

Grocery's next growth advantage

What conversations from Groceryshop 2026 mean for retail and brand leaders



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Executive perspective from Groceryshop 2026

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Groceryshop 2026 reinforced a practical priority for our industry: Innovation must help retailers run better stores and help shoppers make better decisions.

Retail media and audience platforms drew significant attention, particularly around the largest players. I see an opportunity to connect that momentum more closely to product innovation and the everyday needs of regional grocers and the communities they serve.

Regional retailers are balancing customer relationships, store operations, product availability and promotional priorities. New capabilities need to fit those realities and give their teams practical ways to grow.

Brands have an important role in that work. Their product expertise and understanding of changing shopper needs can help shape the experience retailers bring to life in their stores. I am hopeful that brands will bring more of this expertise to future events.

For executive leaders, the opportunity is to bring these efforts together. Coordinated paid and retail media, technology and product innovation can contribute to growth when brands and retailers connect them to the needs of the shopper and the business.

That connection deserves greater attention as the industry moves forward.

Read on for our team's key takeaways from Groceryshop and a closer look at what these developments mean for brand and retail leaders.



The takeaways

AI, retail media and technology platforms were prominent at Groceryshop 2026.

Across the sessions and conversations, a broader opportunity emerged: connecting those capabilities to the everyday work of helping shoppers discover products, make decisions and complete their trips more easily.

AI makes data quality a growth priority.

The AI conversation is expanding from product search to practical tools for shoppers, such as meal planning and replenishment, alongside operational applications including forecasting and fulfillment. These capabilities could reshape how shoppers choose products and how retailers serve them, but their usefulness depends on reliable information.

For retailers, that means accurate inventory information and connected data. For brands, it raises the importance of clear product content that communicates key attributes and connects product benefits to specific shopper needs.

The takeaway

Evaluate AI investments against specific improvements in convenience, availability and operating performance.

Connected execution requires shared ownership.

Many of the opportunities discussed at Groceryshop depend on coordination across teams. Marketing can generate demand, merchandising determines assortment and promotional priorities, and operations influences product availability and shapes the shopper experience.

Retail media makes this interdependence especially visible. Merchant participation should shape category priorities, product selection, placement and timing from the outset. Success should reflect shopper benefits alongside revenue and category performance.

The takeaway

Simplify execution while preserving the local knowledge and customer relationships that distinguish and strengthen your business.



Investment confidence depends on credible evidence.

Retail media spending is increasingly concentrated among large platforms and retailers. As advertisers weigh a fragmented set of media opportunities, networks need a clearer investment case supported by measurable growth.

Advertiser confidence depends on results that are transparent, comparable and tied to business objectives. Networks need well-defined measurement methods that credibly demonstrate incremental growth for advertisers. Reliable performance evidence can help advertisers make informed decisions and strengthen their partnerships with emerging channels and networks.

The takeaway

Establish shared business outcomes upfront, supported by consistent measurement methodology and transparent reporting. Focus success metrics on case movement or risk losing investment to larger platforms.

Shopper relevance should guide creative and investment.

Conversations at Groceryshop highlighted a practical gap: The ability to sell and activate media may be outpacing the ability to produce effective content for those media buys. Different formats, placements and shopping missions require varied creative approaches.

That challenge extends across digital channels, printed materials, displays and in-store screens. In the aisle, content can help shoppers choose between products. At home, it can help them plan a meal. Consistent brand storytelling must reflect shoppers' distinct needs in each setting.

The takeaway

Tailor content to the shopping context to strengthen brand preference and support the shopper journey from consideration through purchase.

The final takeaway

Retailers can build a competitive advantage through stronger CPG investment partnerships that bring marketing, merchandising and operations together to better inform shoppers.

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