is imperative to build trust and credibility with your associates. That's why focusing on empathy - understanding the connection between your employees' experience and your customers' desires - sets the foundation for better execution. By targeting communications based on an individual team member's role, location, and current performance, your employees have a better understanding of your brand's top priorities, know what's most time-sensitive, and gain the knowledge they need to become more effective brand ambassadors. "Coyle Hospitality found a direct correlation between a retailer's Glassdoor score and its sales execution," says Melissa Wong, CEO and Co-founder at Zipline. "That's why it's so important to connect what stores need to know with what stores need to do in a way that guides them and makes it clear what's expected. By doing this, store teams know how their work supports the larger picture and they have context to enable them to make better decisions in the moment."

While many grocery stores today rely on weekly store huddles to relay information, others are learning this method of communication just won't cut it in today's world of higher health and safety compliance standards. After all, we know that across all retail industries, only 29% of direction sent to stores is executed correctly by store teams. When it comes to health and safety regulations, 29% won't fly.



Customer Spotlight

How Hy-Vee Used Zipline to Engage Employees and Deliver Personalized Communication to the Field

For several years, Hy-Vee executives had discussed finding a better solution to engage the company's more than 80,000 employees. The grocery retailer had cobbled together myriad tools to communicate with its employees over the years, including video boards, posted signs, snail mail and DVDs, among others. With the prevalence of smartphones and digital transformation happening at their own stores, they knew there was a modern solution out there that would be more efficient and effective.

The Hy-Vee team made the decision to partner with Zipline in March 2020. Days later, non-essential retail businesses began closing and essential businesses were flooded with customers looking to stock up on supplies. Essential workers were on the front line of the pandemic and Hy-Vee realized that Covid-19 was accelerating their (already great) need for a store communications platform.

A fast launch was important because Hy-Vee's CEO, Randy Edeker, wanted to use Zipline to reach out to each and every associate, each week, with video messages. It was a way for him to show appreciation and support for workers that were risking their health to ensure others had food on their tables.

In addition to being the channel to consume the CEO videos, Zipline was also the place where Hy-Vee stored new pandemic policies and procedures to comply with ever-changing government regulations. Zipline's Resource Library, is one place to maintain all files that associates might need to find any answer they might need to do their jobs.

"Thanks to Zipline, I know our associates feel taken care of. We use the platform to help them do their jobs better and alert them when there's an important update, product recall or task. But we also use [it] to let them know how things are going, how we're keeping them safe and how we're providing them with new benefits or special discounts during the pandemic. So it's tactical, but also emotional. It's another way that we show them we care."

- Jessica Ringena, Hy-Vee's SVP and Chief Digital Officer.

About Zipline

Thanks to increased consumer demand, it's clear that more complex tech roll-outs are now table stakes in the grocery industry. Brands that want to keep up will need to continually push for newer, better, cutting-edge customer experiences. Implementing those types of initiatives, quickly and at scale, can be difficult without the right communications and task management platform in place.

At Zipline, we believe that clear, effective in-store communication is crucial for a successful omnichannel strategy. It's the key to fostering a more agile workforce, and ultimately the only way grocery retailers can guarantee consistent, precise execution. Digital solutions are proven to drive higher execution because they ensure everybody gets the same message at the same time. Zipline ensures that policies and procedures from HQ are seen, understood and completed on time, with the reporting to prove it.

With so many brands developing an omnichannel strategy that will last, this is the perfect time to evaluate your current communication and task management tool.

To learn more about how Zipline can enhance your omnichannel strategy, email us at meetzipline@getzipline.inc, or visit us at getzipline.com/grocery

