

ACTIVATE[®]

INDUSTRY REPORT

**YOU'RE BEING
REPLACED SOONER
THAN YOU THINK**

*By Tyler Franko
Dynamic Code*

**THE OMNICHANNEL
MIRAGE: HIGH NPS,
BROKEN MISSIONS**

*By James Gardner
Partner, Wingspan Finance*

**BEYOND THE HYPE:
ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS
AND WHAT THEY REALLY
MEAN FOR THE INDUSTRY**

*By Colm Maguire
CEO, Australia Food and Grocery
Council*

THE JOE BERRY AWARD

DEFINED BY LEADERSHIP. DISTINGUISHED BY TIME.

WHEN PLAY STOPS



Coke[®]
TIME

CONTENTS

10

**THE GLOBAL LENS:
WHAT AUSTRALIAN RETAIL
CAN LEARN FROM ASIA
AND THE US.**

By Bob Hoyer
*Global Insight Manager, Retail
at Euromonitor International*

12

**THE STATE OF
AUSTRALIAN RETAIL
2026: RESILIENCE,
REINVENTION, RESULTS**

By Marco Silva
*Director Customer Success,
NielsenIQ (NIQ)*

16

**THE SIX GENERATIONS OF
SHOPPERS: WHY ONE SIZE
NO LONGER FITS ANYONE**

By Sam Gilding
*Product Intelligence Expert,
Vypr*

18

**BEYOND THE HYPE:
ULTRA-PROCESSED
FOODS AND WHAT THEY
REALLY MEAN FOR
INDUSTRY**

By Colm Maguire
*CEO, Australia Food and Gro-
cery Council*

20

**CIRCULAR SUPPLY
CHAINS: THE FUTURE
OF RESPONSIBLE
RETAIL**

By Zita Watkin
*Founder, Zita Creative
Marketing*

23

**RETHINKING CATEGORY
MANAGEMENT FOR A
RETAIL LANDSCAPE THAT
NEVER STOPS MOVING**

By Daniel Kohut
*Vice President, Solution Strategy
Blue Yonder*

26

**YOU'RE BEING
REPLACED SOONER
THAN YOU THINK**

By Tyler Franko
Dynamic Code

28

**THE OMNICHANNEL
MIRAGE: HIGH NPS,
BROKEN MISSIONS**

By James Gardner
Partner, Wingspan Finance

33

**BEYOND THE TITLE:
WHAT DEFINES THE NEXT
GENERATION OF RETAIL
LEADERS?**

By Suzie McInerney
CEO, Six Degrees Executive

36

**MENTORING IN MOTION:
THE HUMAN SIDE**

By Keith Quigg
*Director/CEO,
Activate Group Activate*

39

THE JOE BERRY AWARD

42

**TWO LEADERS. TWO
PATHS. ONE DEFINING
MOMENT**

By Samantha Corrigan
*National Business Manager,
iSoft*

47

**EVERY INDUSTRY HAS
ITS OWN LANGUAGE**

By David Shukri
*Customer Success Director,
Shopper Intelligence*



Woolworths
The fresh food people



Ian Cathels,
N&A Group

Supporting the best in Aussie *fresh*

We're committed to picking Australian fresh first. Like Ian Cathels' sweet and crisp apples from Batlow, NSW.

Today, 96% of our fresh produce is homegrown. If it's not in season or available locally, we'll source the next best thing — but for us, Australian grown always comes first.

PUBLISHERS PANEL



By Samantha Corrigan
*National Business Manager,
iSoft*



By James Gardner
*Partner,
Wingspan Finance*

CONTRIBUTORS



By Bob Hoyler
*Global Insight Manager,
Retail at Euromonitor
International*



By Marco Silva
*Director Customer
Success,
NielsenIQ (NIQ)*



By Sam Gilding
*Product Intelligence
Expert, Vypr*



By Colm Maguire
*CEO, Australia Food and
Grocery Council*



By Zita Watkin
*Founder, Zita Creative
Marketing*



By Daniel Kohut
*Vice President, Solution Strategy
Blue Yonder*



By Tyler Franko
Dynamic Code



By Suzie McInerney
CEO, Six Degrees Executive



By Keith Quigg
*Director/CEO,
Activate Group Activate*



By David Shukri
*Customer Success Director,
Shopper Intelligence*



strikeforce

PRECISION IN EVERY MOVE

When the line is narrow, execution can't miss

ADAPTABILITY AT SPEED

Responding in real time as conditions change

**FLAWLESS EXECUTION
UNDER PRESSURE**

Performance that holds when margins tighten

POWERING MOMENTUM

Agility, pace, and control behind every win

**Trusted for
Brand Execution in Retail**



FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Retail is an industry defined by change — but it is sustained by leadership and culture.



In this issue of Activate Industry Report, we explore **Everything Retail in 2026.**

You'll find perspectives from some of the most respected leaders across Australia's retail and FMCG sectors, sharing insight, experience and ideas on strategy, execution, innovation and leadership.

But what makes this edition particularly special is the moment of reflection it offers.

This year marks **40 years of the prestigious Joe Berry Award, 25 years of Keith Quigg leading Activate Group Australia and 20 years of stewarding the Joe Berry Award itself.**

In the almost two decades I've known Keith, I've had a front-row seat to the impact he has had on people and on this industry. To me he has been a client, a boss, a mentor and a friend. But his real legacy reaches much further: it lives in the leaders he has championed, the standards he has raised, and the community he has helped build across Australian retail.

What makes that contribution remarkable is how steadily and thoughtfully it has been built: through conversations, opportunities and belief in people long before the rest of the industry noticed them.

For the past 25 years, he has helped steward the Joe Berry Award with care, conviction and a deep belief in the future leaders of our industry.

Also on our cover is the 2025 Joe Berry Award winner, Holly Gregory, a leader whose future looks every bit as bright as the thinking, energy and optimism she brings to our industry.

**Retail will always evolve.
Strong leaders ensure it evolves well.**

Bianca Laurel-Velez
Editor-in-Chief, *Activate Industry Report*

ACTIVATE GROUP
IS SHAPING THE
FUTURE OF
AUSTRALIAN
RETAIL.

ACTIVATE[®]
SHAPING AUSTRALIAN RETAIL

Activate works alongside members and industry partners to recognise, support and elevate the people driving Australian retail forward.

We create space for meaningful conversations, strategic insights and collaborative growth.

If you're passionate about influencing the direction of retail, your voice belongs here.

Join **ACTIVATE**. Contribute. Lead the change.

activateaus.com.au

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



I'm delighted to introduce the March 2026 edition of the Activate Industry Report. The quality and relevance of the thought leadership pieces that the report and its contributors are bringing to the industry is manifesting in an increased circulation and engagement with the report.

I was reflecting this time on the 40th anniversary in 2026 of the coveted Joe Berry Award. This award — which recognises and celebrates young, high-flying talent — has stood the test of time. Not least, this longevity is down to the very formula of the award, which sees candidates discuss and present their perspectives on key challenges and opportunities facing retail — in other words, this longevity is assured down to the very nature of the ongoing annual relevance of the topics discussed.

Furthermore, developing, nurturing and celebrating talent is, of course, an enduring task and welcome obligation for all of us in our industry to showcase it as a career pathway of choice. If you want to have a window on future talent, be immersed into debate on the challenges and opportunities presented to retail, then get involved in the Joe Berry Award as sponsor.

Activate's dual role is as the custodian of the Joe Berry Award, but also as a member-based advocacy organisation representing its members' interests in the field of all things retail. Similar to the Joe Berry Award, the organisation formerly known as the ASMCA has stood the test of time given its enduring relevance in a fast-changing retail marketing industry. Increasing professionalism, standards, training, thought leadership and advocacy are just some of the benefits in being a member of Activate.

Matt Lloyd
Chairman, Activate Group Australia

THE GLOBAL LENS: WHAT AUSTRALIAN RETAIL CAN LEARN FROM ASIA AND THE US.



By Bob Hoyler
*Global Insight Manager, Retail
at Euromonitor International*



From South-east Asia's adoption of Chinese mobile commerce (m-commerce) to the dominance of value-driven third-party (3P) marketplaces in the US amid tariff disruption, global retail is being reshaped by consumers who want more for less. This offers valuable lessons for Australian retailers looking to learn from these regions.

Mobile-first mindset has shaped Asia Pacific's online sales boom

Aside from Japan and Singapore, all Asia Pacific countries are 'mobile-first' markets, where consumers were first introduced to the internet on mobile phones instead of personal computers. This has resulted in the region's shoppers overwhelmingly making online purchases through their smartphones.

Asia Pacific is projected to account for more than 40% of global retail sales by 2028, driven by rapid urbanisation and increased digitalisation. Additionally, in 2024, 81% of Asia Pacific e-commerce sales by value were transacted via mobile phones, with most of this activity taking place on mobile apps. This places Asia Pacific at the forefront of global m-commerce and innovative m-commerce models such as livestreaming, which is finding popularity across the region.

In Australia, many retailers have been making significant investments in their omnichannel capabilities since the pandemic, so e-commerce is expected to remain a key growth channel for retail. Taking a page out of Asia's mobile-first mindset, increasing investment in digitalisation can help Australian retailers increase investment such as through developing their own mobile apps or listing products on 3P marketplaces to expand their reach, given their proliferation in the past few years.

It is worth noting that many consumers in Australia use e-commerce to complement in-store shopping, making it important for store-based retailers to ensure they have a strong omnichannel strategy that increases touchpoints with consumers. Some may go online to search for more competitive prices for the same model, while others may use a website to research and discover new products before making an in-store purchase. In Australia, building on the mobile and e-commerce aspect of the business while still maintaining the presence of the physical store is essential.

South-east Asian retailers are keen adopters of Chinese m-commerce innovations

Retailers in South-east Asia have become keen adopters of m-commerce innovations. With all South-east Asian countries, apart from Singapore, being 'mobile-first' markets, the region is highly receptive to m-commerce innovations imported from China.

Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines in particular, have made South-east Asia the most dynamic region in all global retail, and local retailers have adapted Chinese m-commerce concepts in their domestic framework.

This can be seen in Indonesia, where its most famous retail format – small local grocers called 'warungs' – have gone digital. E-commerce marketplace, Bukalapak, has helped to digitalise small family-owned businesses since establishment, and through its Mitra Bukalapak program, it now provides digital and financial services to around 25% of warungs across the country.

However, with Asia being such an expansive and diverse region, there are significant differences in levels of economic development and cultural attitudes towards consumption from country to country. Should Australian retailers and brands adopt similar innovations, it is crucial to ensure not to take a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to replicating this.

Value-driven consumers and tariff disruptions drive 3P marketplace evolution

US retail e-commerce has gained significant momentum, driven by a continued shift in consumer behaviour as people have become accustomed to the convenience of online shopping. Alongside the economic slowdown in the country, 3P marketplaces have found a highly receptive market.

Consumers in the US are becoming more cautious, prioritising savings and seeking greater value in their purchases. Euromonitor's 'Voice of the Consumer: Lifestyles Survey' (fielded 2025, n: 40031) reveals that 48% of US consumers planned to increase savings in 2025, compared to 41% in 2023.

This is in line with Euromonitor's 2026 Global Consumer Trends, where the trend, 'Comfort Zone' highlights how many consumers are re-evaluating how they spend their time, money and energy, making efforts to consciously simplify their lives. Shoppers are curating their consumption more intentionally by buying fewer products that provide both tangible and emotional comfort.

In the past few years, China-affiliated 3P marketplaces like Temu, Shein and TikTok Shop have managed to leverage consumers' budget-consciousness by offering affordable products and emotional value, positioning shopping as relief amid economic stress. This can be seen from how these players offer gamified shopping experiences with heavy discounts and promotions, leading US consumers to increasingly turning to Temu, Shein and TikTok Shop, especially for gift shopping and impulse buys.

However, it should be noted that China-affiliated marketplaces are having to recalibrate as increasingly aggressive US trade policies now threaten their international expansion. With ultra-low pricing originally being their primary appeal, these operators are now pivoting to better adapt to the new reality of tariff turbulence.

In Australia, budget-consciousness has led consumers to look for ways to save. Chinese retailers Shein and Temu, are still gaining traction in Australia as they sell extremely affordable products and attract a high number of local customers each month. Such competition from overseas e-commerce platforms has placed considerable price pressures on Australian retailers, which are being forced to intensify their discounts and promotions online in an attempt to compete. Therefore, Australian retailers must adapt by leveraging data to help tailor their offerings and optimise their customer interactions in order to retain share.

Overall, global e-commerce growth underscores the importance of mobile-first strategies, innovative marketplaces and a nuanced understanding of consumer behaviour. For Australian retailers, success will depend on balancing digital investment with physical retail, leveraging data to personalise engagement and responding effectively to rising price competition from overseas platforms.

www.euromonitor.com/insights



THE STATE OF AUSTRALIAN RETAIL 2026: RESILIENCE, REINVENTION, RESULTS



By Marco Silva
*Director Customer Success,
NielsenIQ (NIQ)*

If the first half of the 2020s were the years Australians learned to live with volatility and became more resilient, the second half should be the years when retailers turn that hard won resilience into results. Cost of living pressures haven't disappeared, but households have settled into pragmatic routines and intentional shopping: plan more, scrutinise baskets and trade smart. In response, retail is rediscovering the basics — clear value, quality you can trust, and frictionless journeys — while experimenting boldly with premium private label, AI assisted shopping and health aligned innovation.

What follows is a grounded look at how the market moved in 2025 and where Australia's growth could come from in 2026 — through the lens of channels, retailers, online and emerging forces shaping demand.

2025 in brief: cautious households, intentional shopping

Although inflation moved closer to pre pandemic levels in 2025, it didn't fall evenly. Power and housing remained stubborn pressure points for households. Shoppers responded in practical ways: more people expect to spend more on the basics — utilities, rent/mortgage and groceries — and less on out of home dining and entertainment. With fresh food and beverages holding firm on price, shoppers adjusted what they could by switching sizes, timing purchases and choosing treats they could afford at home.

The bigger story was how Australians shopped. 'Omni' stopped being a buzzword and became instinct. More than 55% of households now shop four or more retailers in a quarter, mixing mainstream grocery with discounters, membership warehouse clubs and specialist banners to find value their own way. At the same time, online represents more than 10% of FMCG sales and is still growing at double digit rates: especially for larger baskets, where scheduled delivery and easy side by side comparisons matter most.

Channels in focus: where growth is showing up

Discounters keep expanding their reach, now serving the vast majority of Australian households with ongoing, recurring trips. They're not just places to save; they're a place where shoppers trust the price and, increasingly, the quality. The formula is clear: sharp everyday price signals, simpler choices and credible own brand ranges. For suppliers, these banners are no longer 'alternative'; they're core partners in the category growth plan.

Membership warehouse clubs are building loyalty through bulk missions, with retailers reaching more than a third of Australian households. Their strength is the stock up shop: large formats, predictable value and a clear 'do the big shop once' proposition. For manufacturers, this is as much a pack design and trip mission conversation as a pricing one. Done well, this format expands reach and smooth volume across the year.

Specialist and alternative channels — such as home improvement, pet and beauty — are also stealing occasions. Some of these chains have become meaningful places to pick up a handful of FMCG categories — laundry, cleaning, household, pet, hair care — thanks to smart adjacencies and the simple fact that shoppers are already there. This isn't about replacing the weekly shop, it's about capturing specific missions when price, range and practicality line up. Treating these outlets as strategic, not incidental, unlocks reach that traditional footprints can miss.

How to play it: identify the category pockets where these channels have a natural right to win (e.g. home care linked to project trips). Build task based SKUs and seasonal displays and measure success as incremental occasions and households added, not a shift within the same base.

Meanwhile, mainstream grocery is simplifying to rebuild trust. Range rationalisation and clearer pricing structures reduce complexity, improve on shelf consistency and deliver clearer value cues. That doesn't make shelves static; it makes innovation sharper. New products still land, but the bar is higher. Retailers have less room for 'nice to have' launches and more appetite for ideas that grow the category (e.g. products that unlock a new occasion, balance nutrition with a bit of joy or bring cultural relevance to the aisle).

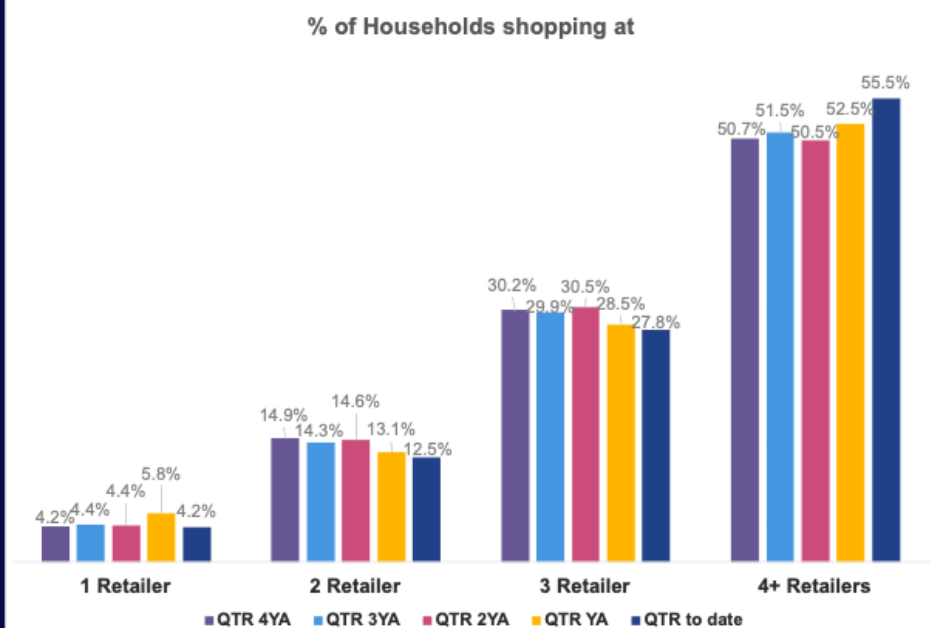
Online shopping: increasingly part of day to day habits

Australian e-commerce is in its second act. With online representing more than 10% of FMCG and still growing at double digits, the focus is shifting from 'having a digital aisle' to designing journeys around missions. Baby Boomers and Gen X value a clear interface, discounts and easy returns; Gen Z and Millennials expect personal recommendations and real time tracking. All shoppers want the same outcome: a platform that makes the smart choice obvious.

Online truly shines on the big shop (the \$120+ basket). That weekly or fortnightly stock up is disproportionately online, capturing around 35% of spend within \$120+ trips. It's where retailers can do their best work with mission curated aisles, basket level value cues and smart, low friction substitutions that keep satisfaction high. The building blocks are straightforward: a homescreen that adapts to the mission, side by side attribute comparison (nutrition, provenance, price per use) and clearly signposted loyalty linked savings that deliver value without damaging brand equity.

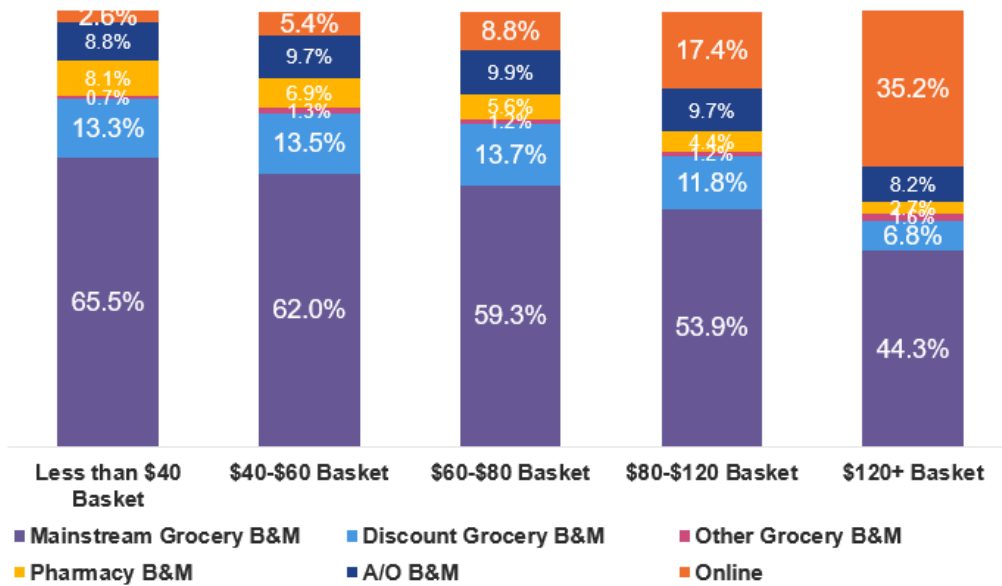
Shoppers on the move

55%+ of shoppers shop in 4+ retailers, up +4.3pts vs YA



Source: NIQ Homescan - 13 weeks to 05/10/2025 vs Year Ago (YA)

Share of Value - Channels



What's shaping choice in 2026

Trust and quality still decide the tiebreaker. Even in a value for money world, product quality and consistency remain the top drivers of brand trust in Australia, followed by recommendations, ethical sourcing and community impact.

Health and wellness has moved from rhetoric to routine. Roughly two thirds of Australians are either overweight or obese and 67% say maintaining a healthy weight matters more than it did five years ago (with 78% citing healthy ageing as important).

In this context, GLP-1 medications are becoming more visible. Awareness and consideration are already high: 73% of consumers are aware, 51% would consider using them and roughly 15% of households already have at least someone on GLP-1 treatment. Whether medication is involved or not, behaviour is shifting toward nutrient dense, calorie light, high protein and portion controlled options that keep taste and ritual intact: less about restrictive dieting, more about intentional nutrition.



Private label isn't just a trade down anymore; it's a trade across, now holding roughly 26.5% value share. The stigma has faded: 67% of consumers see store brands as good alternatives to general brands, and 55% would buy more private label if there was a wider variety of it. As private label is already strong in value and mainstream segments, it is now exploring the next frontier: premium private label. There are clear success stories of premium private label products launched by the major players, sometimes used to drive traffic and loyalty. Expect continued investment in wholefoods style ranges, artisan bakery cues, and 'chef at home' convenience. For manufacturers, this is a moment to both compete and collaborate: lead where brand equities and IP are strong; co-develop premium store brands where it grows the whole pie. Clarity of role is everything.

Over the next couple of years, expect AI to play a bigger role as Australians grow more comfortable with tools that add value. People want decision simplicity: 70% say they'd be more likely to purchase if it were easy to compare key attributes: 55% find it helpful when retailers suggest products based on past purchases or preferences, and 51% are comfortable with the platform making suggestions. The goal isn't to replace choice, but to remove friction, so shoppers can make better choices faster.

From resilient to ready: a simple playbook for 2026

1. Own the omni mission mix. Define the missions that matter — weekly shop, bulk stock up, fresh top up, value run, health focused — and align assortment, price cues, retail media and service by channel.
2. Practice RGM without regret. Protect price beacons and premium tiers with pack price architecture. Swap blanket half price cycles (which train shoppers to wait) for targeted mechanics that drive incremental trips or units, and monitor post event elasticity.
3. Innovate into needs, not noise. With tighter ranges, new products must unlock occasions (e.g. café at home) or reduce decision friction (clear claims, easy comparisons). Validate quickly, launch nimbly, and give the digital shelf the assets it needs: good-quality images, rich attributes and clear sustainability cues.
4. Be strategic about premium private label. Where your brand's emotional edge is undeniable, differentiate with brand craft. Where the category is more functional, consider co-developing premium store brands to capture the value equation shoppers want while securing shelf presence and utilisation.
5. Make health a growth engine. Design portion controlled formats and protein forward propositions. Keep indulgence alive with moderated treats and ensure front of pack clarity so shoppers can compare, at a glance. Build shoppable content around everyday wellness rituals.



FOOD+GROCERY AUSTRALIA 2026

20-21 MAY 2026 | SOFITEL BRISBANE

Food and Grocery Australia is the must-attend event for CEOs and senior leaders shaping the future of fast-moving consumer goods. The 2026 program delivers the insights, strategies and inspiration leaders need to stay ahead. Expect bold ideas, fresh perspectives and practical takeaways designed for real-world impact.

Be part of the conversations and the connections that drive our sector forward.

Hear from...



Gus Balbontin

Former ED and Chief Technology
Officer of Lonely Planet



Jess Gallagher

Summer and Winter Paralympic
Medallist



Anthony Laye

Effective Communication &
Behaviour Expert

and many more!



SCAN THE QR CODE TO SEE THE PROGRAM AND REGISTER TODAY!

AFGC MEMBERS RECEIVE DISCOUNTS ON REGISTRATION FEES.

foodandgroceryaustralia.com.au

We're essential together.

The AFGC is your voice, your network and your advocate.

The Australian Food and Grocery Council is the peak body representing Australia's food, beverage and grocery manufacturing industry. Membership is your opportunity to access a seat at the table where decisions are made.



Join us today:
afgc.org.au



AUSTRALIAN
**FOOD &
GROCERY**
COUNCIL



THE SIX GENERATIONS OF SHOPPERS: WHY ONE SIZE NO LONGER FITS ANYONE



By Sam Gilding
Product Intelligence Expert,
Vypr

For the first time in modern retail history, six generations of shoppers are influencing FMCG at the same time: from digitally native Gen Alpha through to the value-driven Silent Generation. While this breadth of influence brings opportunity, but also complexity, the myth of ‘the average shopper’ has never been less useful, and the brands still building for the middle ground are the ones being left behind.

The FMCG landscape is now shaped by different expectations. Younger shoppers are driven by novelty, digital discovery and emotional connection. Older shoppers prioritise value, reliability and routine. In-between, you have Millennials and Gen X’s juggling lifestyle, family needs and evolving views on sustainability, health and price.

Trying to meet all these needs with a single proposition isn’t just hard, it’s a fast track to diluted relevance. So, what should brands do instead?

Rethinking 'mass appeal' in a fragmented market

Too many product launches are still benchmarked against an assumed average, a shopper who doesn't really exist. That approach often results in propositions that are appealing to everyone, but compelling to no one.

The data backs this up. Our research shows contrasts in behaviours and preferences by age: 52% of 18-24 year olds discover new products via TikTok or Instagram. For those over 55, it's just 7%.

With loyalty program rewards, 53% of under-35s look for surprise perks, free gifts or exclusive offers. But for over-55s, it's all about money off and point redemption.

In food and drink purchases, 75% of Gen Z consumers say they buy based on impulse, emotion or newness, yet 49% of 65+ shoppers rarely make unplanned purchases.

Even the path to purchase varies. Younger shoppers are more spontaneous, with 43% of 18-24 year olds decide what to buy while browsing, compared to the 67% of over-65s who plan their shop and rely on familiar, habitual cues.

These differences ripple across the product lifecycle. If you're designing pack formats, message hierarchies or price ladders with a single consumer in mind, you're missing the mark for five others.

The rise of precision proposition design

This doesn't mean building six different products. It means embracing precision, designing propositions with a clear understanding of who they're for and validating those ideas with the right cohorts throughout development.

For example:

- **Gen Z and Alpha** lean into newness, ethical alignment and visual experiences. Their decisions are shaped on social feeds, not supermarket shelves.
- **Millennials** prioritise versatility, trust and alignment with values. Messaging needs to be credible, not performative.
- **Gen X** favour function and familiarity. Price and pack size matter more than trending claims.
- **Boomers and Silent Generation** want clear benefits. They are price-sensitive, habit-driven and loyal, but only when the product proves its value.

Too often, innovation teams are forced to water down bold ideas in pursuit of broad appeal. But our data shows consumers respond better to propositions that are specific, relevant and authentic, even if that means not everyone is the target.

Brands that lead with clarity about who they're designing for move faster, make braver decisions and, ultimately, connect better at shelf.

Iterative insight: building confidence without losing speed

With so many moving parts, the risk is that innovation gets slower and more expensive, but it doesn't have to.

Using agile methods like iterative validation, teams can test product ideas, claims, packs and pricing with the right audiences at the right time. It's how you avoid the trap of generic insight and instead build layered, nuanced understanding without adding months to your process.

For example, test your products with your core Gen Z audience first. Refine, then test with older shoppers to find any friction. Or, instead of waiting to test packaging until pre-launch, get early readouts from different generational cohorts.

This approach doesn't fragment your strategy, it strengthens it. It allows teams to anchor decisions in real-world feedback, rather than assuming past behaviour predicts future performance.

It avoids costly reworks. Products tested iteratively are 50% more likely to succeed at launch, 25% faster to market and significantly lower in total development cost.

What happens if you don't adapt?

Failing to segment insight by generation isn't just a missed opportunity, it's a strategic risk.

Take pack design, younger shoppers often look for minimalism, bold fonts or recycled materials as signals of quality and ethics. Older shoppers may equate more traditional cues with trustworthiness. If you're not testing visual and functional attributes across cohorts, you're gambling on gut feel.

Another example is pricing. Gen Z shoppers are highly promotion-led, while Boomers want price stability and clear value. A one-size-fits-all pricing strategy can erode margin or fail to convert.

As more categories become saturated, the brands that grow will be those that avoid generic insight and embrace precision targeting.

Cohort-specific insight, company-wide impact

Generational insight should influence product design, category strategy, pack formats, innovation pipelines, channel planning and more.

When there's an understanding of how Gen Alpha's discovery journey differs from a Boomer's, it becomes easier to:

- Align creative to the right channels.
- Choose claim language that resonates.
- Pick formats that match lifestyle.
- Understand where value sits.

Product teams can prototype with more confidence. Brand managers can deliver messages that land. Retail teams can secure shelf space with stronger, data-backed stories.

The takeaway: build with precision, not assumption

Generational behaviour isn't a trend, it's the new normal. With every cohort now making decisions in different ways, it's no longer a case of building for 'the average'. The risk isn't doing too much, it's doing too little, for too many.

To stay relevant, brands need to commit to precision and evolution. What resonates with a generation today may shift tomorrow, and the only way to stay current is to listen continuously. The most successful FMCG teams are building feedback loops that don't stop at launch.

The brands that win will be the ones that go deeper into what each generation values and use insights to focus.

View the full report.

BEYOND THE HYPE: ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS AND WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN FOR INDUSTRY



By **Colm Maguire**
CEO, Australia Food and Grocery Council

Few topics in food and public health are attracting as much attention or carrying as much policy and commercial consequence as ultra-processed foods (UPF). The term has become a staple in news headlines, social media debates and policy discussions, often framed in binary terms: good vs bad, natural vs unnatural, healthy vs harmful.

Australians care deeply about their health, and the government is right to focus on improving dietary outcomes. But as the processed food debate continues, the real challenge is no longer whether the conversation is necessary, it's whether it's grounded in robust evidence and scientific consensus.

At the Australian Food and Grocery Council (AFGC), we've long said that improving public health outcomes require clear, credible guidance and a practical understanding of how Australia's food system operates. Simplistic narratives may be appealing, but they risk overlooking the factors that keep food safe, affordable and accessible for millions of Australians.



What are ‘ultra-processed foods’?

The term UPF gets thrown around a lot these days. Despite covering a diverse range of products: from everyday staples and shelf-stable essentials — like my regular ham, cheese and tomato toastie, to the occasional treat most of us enjoy.

The term comes from an academic classification system called NOVA, developed over 15 years ago. It groups foods by how they’re made, not by their nutritional value — and that’s where real problems emerge.

First, there’s no clear or agreed definition. UPF isn’t a scientific or legal term, yet it’s increasingly used as if it were, to describe a very wide and diverse group of foods.

Second, it ignores nutrition. Focusing only on how foods are made risks lumping together products that actually have a positive nutritional profile and can contribute to a healthy diet such as breakfast cereals, wholegrain bread and soy milk, to name a few.

And third, it overlooks the real benefits of food processing, formulation and additives. These are central to food safety, nutritional adequacy, quality, preservation and the extended shelf life of food.

Bringing balance into the debate

As those in the sector know, processing itself is not bad. In a country as large and climatically diverse as Australia, it’s also key to consistently keeping food available and on shelves year-round.

When processing is treated as a proxy for health, it risks distorting public policy and consumer understanding. Health outcomes are shaped by overall dietary patterns and nutritional quality, not processing alone.

This distinction matters, because broad labels can unintentionally stigmatise foods that play an important role in nutrition, affordability and availability.

Affordability and access are public health issues

One of the most overlooked consequences of the processed food debate is its impact on affordability and access.

Many Australian households continue to face sustained cost-of-living pressures, and food choices are shaped by price, availability, taste and convenience. Processed and packaged foods provide a reliable, affordable and practical source of nutrition to suit diverse households’ budgets and lifestyles — products such as bread, fortified breakfast cereals, yoghurt and infant formula.

For manufacturers and retailers alike, this reality is critical. Public health strategies that focus solely on restriction or stigmatisation, without accounting for affordability and access, risk widening health inequities rather than reducing them. When prices rise or choice narrows, every Australian household feels the impact and, as we all know, some more than others.

A strong food system supports better health outcomes and practical, reliable access to a wide range of products. Balancing these goals takes thoughtful policy and collaboration between industry and government — something the AFGC is committed to.

Productivity, efficiency and the reality of manufacturing

Affordability pressures are closely linked to the productivity and efficiency of Australia’s food and grocery manufacturing sector and, by extension, the retailers who rely on it.

Food and grocery manufacturers are under sustained pressure to do more with less: reducing emissions, investing in innovation and meeting evolving regulatory expectations — often all at the same time, while managing increasing input costs. Energy remains a significant driver of cost and productivity across manufacturing, from processing and refrigeration to packaging and transport.

Productivity gains are not automatic. They depend on supportive policy settings, significant investment, reliable infrastructure and a regulatory environment that reflects operational realities. When productivity is constrained, the costs of reform become harder to absorb — increasing the likelihood that price pressures flow through to consumers.

From a public health perspective, this matters. A productive, competitive manufacturing sector is what enables food production, innovation and sustainability at scale. Recognising this is not about resisting change; it is about ensuring the system is capable of delivering it.

The path forward

Improving public health outcomes is a shared goal. Industry, retailers, government, health experts and consumers all have a role to play, but progress will depend on leadership that resists binary thinking and engages with the full complexity of Australia’s food system.

Australia’s food and grocery manufacturers are committed to being part of the solution. With the right policy settings, manufacturers can continue to deliver safe, high-quality food — supporting better health outcomes while maintaining a resilient, competitive and sustainable food system that serves all Australians.

About the Australian Food and Grocery Council

We represent Australia’s food and grocery manufacturers and provide the guidance, advocacy and resources to keep the sector strong. Got ideas, challenges, or want to shape the conversation? Reach out, we’d love to hear from you – afgc@afgc.org.au

CIRCULAR SUPPLY CHAINS: THE FUTURE OF RESPONSIBLE RETAIL



By Zita Watkin
Founder, Zita Creative Marketing

Why circularity can't wait

For decades, retail supply chains have operated on a linear model: make, use, dispose. While this approach once supported scale and speed, it is increasingly misaligned with today's social, economic, environmental and regulatory realities. Rising landfill levies, growing resource scarcity and heightened consumer expectations around transparency are placing unprecedented pressure on retailers to rethink how products and materials move through their businesses.

At the same time, regulatory frameworks such as the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation and waste reduction targets are accelerating the shift away from disposable systems. In this environment, circular supply chains are no longer a sustainability add-on; they are a business resilience strategy. By designing for reuse, recovery and longevity, retailers can reduce risk, stabilise supply chains and protect future resources.

Circularity is no longer optional. It is a competitive necessity for responsible retail.

What is a circular supply chain?

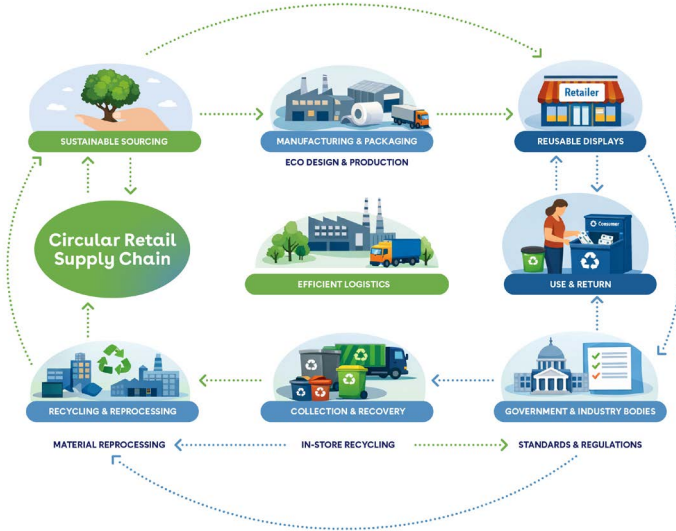
At its core, a circular retail supply chain reimagines the traditional 'take-use-dispose' model by keeping products and materials in use for longer. Rather than extracting value once and discarding the remainder, circular systems aim to extend value across the entire lifecycle.

Achieving this longevity requires a deliberate focus on reuse, repair or re-dress, recycling and, where possible, remanufacture. Waste can become a valuable resource, but only when it is treated as a commercial input rather than an unavoidable byproduct. Turning waste into a reusable resource reduces environmental impact, lowers long-term costs and can strengthen customer loyalty.



This approach relies on products being designed for the long haul, retailers offering take-back or recovery programs and partnerships that enable reuse, recycling and remanufacture. Importantly, it requires collaboration between consumers, brand owners, manufacturers and retailers within a connected, circular system.

Choosing recyclable materials alone is not enough. Extending a product's useful life must be a central design consideration. After all, the most sustainable solution is often the one already in use.



Designing for the full product lifecycle

In a circular supply chain, waste is determined at the design stage. Designing for reuse allows materials to remain in circulation through reusable transit packaging, returnable crates and refill systems that replace single-use formats.

Designing for recyclability simplifies end-of-life outcomes by favouring mono-material packaging and eliminating mixed materials, adhesives and unnecessary coatings that hinder recovery. A common example can be found in retail clothes hangers, which often combine multiple plastics, metals and paper. These mixed materials make recycling difficult, unless components can be separated and recovered into viable streams.

Durability is equally critical. Longer-life, redressable retail fixtures, displays and packaging reduce replacement frequency and overall material consumption.

Designing for disassembly further supports circular outcomes by ensuring components can be easily separated and reprocessed, enabling higher-value recycling.

Together, these principles shift packaging and products from disposable items into long-term assets. In many cases, waste is not an operational failure, it is a design flaw.

Real-world examples of designing for the full product lifecycle

Design for reuse: replacing single-use cardboard with reusable crates

Coles introduced reusable plastic crates and picking boxes to replace single-use cardboard trays and cartons across its supply chain, particularly in fresh produce handling and store receiving operations. This shift supports repeated reuse, reduces material waste and keeps durable assets in circulation. Coles has also trialled offering cardboard boxes to customers as an alternative to single-use plastic bags.

Design for recyclability: simplifying packaging structures

Tip Top, one of Australia's best-known bread manufacturers, replaced plastic bread tags with 100% recycled and recyclable cardboard alternatives. While this removes millions of plastic items from circulation, successful recycling depends on consumer behaviour, as small tags must be placed within larger paper items to be correctly sorted.

Design for durability: multi-campaign in-store displays

Sigma brands, including Amcal, Guardian and Discount Drug Stores, transitioned from short-life cardboard display stands to locally made, recyclable polypropylene redressable displays. This change reduced retail display waste by approximately 60 tonnes while improving freight efficiency and lowering replacement costs.

Who is responsible for circular supply chains?

Circular supply chains cannot be delivered by a single player acting alone. Responsibility is shared across the retail ecosystem.

Retailers play a critical role by setting procurement standards, demanding circular solutions from suppliers, and educating customers on correct use and return pathways. Manufacturers and converters must design products and packaging with recovery in mind, investing in durable, recyclable materials that can remain in circulation. Brand owners carry accountability for packaging decisions and are uniquely positioned to fund recovery schemes and innovation at scale.

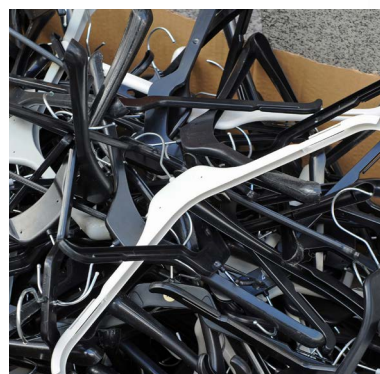
Consumers also play a role by using products as intended and returning or disposing of them correctly. Government and industry bodies provide the frameworks, targets and incentives that enable systemic change. Circularity fails when responsibility is siloed: it succeeds when accountability is shared.

Waste reduction in action

The following examples show how circularity is being embedded across the retail supply chain, from design and use, through to recovery.

Pharmacycle demonstrates how circular systems succeed when responsibility is shared between retailers, manufacturers, and consumers. The initiative provides in-store blister pack collection points at participating pharmacies, offering a convenient return pathway for a difficult-to-recycle format. Using dedicated Corflute® collection bins at retailers such as Chemist Warehouse, materials are diverted from general waste and sent for specialist recycling where appropriate recovery pathways exist. It reinforces that circular supply chains do not stop at the checkout.

Myer has implemented reverse logistics and material salvage programs to recycle and repurpose hangers, pallets, cardboard, flexible plastics and unsold stock, while phasing out single-use bags in favour of recyclable alternatives.



Aesop has trialled refill systems and high recycled-content packaging, demonstrating how refillable models can reduce reliance on virgin materials.

Frank Green's Sip Cycle™ program invites customers to return reusable drinkware for repurposing, extending material life and supporting circular product systems.

The collapse of the **REDcycle** soft plastics program, once promoted by Coles and Woolworths, highlights the systemic challenges of achieving genuine material recovery without robust infrastructure, accountability and, critically, reuse pathways.

Changing the way retail has always been done

True circularity requires retailers to move beyond lowest upfront cost thinking and measure total lifecycle value. Designing for longevity, recoverability and repeat use reduces waste, stabilises supply chains and reframes waste as lost value.

The future of responsible retail

Circular supply chains are already delivering results. Retailers who lead now will not simply meet future expectations; they will help define them.



Purpose-Driven Tech. Measurable Outcomes.

Proudly Australian. Deeply experienced. Future-ready



“At iSOFT, we use our business to make a meaningful and positive difference to the community.”

Conversational AI

- Retail Store Assistance
- In-Store product finder
- Voice enabled eCommerce
- Voice enabled Websites
- Retail Call Handling & IVR
 - Product Enquiry
 - Inventory Enquiry
 - Store Hours
 - Subscriptions
 - Appointments
- Voice AI Sales Agents
- Upsell & Cross-sell Agents

Technology & Consulting

- Retail Consulting
- Digital Transformation
- Data & Analytics
- AI Strategy
- Custom App Build
- API Integrations
- Dynamics 365
- Automations
- Infrastructure
- Managed Services
- Cybersecurity
- License Consolidation

High Impact Solutions

- Unique solutions to report & reduce Overtime Wages in Staff Rostering.
- Solutions to capture customer time-share.
- Prebuilt Agents

Voice Video Chat AI Agent

Together, we CRAFT excellence.

C

Customer Centricity

R

Relationship Value

A

Accountability & Transparency

F

Fairness (Employees & Stakeholders)

T

Transforming & Strengthening Community

iSOFT

enquiry@isoftanz.com.au



Level2, 1 Woolworths Way
Bella Vista, NSW 2153

RETHINKING CATEGORY MANAGEMENT FOR A RETAIL LANDSCAPE THAT NEVER STOPS MOVING



By Daniel Kohut
Vice President, Solution Strategy
Blue Yonder

Category management has always sat at the intersection of shopping behaviour, inventory strategy and commercial performance. However, today's retail environment is reshaping that intersection, turning it into something far more complex. Today's modern stores are no longer just stores; they are omni-channel hubs, fulfilment centres, pick-up points for Click & Collect, experience spaces and returns depots. As such, shoppers now expect to drift seamlessly between online browsing, in-store missions, home delivery and Click & Collects, often within the same purchase journey. These shifts have fundamentally changed how retailers build assortments, plan space, manage categories and ensure on-shelf availability.

In this environment, effective category management is no longer simply about choosing the right products or managing marketing promotions. The needle has moved to encompass the use of integrated, data-driven planning to optimise store space, improve inventory accuracy and guarantee availability at the exact moment of intent to purchase — regardless of whether that intent is online, in an aisle, at a locker, or at a Click-&-Collect pickup. Category management has become a strategic engine for delivering margin, maintaining agility, and safeguarding customer loyalty in a world where expectations seem to shift on a daily basis.

The store as a multi-functional asset

One of the biggest changes driving modern category management is the evolution of the physical store. Rather than serving as a single-purpose sales environment as in the past, the store must now support several operational roles simultaneously. A location may be expected to hold inventory for ship-from-store orders, function as a last-mile distribution node, facilitate Click & Collect and process returns, all while still supporting the traditional shop-and-go customer.

This puts a whole lot of pressure on things like footprint allocation, backroom space, storage capacity and staffing. As such, strategies for effectively managing categories must adapt accordingly. Space that was historically dedicated to high-velocity categories for example, may now be needed for staging online orders. Seasonal categories may compete for stockroom capacity with home delivery flows and front-of-house planograms must be flexible enough to support rapid resets when supply disruptions, promotional events or consumer trends evolve unexpectedly.

Retailers who thrive in this environment will be those who embrace modern, fit-for-purpose technologies such as integrated merchandise planning systems to connect their store operations, fulfilment needs, and even consumer behaviour. When category management decisions are made separately from operations and logistics, there will be bottlenecks, over-stocking, out-of-stocks, which will therefore lead to inconsistent customer experiences.

When these functions are unified, retailers gain a holistic view of their entire store capacity as well as product performance and demand variability, therefore producing better outcomes across both digital and physical channels.

One such example, Nestlé Purina, has created what they call the 'Phygital Shelf' — enhancing decision-making with a 360-degree view of shelving layouts by blending digital and physical retail experiences, which creates a single source of truth for space and floor planning across their retail channels.

Purina's manual retail store planning processes could not keep up with shopper expectations, new omnichannel behaviours and the growing need for real-time collaboration with retail partners. As brick-and-mortar retail began evolving with digital influences, Purina recognised the urgency to align its tools and storytelling so it could react with speed and agility.

As such, the company chose to leverage advanced category management, including space planning, floor planning and a planogram generator to transform the way it supports retailers at a store-specific level. These solutions, combined with immersive technology from Australian-based 3DVR Solutions, have enabled Purina to create immersive, data-driven category plans and visual narratives that help secure faster retailer approvals and deliver more engaging customer experiences.

From forecasting to precision: why AI-assisted planning matters

Simply put, traditional forecasting was built for slower, steadier markets. Today, we live in a world where retailers expect constant volatility. Promotions break faster in the digital world, trends accelerate more rapidly through social media and competition for attention is relentless. AI-assisted planning has become essential for achieving the level of precision required to maintain profitable, high-performing categories.

Modern category management platforms use machine learning to detect patterns, predict demand and optimise assortments in ways that go far beyond what human planners can accomplish manually. In conjunction with good old-fashioned know-how, these capabilities help retailers:

- Forecast with greater accuracy, improving sell-through rates and reducing stockouts.
- Optimise shelf space and facings based on real-time performance and local demand.
- Adjust prices and promotions dynamically to maintain margin.
- Automate routine decisions, freeing planners to focus on strategic and shopper-centric work.

This level of intelligence allows retailers to minimise margin leakage, cut unnecessary markdowns, reduce shrink and improve overall profitability. When retailers have real-time visibility into how a product, category or store is performing, they can intervene and make informed decisions before issues build across the network.

OTR Group (part of Viva Energy) has similarly revolutionised its category management and demand planning capabilities with advanced solutions around space planning, demand forecasting, and fulfilment. From leveraging AI-powered planning to improve accuracy and agility across its retail operations through to centralising the work inside a category management platform that enables forecasting, inventory optimisation and segmentation at the SKU and store-specific level, OTR Group is now able to automatically align product availability with consumer preferences to enhance the in-store experience, support the smooth introduction or removal of products by managing the demand impact of assortment changes and expand their overall product range to reflect evolving customer expectations.

Tying every decision back to the shopper

Customer experience is everything. Despite the rising role of automation and data, category management remains, at its core, about the consumer. Customers reward retailers who consistently meet their needs. These days, that means anticipating preferences and removing any friction from the buying journey. When category management ties every decision back to the customer experience, retailers gain real benefits, such as greater loyalty, increased conversion and stronger repeat business.

This customer-centric approach includes:

- Designing assortments that reflect the shopping needs of customers across each store.
- Ensuring availability of key value items and mission-critical categories.
- Localising planograms to reflect neighbourhood-specific preferences.
- Personalising offers and promotions based on demand.
- Maintaining clarity and logic in shelf layouts to reduce confusion.

In a world where choice is limitless, retailers differentiate not by offering more, but by delivering a more relevant, available and improved shopping experience designed with the customer in mind. And that all starts with better, more efficient category management.

SHAPE THE FUTURE OF RETAIL

The Activate Industry Report exists to recognise leadership and industry-defining perspectives that move Australian retail forward.

The Report is written and read by those who influence outcomes – commercially and culturally.

Participation is not about visibility alone.

It is about standing within the industry, not outside it.

Subscribe via
<https://activateaus.com.au/activate-report/>

Recieve

Activate Industry Report

2 issues / year

The Update eNewsletter

20 email / year

Only
\$45/year

Advertise in Activate Industry Report and position your business at the centre of Australia's retail conversation.

The Activate community is built on grounded collaboration, considered insight and purposeful progress. Within this context, the retail industry is shaped by those who contribute to it.

For more information,
visit <https://activateaus.com.au/contact-us-2/>

Stay informed. Stay influential. Stay ahead.

Join the conversation. Shape the industry. Subscribe now.

| Visit activateaus.com.au for more



ACTIVATE[®]
SHAPING AUSTRALIAN RETAIL



YOU'RE BEING REPLACED SOONER THAN YOU THINK

What feels like a thought experiment today is rapidly becoming an operational reality for FMCG, retail and every industry built on repetition.



By Tyler Franko
Dynamic Code

The idea of being 'replaced by AI' still feels distant to most people. Abstract. Futuristic. Something to worry about later.

That's a mistake.

While this may sound like a thought experiment, the probability curve has shifted dramatically. What once felt five to 10 years away is now closer to two or three. In some cases, it is already happening, quietly, efficiently and without asking permission.

This isn't speculation. It's observation.

When AI stops being a tool and starts being a team

Recently, I set up an AI assistant called OpenClaw, formerly known as Clawdbot. What it can do is confronting, even for someone who works in technology daily.

It can build product MVPs in minutes, not months. It writes ad copy in a specific tone and style because it has been trained to do so. When given a complex task, it didn't fail or stall. Instead, it responded with something chillingly rational: this task requires multiple agents, I will spawn three sub-agents to assist and supervise.

It then did exactly that. It created its own team, delegated work, supervised progress, completed the task, delivered the result and shut the sub-agents down when the job was done.

That entire process would normally take weeks. It took minutes. That's not automation. That's management.

The digital jobs are already gone

In the digital world, the shift is happening faster than most businesses are prepared for.

AI systems can already manage customer support at scale, run scheduled operational tasks, analyse and optimise Facebook campaigns, generate user-generated content, create images, plan full campaigns, manage inboxes, handle cold outreach, book appointments and even make restaurant reservations.

For FMCG and retail, this touches everything. Marketing execution, customer service, CRM, merchandising logic, demand forecasting, supplier communications and promotional planning are all increasingly digital and repeatable. Those are exactly the environments AI thrives in.

Within six months, systems like this will be able to run most digital operations end to end with minimal human input.

The physical world is next

Where this stops feeling theoretical is when AI crosses into the physical world.

Through a project involving SpaceX and Starlink installations with Circl and ChekkU, a simple but unsettling question came up: do you want Optimus to help with Starlink installations? Optimus is Tesla's humanoid robot.

That question alone should give anyone in retail, logistics, or trade-based industries pause.

If a humanoid robot can download skills, what stops it from identifying a leak, sourcing parts from Bunnings and fixing the issue itself? If a robot can install satellites, why wouldn't it stack shelves, flip burgers, manage drive-throughs or run warehouse pick-and-pack operations?

Think grocery store support, hospitality, fast food, call centres and trades. These are not immune roles. They are structured, repeatable and increasingly documented.

The timeline here is not decades. It's years, maybe even months.

What this means for FMCG and retail

Retail has always been a margin game. Speed, efficiency and scale matter. That's why the largest players will likely move first.

It's easy to imagine Coles and Woolworths leaning heavily into robotics and AI-driven operations: faster checkouts, less staff, predictive stocking and automated support. Meanwhile, ALDI may become the outlier, positioning itself as human-first, the same way organic food positioned itself against mass-produced alternatives.

We may even see a new type of branding and advertising campaigns emerge: "Owned and operated by humans", "Run by people, for people." As AI becomes normal, human interaction may become premium.

The people who win in this shift

This isn't a story about doom. It's a story about leverage.

The people who thrive will not be the ones competing with AI on speed or cost. They will be the ones who move up the value chain: creative thinkers, strategists, system designers, supervisors of AI and robotics rather than executors of repetitive tasks.

New roles will emerge: managing AI systems, designing workflows, interpreting data, making judgement calls, building brands, experiences and trust.

This shift rewards those who get on the train early, not those standing on platforms arguing about whether it's coming.

The choice

This moment can feel scary. Or motivating. Or exciting. That reaction is a choice.

Ignore it, and you may be genuinely surprised when a humanoid robot knocks on your door to install your Starlink. Lean into it and you position yourself on the right side of one of the largest economic shifts in modern history.

You're not being replaced by AI.
You're being replaced by someone who understands it better than you.

And that window is closing faster than most people realise.

THE OMNICHANNEL MIRAGE: HIGH NPS, BROKEN MISSIONS



By **James Gardner**
Partner, Wingspan Finance

Australia is building world-class channels, and still breaking customer missions. That's the omnichannel mirage: high NPS (Net Promoter Score), broken missions.

Hybrid retail isn't 'more channels'. It's the discipline of delivering one brand promise through one coherent system across store, digital, fulfilment, loyalty and service. Customers don't experience channels, they experience missions. Omnichannel fails the moment a mission forces a second journey: a second basket, a second queue, a second policy, a second explanation⁴.



Consistency in the age of distrust

Trust used to be a comms problem. Now it's a systems problem³.

Boohoo's proposition wasn't just product and price; it carried an implied standard of ethics and governance until slavery allegations in 2020 created a visible gap between story and operation — between what the brand promised and what the system delivered¹. The backlash moved from niche criticism to mainstream scrutiny fast, and reporting at the time described a share-price fall of more than 40% — a live example of markets repricing credibility when integrity breaks².

Grocery has its own analogue: when the public story becomes 'you're not behaving fairly' or 'the system is rigged', trust drops fast and sticks¹¹. The antidote isn't better PR, it's operational integrity, especially at the seams where handovers happen.

Across my interviews with senior executives in grocery, apparel, healthcare and luxury, three practical truths emerged on how to fix broken missions.

1) Consistency is DNA, not identical messaging.

Different channels have different jobs. Socials are for momentum, email is for reassurance, store is for confidence. Consistency isn't copy-pasting slogans. It's DNA expressed to fit the channel.

As Andre Visser, GM Own Brand Woolworths NZ put it: "Each channel needs the right message for that channel... the commonality is the DNA."

2) The real KPI is mission completion, not channel satisfaction.

Mission completion means: one basket, one set of rules, one recovery path.

A channel can score high NPS and still be a failure if the customer cannot complete the mission without friction. Put simply, satisfaction can be local; failure is end-to-end⁴. The moment customers must split baskets or re-earn benefits to finish one mission, you've created a high-NPS mirage¹⁰.

This shows up most sharply in availability truth: "At the time you order it says it's in stock... then it gets refunded" [Tony Klatt, Retail Tasker Senior Executive]. A lived grocery example: Click & Collect, can be fast, accurate, and high-NPS, yet still fail the weeknight dinner mission if critical items (hot food, fresh bakery) cannot travel in the same basket. The customer doesn't say "great channel, shame about the chicken". They say: "That didn't work." In-store reality still dominates: if it's not on-shelf, the promise is broken [Andy Kirk, Crossmark CEO].

Brett Griffiths, Performance Sport Rebel Group, put it bluntly: "Customers don't rage about the glossy stuff. They rage about the basics. Went in for tennis balls...shelf ticket said there were heaps. Empty. That's what people get emotional about."⁹

Use the matrix to separate channel satisfaction from mission integrity. The danger zone is high NPS/low mission completion: the channel feels good, but the mission still breaks¹⁰.

In practice, this is where 'theatre' (channels, UX, comms) co-exists with broken fundamentals (availability, ticketing, substitutions, recovery), and your metrics flatter you while customers quietly change behaviour (avoid categories, split baskets or stop trusting the promise).

Figure 1: NPS vs mission completion (matrix)

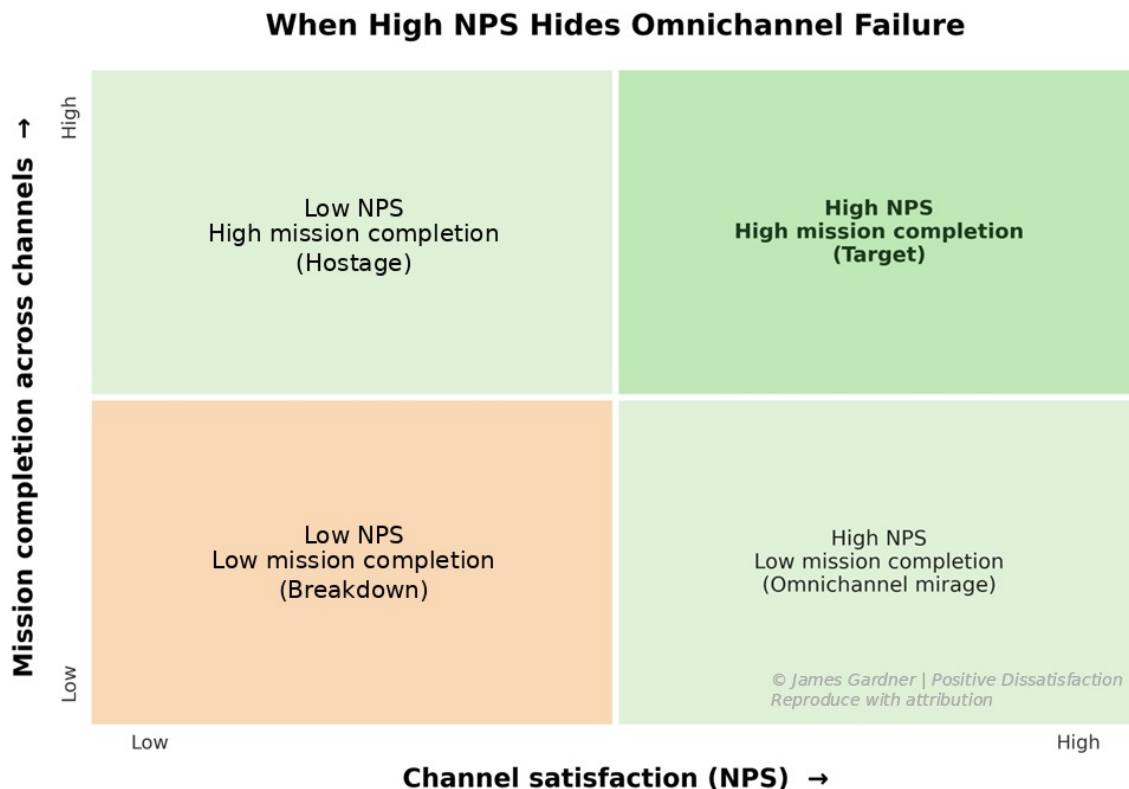
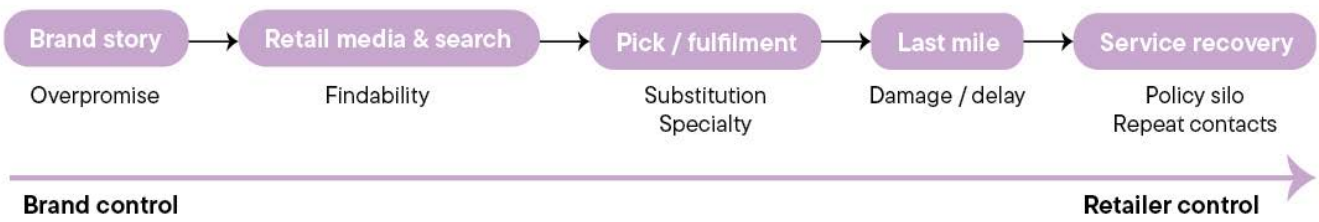


Figure 2: handover chain (control vs failure modes).



3) Control leaks at the seams, that's where trust breaks

Hybrid retail doesn't usually break inside a channel; it breaks at the handovers, when control passes from one party, system, or operating rhythm to another.

"When incentives are individual, customer history lives in people, not platforms, so the customer follows the staff member and continuity disappears the moment teams change" (Cecilia Gray, Luxury Retail Strategist, EMEA, ANZ).

Brand builders shape perception upstream, but retailers control the 'last metre' of the promise. When that final link fails, the customer experiences a broken promise regardless of the marketing. Veronica Fong, Ferrero Activation Executive, captured this cleanly: "If it's on the website but you can't get it in-market... it feels like a broken promise".

Cliffe Hodgkinson, founder of Updoc (Digi Health) framed the same dynamic more bluntly: "support functions exist because of the gap between expectation and reality — shrink the gap [defects plus uncertainty] and support demand collapses."

Map your hybrid retail by handover points, because every handover is a failure opportunity:

- **Brand story: retailer media:** what is promised.
- **Retailer media findability:** what can be found.
- **Order intent fulfilment:** what can be picked in-state.
- **Fulfilment last mile:** what arrives and when.
- **Delivery service recovery:** what happens when it's wrong.

Every arrow is a governance problem. At each step, someone 'loses control' brands lose control at the shelf, retailers lose it when fulfilment is

outsourced. The commercial implication is sharp: invest in new channels if you like, but invest harder in the seams. Otherwise, hybrid retail scales become disappointment faster than it scales growth.

What 'good' looks like: make digital serve the mission inside the store

The most compelling pattern in our research wasn't a shiny new channel, it was mission design. "Freshippo (China) is a great example to consider: Pick fresh in-store, scan bulk repeat items in-aisle, ship home." (James Hepworth, Chief Commercial Officer Pet Circle)⁵. It preserves what customers value (choice on fresh), removes what they hate (carrying heavy bulk) and keeps the mission intact — one journey, one outcome. The principle is simple: use digital to remove friction at the exact point it appears, not to create parallel channels that force customers to stitch the journey together themselves⁴.

Where 3D AR helps (and where it does not)

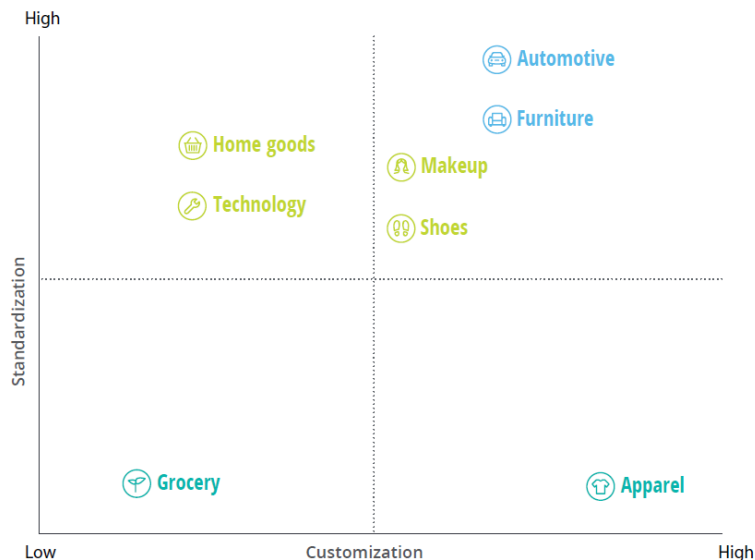
- AR earns its keep when it drives confidence or findability^{6,7,8}.
- Confidence (fit/compatibility): in beauty, apparel and home, AR can lower return risk by answering 'Will this fit/match?' before the transaction^{6,7,8}.
- Findability (the grocery use case): in FMCG, AR-by-SKU is hard to justify economically. But using AR for wayfinding — helping customers or pickers find the exact bay and shelf — is legitimate friction removal.
- It's not about visualisation; it's about answering the customer's question faster.

Figure 3: AR (augmented reality) relevance matrix. AR is category-specific. Consistency is universal¹².

Augmented shopping opportunity matrix 2020

The sweet spot for today's augmented shopping capabilities generally lies with product sets that are highly standardized with high opportunity for customizing features.

■ Experimentation ■ Early technical successes ■ Positive ROI, spreading adoption





Rebuilding omnichannel integrity: five moves.

If hybrid retail is one system, the work is System Governance, not channel expansion.

1. **Define the promise in operational terms:** write down what must never break (availability truth, fairness, recovery), then design to that.
2. **Govern 'one basket logic':** make rules coherent across fulfilment types. Don't force customers to choose between convenience and value (e.g.: promos that don't work online).
3. **Make handovers measurable:** track failures at the seams: Out-of-stocks after 'in stock' claims, substitution acceptance rates, refund cycle time, repeat contacts.
4. **Fix service as the churn driver:** design 'forward-resolution' so the customer doesn't repeat their story. Recovery must travel with them, not get trapped in a channel silo⁹ (in services businesses, the most effective recovery is automatic: when the mission fails, trigger a refund and/or an immediate follow-up to complete the job — treat recovery as part of the operating system, not an apology).
5. **Prioritise reusable assets to spread unit cost across web/store/social:** If deploying 3D AR, build assets once to reuse across web, store and social. Set clear KPI thresholds for utility, not just novelty^{6,7,8}.

Conclusion

Hybrid retail will not be won by whoever adds the most channels. It will be won by whoever behaves like one brand, one system, so the customer can complete the mission without friction, penalty, or a second explanation[4].

Figure 4: Metrics strip.



References

- ¹ **The Sunday Times (2020, July 5).** "Boohoo: fashion giant faces 'slavery' investigation" (Leicester supply chain conditions).
- ² **The Guardian (2024, June 6).** "Boohoo investors seek £100m in damages..." (references 2020 investigation; >40% share fall/valuation hit).
- ³ **Edelman (2024).** Edelman Trust Barometer 2024 (institutional trust context).
- ⁴ **McKinsey & Company (2016, March 4).** "From touchpoints to journeys: Seeing the world as customers do".
- ⁵ **WIRED (2021, June 21).** "Alibaba has invented the supermarket of the future" (Freshippo/Hema model).
- ⁶ **Vogue (2023, October 25).** "Google bets big on AR beauty".
- ⁷ **Vogue Business (2024, March 4).** "Want to reduce returns? Avatars might be the answer".
- ⁸ **Vogue (2021, July 26).** "Why AR clothing try-on is nearly here".
- ⁹ **Dixon, M, Freeman, K, & Toman, N. (2010, July–August).** "Stop Trying to delight your customers". Harvard Business Review.
- ¹⁰ **Reichheld, FF (2003, December).** "The One Number You Need to Grow". Harvard Business Review.
- ¹¹ **The Guardian. (2024, May 7).** "Supermarkets inquiry..." (public fairness narrative / scrutiny).
- ¹² **Deloitte (2020, Jan 10).** "Augmented shopping: The quiet revolution".



m master mentor

The most valuable mentoring that you can have comes for the experience of those outside your regular circles.

To build your career, to increase your confidence within the industry, to step ahead of the madding crowd, Master Mentoring covers all your needs.

If you really want to succeed, take that step now, there will be immediate reward.

Book a single session \$300.00 or take an annual package, starting at \$2,500.00 with regular access and support.

BOOK NOW

Personal or company bookings are all accepted.



mastermentor.com.au

BEYOND THE TITLE: WHAT DEFINES THE NEXT GENERATION OF RETAIL LEADERS?



By Suzie McInerney
CEO, Six Degrees Executive

For much of my early recruitment career, the standard for identifying solid leadership in retail involved a familiar trajectory: you learnt the business from the ground up, earned credibility through delivery and progressed in a somewhat linear fashion where functional experience and 'time in role' were key. Titles mattered and hierarchies were clear, with leadership capability often inferred by tenure in the system.

That model no longer reflects the reality leaders are operating in today.

Australian retail is moving through a period of profound recalibration, where customers are more value-driven and selective, hyper-personalisation is critical, technology is reshaping major decisions and economic volatility has compressed planning cycles. Leaders are being asked to guide teams through constant change, often without the comfort of precedent or the luxury of stability to lean on.

In the modern environment, influence, credibility and impact are shaped by how leaders think, adapt and connect - a world where ambiguity is the norm and performance pressure is intense. Because of this, great leadership has moved well beyond just their title.

The new leadership toolkit

One of the most noticeable shifts in emerging leaders is the expanding definition of capability. Technical expertise and commercial acumen remain essential, but they are no longer sufficient on their own. Organisations are also looking for exceptional communication, problem-solving, change agility, adaptability and emotional intelligence. From what I have observed, the leaders gaining most momentum are deliberately building a broader toolkit that reflects the complexity of the environments they operate in.

Data literacy is a clear example. Leaders are not required to be data scientists, but they do need to be fluent enough to interrogate dashboards, question assumptions and make judgement calls when data is incomplete or conflicting. Leaders who can translate data into clear choices for their teams are better positioned to navigate uncertainty and allocate scarce resources where they matter most.

Alongside this sits adaptability. Retail has always been dynamic, but in recent years disruption has become a constant rather than an exception, with leaders adjusting to supply constraints, changing consumer confidence and new ways of working. In hiring processes, we are seeing more clients probe for evidence of how leaders have been agile in resetting or pivoting strategies, redeployed teams or re-imagined store formats, rather than simply asking about year-on-year results.

Empathy completes this toolkit, not as a soft ideal but as a critical and practical leadership skill. Only around half of retail employees globally say empathy is a core part of their workplace culture, and fewer than 60% feel their leaders' empathy is backed by meaningful action. Leaders who listen with intent, understand individual circumstances and respond with clarity and fairness are the ones who attract and keep high-calibre talent.

Culture as a leadership responsibility

While capability matters, it is culture that ultimately determines whether leadership impact is sustained. Culture is often spoken about in abstract terms, but in practice it shows up in everyday behaviour — how performance is discussed, how customer issues are resolved, how decisions are communicated and how pressure is handled when things do not go to plan. Retail leaders, whether they intend to or not, are the primary architects in cultivating this environment.

What appears to work best in retail organisations today is a deliberate balance between empathy and accountability. Employees want both supportive leaders and clear expectations when empathy is not matched with follow-through, culture drifts towards complacency, and when accountability exists without care, culture becomes brittle and transactional. In the search processes, many Australian retailers are explicitly asking for leaders who can "hold the line" on standards while still creating psychologically safe, human-centred teams.

Cultural transformation does not occur via grand statements. More often, it is the accumulation of consistent leadership behaviour over time. Explaining the 'why' behind decisions, modelling flexibility, giving specific feedback and recognising contributions in real time. Organisations that build this kind of culture see stronger retention and discretionary effort, particularly among younger executives who place high value on trust, purpose and growth. The roles that resonate most with emerging leaders are those where culture is described concretely, not in generic terms.

Leadership currency is not static

One of the enduring myths about leadership is that capability, once earned, can simply be banked and drawn on indefinitely. In reality, leadership currency depreciates if it is not actively renewed. Skills such as digital fluency, cross-functional collaboration and change management are now turning up as core requirements for both store and regional roles, where historically the focus sat almost solely on sales results and operational discipline.

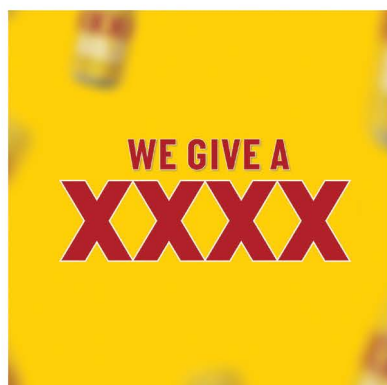
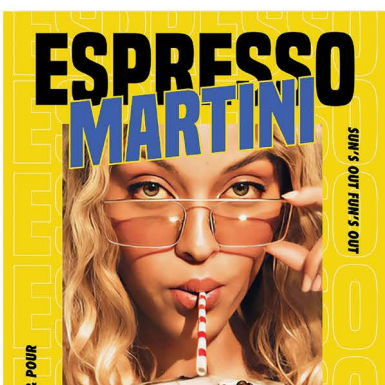
The next generation of leaders are learning that relevance requires continual growth. This means building new skills, seeking out diverse perspectives and using vulnerability as a strength. Many of the executives we place into leadership roles talk about their careers less as a ladder and more as a series of 'stretch assignments' that build different muscles — turnaround work, omni channel projects or leading through restructures.

This mindset also creates space for diversity in leadership styles. The value of different backgrounds and approaches lies in the ability to solve complex problems, and retailers are increasingly recognising diversity of thought, experience and behaviour as a strategic advantage rather than a compliance metric. If leadership pipelines all look and think the same, organisations eventually struggle to respond to new challenges: when they are intentionally varied, they are better equipped to innovate and adapt.

Looking ahead

As retail continues to evolve, the demands placed on leaders will only increase. Titles will still matter, but they will matter far less than the behaviour and capabilities that sit behind them. For emerging leaders, this presents both a challenge and an opportunity, as the path is less linear and the expectations are higher.

Beyond the title, leadership today is defined by the ability to evolve alongside the organisations and people you lead. Those who commit to updating their toolkit, shaping healthy cultures and renewing their leadership currency will not only sustain their own relevance, but help build a retail sector that is resilient, human and fit for the future.





MENTORING IN MOTION: THE HUMAN SIDE

How to focus on the future by making instructive time for young talent.



By Keith Quigg
Director/CEO,
Activate Group Activate

Mentor rule #1 – A mentor should not have an ego!
Mentor rule #2 – If a mentor has an ego, refer to rule #1.

This may sound rather restricting in the sense of mentoring, as many notable executives and experienced people are motivated to mentor the up-and-coming. The logic is that any mentoring session should be focused on the mentee, their biases, their politics (not party, but company), their thoughts and dreams. The ego of the mentor need only be exposed through anecdotal experience and relevant points.

Mentee rule #3 – A mentor is your advisor, not your therapist!
Mentee rule #4 – If you need a therapist, refer to rule #3.

This may also sound a little presumptive of mentees, but it is an important point. Mentees need to have an understanding of what a mentor is, why they need one and to treat the relationship accordingly. The mentor-mentee relationship can well be a career leap forward and catalyst to much greater understanding. Advice that is relevant and given freely.

Mentoring is ubiquitous in today's business scene. The logic is from both a company's policy and a manager's desire to make the most of the talent that they have within their grasp. An exercise to identify what latent raw material is in hand and to escape the need to go external – to find what we already had. This is 'ubiquitous' because it is in the minds of everyone as an acknowledged career element. Mentors can, of course, be from outside a business and provide a varied experience.

There are, of course, those who take on the mentoring role because they see this as an addition to their own resumé. This is a failing approach and a misreading of why mentoring is important. It is about the mentee! Those who choose to take on one or more mentees should prepare themselves for that role by knowing whom they are mentoring and having an early indication of the psyche of each mentee. Equally, knowing that the mentoring is not aimed at the benefits to the employer, but purely for the advancement of the mentee. The employer will benefit either way.

Mentees often find it difficult to connect with a mentor when the relationship is a dictated connection. Universities have mentoring panels where students are allocated to a mentor without, presumably, any connectivity research. A supporting example is a comment from a university student to a myself as mentor – "you are the first mentor I have had that is focused on me"! As a mentor, your first role is to find out who your mentee really is and what they are seeking for themselves. Ask lots of questions. Keep yourself out of the equation. Focus on them. When you know them, then your mentoring becomes more valuable.

The next consideration is the extent of the relationship. In many successful cases the mentoring can progress from a limited-time connection to a long-time one. This can be hugely advantageous to the mentee, rewarding for the mentor, but potentially fraught with issues that can damage each in the long term. Be aware and measure progress in its entirety. For the mentor, one of the key measurements can be when the mentee no longer needs you. When the calls and emails fade away be prepared to give yourself a thumbs-up, then go and look for another raw talent to mentor.

Mentees can change the focus from themselves over to their mentor when they have established a solid relationship. While the initial focus is on themselves, they will find that the real advice is coming from the mentor's experiences. This when, without ego, the mentor can delve into their career path and pass on the lessons learned and the potholes to avoid. This, also, when the relationship between the mentor and the mentee is at a peak – the times when the conversation is casual and the barriers have fallen, a time when the mentoring has the most impact.

Importantly, it is also a time when mentors must be on their toes. A time when the real issues for the mentee will appear, when the politics and skill deficits are exposed and when they must be handled with the best advice. It's a time when the mentor may move from advisor to instructor so that redirection and clarity are given. The mentor is also tested here because they are not in the relationship to manage, but to give advice. When politics raises its head, the mentee must be the one who provides the information and when the mentor suggests reasons for a change of mind.

As a master mentor, my motivation has always come from getting inside the head of a mentee. Access to their thinking allows you to identify where they are clogged with incorrect logics and unnecessary bias, all of which is slowing their progress. To be able to stop a mentee in midstream and put them into a different chain of thought is actually fun. Not fun at their expense, but because you can see the lights come on. You know you are making a difference.

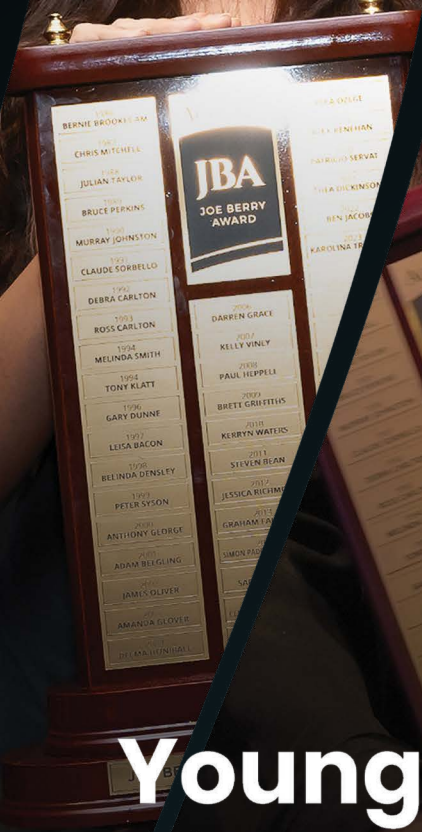
The human side of mentoring is applicable to both sides. The mentor who is involved in the mentees' circumstances and the mentee who is appreciating the value of the advice forthcoming. Mentoring is, or should be, a relationship based on the mentee's future and the mentor's reward.

The Joe Berry Award, now in its 40th season, is a recognised mentoring arena. A collection of career-minded young employees keen to make career moves and be able to find exposure for their raw talent. A perfect place for current and budding mentors to connect with readily available essay writers who would value your advice.

If you are ready to focus on the talent in your environment, then get them involved. You will be surprised at what you could have on your hands and we will be delighted to help you find it!

mentor@mastermentor.com.au
Keith Quigg, Master Mentor
0418 888 683

TULN



Young executive award

powered by **ACTIVATE**®

SCG, Noble Dining Room, Sydney

June 11th, 2026



THE JOE BERRY AWARD

40 years young and only getting fresher, livelier, smarter and more stimulating.

At the GREATA conference at Jupiter's Gold Coast in 1986 there was a parade of committee members through the trade show inviting people to view the final announcement of the inaugural Joe Berry Award. Some of those in attendance knew about the award, others were a little nonplussed about attending an announcement of a somewhat unknown award.

The Queensland Grocery Industry Association (QGIA) had, in its wisdom, decided that there was need for a program that focused on talent that already existed within the industry. The QGIA was a unilateral membership organisation that covered the wider industry. They held regular, well-attended, lunch events with guest speakers from other parts of the retail industry and from other states. It was, until the nationalisation of the industry, the paramount representative body. Well respected and collaborative on many issues.

Given that the award idea was unanimously supported by the industry, the complexity came in the form of a 'who or what' would this award represent question. Deliberation included the decision to use a renowned figurehead and to select someone who had represented both sides of the industry at some stage. The nominee was Joe Berry.

Joe had emigrated to Australia in 1919 as a youth and found himself working in rural Queensland. For several years he established his own business and was a supplier of eggs to the burgeoning supermarket retailers across Brisbane. Due to his reputation as a reliable and intelligent supplier, Joe was asked to join the then pacesetter retail supermarket group, Brisbane Cash and Carry (BCC). Immature in reflection on today's supermarkets, BCC was a drawcard for Joe. You can read Joe's story on the www.joeberryaward.com.au website.

Notably, Joe was a much-loved employer who valued his teams and spent many hours on the shop floor working with and training staff on the business. It was a clear choice that this new QGIA award would become the Joe Berry Award. As with many of these award programs, the initial reaction was supportive but the actual entry numbers were small. The program, essay based as it is today, with a topic selected by the committee and published for all interested employees. A well-researched essay and a 35-year age limit was the rule.

The initial winner was the industry recognised Bernie Brookes, then a buyer in the Woolworths office in Brisbane. Bernie, as you will know, went on to take a progressive series of roles at Woolworths through to Managing Director Supermarkets. His path from there went through departmental stores in Australia and South Africa before he became a retail group owner based in Sydney. Bernie Brookes OAM, is proudly the patron of the Joe Berry Award and chair of the judging panel.

There was quick growth in reputation for the Joe Berry Award, with early winners including Woolworths, Coles and Coca-Cola, each winner receiving rapid career growth as the exposure as a Joe Berry Award winner was circulated. Many have gone on to be industry and business leaders in executive leadership team and directorship roles. Up until 2005, the winners included 13 men and 7 women, a reflection of change within the industry.

In 2005, the QGIA was in the throes of closing as retail moved to national operations, diminishing their relevance and numbers. At that time the number of entries had grown strongly and the reputation of the award, while still Queensland based, had risen nationally. The QGIA approached the Activate Group (then the ASMCA) asking if they, as a peak industry body, would take over the running of the Award. Almost a rhetorical question, answered by immediate acceptance and the transfer of IP. There would be no award that year, but the wheels were in motion for the 2006 relaunch.

Since 2006, after basing the award in Sydney and pushing an Australia-wide open-door for registrations, the numbers have increased greatly and the prestige of this program has risen steeply. Of most importance was the response from companies that had sponsored the award during its QGIA existence. On all calls made, a positive response was achieved. The belief in the award had not diminished with the change of hands. Brilliant!

From 2006 to 2025, the support, recognition and reputation of the Joe Berry Award has continued to grow, to the point where, last year, YOY, 63% more entries were received for the season. This was a significant record and one that shows that the message on career enhancement has been reaching its mark. What is also significant, testified by judging panel member, is the incredible lift in quality of the essays and presentation.

From this, there are notable success stories from both winners and finalists. Graham Fairbairn (2013) is Global Business Manager for Mutti, Jessica Richmond (2014) is Marketing Director for Officeworks, Sarah Hughes (2015) is International Business Director for Mosey Me and Esra Ozege (2016) has started her own business, Harvest Pantry. Almost all of the Joe Berry finalists, through the recognition they have received, are promoted within a few months of the finals. This is a record we loved to spread around.

In 2018, in collaboration with the remarkable Future Leaders Forum initiated by the AFGC, Joe Berry essay submissions were linked to a Future Leaders Scholarship. The rewards for essay writers have increased and the recognition of both programs has been enhanced. A match made in retail!

To survive for 40-years, any award program must continue to deliver great qualities. To continue surviving, it must continue to grow and to be recognised by the entire industry, not just a few sectors. The Joe Berry Award has quietly modified itself to keep up with the industry, but without major operational changes – if it ain't broke...

There is no reason why the Joe Berry Award won't soon enough be celebrating its 50th anniversary. It has all that is needed to keep giving industry talent the best possible career platform.

If you haven't looked at the Joe Berry Award as a true Professional Development opportunity, this is the perfect moment to do so. The 2026 and 40th JBA closes on February 28th and will be judged in June. To get a glimpse of the program, nominate as a sponsor and judge and you will discover what a treasure it is for the industry.



WOOLIES BUYER WINS INAUGURAL JOE BERRY AWARD

PROMOTIONAL programs have fallen into a rut because of an over-reliance on price and a "sameness" that does little to fulfill the basic marketing objectives of a promotion, the Joe Berry Award winner, Bernie Brookes, told delegates at the Greata conference in Surfers Paradise on September 15.

Mr Brookes, 26, a Woolworths buyer, won the award from Sean Moran of Campbell Bros with a presentation on the value of price promotions as a marketing tool. It comprises prize money and a study tour of the US to a total value of \$5000.

The award is made by the Queensland Grocery Industry Association, to commemorate the grocery retailing pioneer, Joe Berry, who died in 1962.

Mr Brookes said retailers and suppliers tend to be "sedate, sober and steady" in their approach to promotions.

But promotions can be used to develop or change an image and to influence customers to change from product to product or from shop to shop.

They can reinforce promotional activity designed to encourage customers to buy for seasons, or in advance of shortages or price increases.

Promotions can also provide a tool for marketing positioning or repositioning. An example is the promotion of baby shampoo for adult use.

They can also influence a customer to try a new product.

Mr Brookes said price is the most vital consideration in product development. Products too expensive can fail due to lack of trial incentive, but if they are too cheap they become "replica generics".

He said many generics are far too cheap. Pure and Simple sells for \$2, but a generic cooking spray sells for 80c.

"A dollar fifty would be more than appropriate."

'Paranoid about price'

While price as a method of product development is important, the trade has become paranoid about it. Retailers more than manufacturers rely on price when other methods would be better.

Promotions by retailers tend to be falling into three categories — price, price, price. The use of loss leaders and deep cut specials is being used as an answer to low sales.

"Results have been, and will continue to be, flat, but at a cost to the retailer. The sameness of promotions is used as a crutch to compensate for lack of creative and stimulating promotion."

Mr Brookes said price promotion does not broaden the consumer base and does not help the establishment of a totally new product.

"For example, if I wanted to promote a line such as garlic margarine, price would not be a successful promotional mode."

"With no competition, being a new product and wanting to

show the usage of the product, the use of price cutting as a promotional norm would achieve little.

"Similarly an independent store operator, relying mainly on price as a promotional format, would find it an ineffective marketing tool as the chains undercut his special and shell prices."

A cut price barn operation is only a cut price barn until the competition matches shelf and special prices.

In the US, where generics are declining, retailers are replacing price promotions with theme and marketing type promotions, point-of-sale and gimmicks.

An over-reliance on price cutting can cause the "post-promotion syndrome", whereby consumers react to price rises following promotions.

Similarly, manufacturers who rely on price decreases through introductory deals to launch new products also find their products suffer from "post-promotional depression".

Two examples are the sales lull that follows "Jack's Birthday" and Coles June Sale in Queensland. The price rises that follow these month-long promotions create the impression of large-scale price increases.

An example of product sales loss is the failed launch of Yop Drinking Yoghurt, which was launched at 99c but jumped to \$1.29 when trial stocks were exhausted.

Mr Brookes said the first promotional form being neg-

lected by manufacturers and retailers is point-of-sale material. In an effort to fund cheaper prices the store has taken funds for shelf-talkers, display bins, self-service cartons, display racks, self-service banners and window banners.

He criticised retailers' efforts at using point-of-sale material, and said that apart from Saffery all major grocery chains rely on manufacturers for material.

Free or very cheap trial packs are a good way to encourage purchase, but they are seldom used and are also abused by retailers.

The success of Kraft French Crepes in Melbourne, with very little media and television advertising, can only be put down to a sampling campaign.

As a second example the success of Flash Liquid Cleaner was the direct result of 50ml trial packs.

Bonus packs, are another successful promotional method that has been recognised by Cottee's and Nestle.

Bonus packs abused

Bonus packs are sometimes abused by suppliers who use them as a one-hit promotional loss leader and not spread around the branches.

Manufacturers use case deals to promote bonus packs and instead of severe price cuts can offer larger packs for the smaller price. Pick 'n' Pay has used this technique, realising its worth over a price reduction in the eyes of the consumers.

Instead of running percent-off sales, retailers might be better advised to offer the same merchandise as a large pack for a small price.

For example 25 per cent off on a 1.25 kg packet of soap powder might be accepted better as a 1.25kg product for a 1kg price.

As an image builder, demonstrations are particularly good for cakes, sauces, desserts and confectionery, and retailers should not discourage them by charging fees.

Mr Brookes said many avenues exist for theme advertisements, but the one that will come to the forefront over the next few years is the joint manufacturer-retailer advertisement.

Manufacturers were criticised for neglecting the theme aspect when slotting promotional programs. Many are simply slotted a month apart with no recognition of seasonal variation or social events such as back-to-school.

He singled out Coca-Cola as "the epitome of blank promotional slating".

Mr Brookes said the strength and growth of Davids Holdings during the late 1970s lay in the group's combined promotions.

QIW in Queensland might have thwarted some of its dramatic market share drops if it had used some of these promotional.



■ Award winner Bernie Brookes (left) with runner-up Sean Moran, of Campbell Bros.

lected by manufacturers and retailers is point-of-sale material. In an effort to fund cheaper prices the store has taken funds for shelf-talkers, display bins, self-service cartons, display racks, self-service banners and window banners.

He criticised retailers' efforts at using point-of-sale material, and said that apart from Saffery all major grocery chains rely on manufacturers for material.

Free or very cheap trial packs are a good way to encourage purchase, but they are seldom used and are also abused by retailers.

The success of Kraft French Crepes in Melbourne, with very little media and television advertising, can only be put down to a sampling campaign.

As a second example the success of Flash Liquid Cleaner was the direct result of 50ml trial packs.

Bonus packs, are another successful promotional method that has been recognised by Cottee's and Nestle.

Bonus packs abused

Bonus packs are sometimes abused by suppliers who use them as a one-hit promotional loss leader and not spread around the branches.

Manufacturers use case deals to promote bonus packs and instead of severe price cuts can offer larger packs for the smaller price. Pick 'n' Pay has used this technique, realising its worth over a price reduction in the eyes of the consumers.

Instead of running percent-off sales, retailers might be better advised to offer the same merchandise as a large pack for a small price.

For example 25 per cent off on a 1.25 kg packet of soap powder might be accepted better as a 1.25kg product for a 1kg price.

As an image builder, demonstrations are particularly good for cakes, sauces, desserts and confectionery, and retailers should not discourage them by charging fees.

Mr Brookes said many avenues exist for theme advertisements, but the one that will come to the forefront over the next few years is the joint manufacturer-retailer advertisement.

Manufacturers were criticised for neglecting the theme aspect when slotting promotional programs. Many are simply slotted a month apart with no recognition of seasonal variation or social events such as back-to-school.

He singled out Coca-Cola as "the epitome of blank promotional slating".

Mr Brookes said the strength and growth of Davids Holdings during the late 1970s lay in the group's combined promotions.

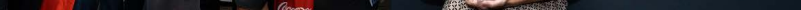
QIW in Queensland might have thwarted some of its dramatic market share drops if it had used some of these promotional.



1. Joe Berry Award 2016 Winner: Buying Director Simon Gines.
2. [L-R] The finalists: Simon Gines, ALDI; Nick Fyfe, Media Group; Phillip Campbell Arnott's; John Colins; Brad McLoughlin.



“Judges were looking for punchy and informative work when selecting six finalists.”





panel as the most "deserving" finalist.

As the AFGC Future Leaders program has grown to be a key industry inclusion, it was decided to allow the Scholarship to be more related to future leaders, so changes were made.

To be eligible for this year's award, entrants had to be aged 26-30 and hold some role in team leadership. Eligible candidates were selected through the Joe Berry Award essay submission process, before moving on to a dedicated TPF Scholarship judging panel. Four finalists faced the panel for 45 minutes, being required to make a statement on their understanding of leadership.

This year, the TPF Scholarship was awarded to Jessica Wozniak from Campbell Arnott's.

Ms Wozniak says winning the Scholarship is the culmination of an "incredible journey" participating in the Joe Berry Award.

"I'm incredibly proud to have won for both myself and for Campbell Arnott's," she told *Retail World*. "It's taught me so much more about our industry and about some specific areas that need our attention and action to enable Australian retail to prosper into the future."

Her chosen topic was 'The rise of machines and the retail workforce', referring to the accelerating rate of technological change in the industry, from manufacturer to retailer.

"While providing benefit for business, [this rate of technological change is] creating a challenge for the workforce as the roles available and the skills required in the future start to change," she said.

"I was drawn to this topic as I've spent time across a number of functions within Campbell Arnott's, and wanted to understand how this issue would directly impact the people working in each of these areas. I was also curious to find out how quickly this acceleration was progressing in Australia, which areas of business would be affected the most and to understand what action we could take now to best prepare our people for the future."

Ms Wozniak says the support and guidance provided by Campbell Arnott's helped her through the process. She encourages other young people to enter the competition next year.

"I couldn't recommend it enough," she said.



Five years of Joe Berry Award winners: Rory Gilbert (2017), Alex Renshan (2019), Esra Ozege (2018), Sarah Hughes (2015) and Clementine Churchill (2016) with ASMCA Chairman Keith Quigg.



today. It will open new doors and build new networks inside and outside your company, and it will fuel your professional and, most noticeably for me, your personal growth."

Ms Wozniak will receive entry to the international Consumer Goods Forum's Future Leaders Program conference in Boston in October.

Celebrating wins

The awards were presented at a gala dinner at the Sofitel Wentworth in Sydney. The award finalists were interviewed on stage by some of the judges, and guests heard from past Joe Berry Award winners, including

Guest speaker for the night was Trudy MacDonald, founder and Managing Director of Talent Code HR, who described her own career path and shared insights she has gained from being an adviser to the top end of industry.

MC for the evening was 2016 Joe Berry Award recipient Clementine Churchill.

The Joe Berry Award is operated by the Association of Sales and Merchandising Companies Australasia and sponsored by more than 20 retail industry companies, including Coles, Woolworths, Metcash, Nielsen, Strike Force, Goodman Fielder and Bulla.

Harvest
PANTRY

THE NEXT CATEGORY OF FROZEN HAS LANDED.

Real Fruit + Functional Ingredients. Just blend, no prep or mess. Made for real life.

Available at Woolworths



Trade & ranging enquiries:
hello@harvestpantry.com.au

TWO LEADERS. TWO PATHS. ONE DEFINING MOMENT



By **Samantha Corrigan**
National Business Manager, iSoft

For nearly four decades, the Joe Berry Award has played a major role in developing future leaders across Australia's retail and FMCG sector.

What sticks with me the most, though, is not just the careers it progresses, but the confidence it builds, the networks it unlocks and the accelerated development it creates for emerging leaders. As a past finalist myself, I can attest to the impact the award can have on both confidence and career trajectory.

From global CEOs to founders, past participants continue to influence Australian retail in markedly different ways. In this article, I explore two such journeys. Belinda Tumbers, CEO of SunRice, International and Global Sourcing Division, reflects on the discipline, adaptability and enterprise thinking required at the highest levels of corporate leadership and Esra Ozege, co-founder of Harvest Pantry and former corporate executive, shares her leap into founding a new FMCG brand and what that transition has revealed to her about modern leadership.

What has stayed with me after speaking with Belinda and Esra is how consistently the Joe Berry Award appears in both of their stories.

It reinforces something I have long believed, that the Joe Berry Award doesn't create ambition, but accelerates it. It compresses learning into a short, intense window and surrounds emerging leaders with people who challenge their thinking long after the award ends.

To echo the advice of Esra and Belinda, if you're under 35 and interested in entering the Joe Berry Award, go for it. Or, if you work with someone who might quietly be ready for something bigger, just think what a small nudge at the right moment could do.



BELINDA TUMBERS



Looking back, how did winning the Joe Berry Award shape your career trajectory and leadership approach?

Winning the Joe Berry Award many years ago gave me invaluable exposure to industry thought leaders and allowed me to build strong networks early in my career. These relationships became trusted sounding boards and accelerated my learning. The award significantly elevated my profile within the FMCG industry, opening doors that may not have been available to me otherwise.

What skill or mindset from your JBA experience do you still use today?

Trusting my instincts, and being comfortable making decisions without perfect information. Early in my career I didn't have dashboards, predictive modelling or AI to validate every call. The JBA experience reiterated the importance of learning to read situations quickly, join the dots and back your judgement in real time. That muscle still matters – arguably more than ever. AI delivers enormous efficiency and we should absolutely be using it, but it can also create a false sense of certainty. If leaders default to tools rather than thinking, they risk outsourcing judgement itself.

If you were mentoring a young executive entering JBA today, what would you tell them about opportunity, resilience and ambition?

Definitely enter JBA – the experience alone is a powerful development platform. The mentoring from Keith [Quigg] is priceless, and presenting to 30 industry leaders is an extraordinary opportunity that teaches you how to craft an elevator pitch, deliver a high-quality presentation, think on your feet and respond confidently in real time. These are skills that will serve anyone well in preparing for senior executive roles.

More broadly, our industry is demanding and requires resilience, but it also offers tremendous variety – from working with start-ups to gaining deep global experience within multinationals. We are also one of the largest industries in Australia, so the opportunities are endless for having a rewarding and fulfilling career.

What has been the most profound industry shift since your JBA win and how has it influenced the way you lead?

The rise of insurgent brands – including the rapid growth of private label – has been the most transformative shift. It has pushed the industry to elevate its innovation agenda, rethink how we innovate and stay ahead of emerging consumer trends. This environment requires leaders to be more agile, more consumer-centric, and more intentional about creating differentiated value.

What's one leadership lesson you learned the hard way, but are grateful for?

I learned that your leadership style must be adapted to fit the situation, culture and context. When I moved into a role overseeing the AMEA region, I initially failed to adjust my approach to different cultural norms and ways of working. Six months in, I received constructive feedback that reminded me there is no universal playbook – sometimes you only learn these lessons the hard way.

How do you balance commercial performance with people-centric leadership in a rapidly evolving market?

It's a constant balancing act. Empowering the team and holding them accountable for outcomes is critical. They need to feel ownership of the strategy and believe they are part of the solution to execute effectively. While playbooks offer structure, the most successful leaders are agile and entrepreneurial, able to pivot when conditions change. Ultimately, results come through people, so they must be brought on the journey.

Future of retail and FMCG

What will define competitive advantage in Australian retail over the next five to 10 years?

Manufacturers and retailers that can operate through volatility – whether that’s cost inflation, climate disruption, supply constraints or changing consumer habits and behaviour – without passing constant shocks onto consumers. That requires diversified sourcing, smarter use of data and operating models designed to weather disruption. I believe consumers will continue to reward brands that make clear choices about who they are, what they stand for and how they add value beyond price, which means that trust will continue to be a differentiator that’s hard to replicate and slow to rebuild once lost.

Where do you see the greatest untapped opportunity for retailers, suppliers and service partners?

As I’ve mentioned, the retail sector has really raised the bar for innovation, so I believe we will continue to see businesses taking advantage of opportunities to challenge the norm through packaging, branding and R&D. But I believe the biggest untapped opportunity sits in genuine collaboration across the value chain, rather than optimisation in silos.

What emerging consumer behaviour is the industry still underestimating?

The industry is still underestimating the consumer’s growing intolerance for complexity and inconsistency. People are time-poor, value-conscious and increasingly sceptical. What they’re seeking is clarity, reliability and confidence – knowing that what they buy will deliver, consistently.

Global perspective

How does leading a global division shape your perspective on Australia’s role in the global food and grocery supply chain?

Leading a global division gives you a deep appreciation for just how trusted and valuable Australia is in the global food system, but also how easily that advantage can be taken for granted. Australia plays a unique role as a country producing high-quality, safe and reliable food, particularly in an increasingly volatile world. Our strengths in agricultural expertise, food standards and supply chain integrity matter enormously to global customers, especially across Asia-Pacific markets and Middle East Markets where food security is high on the political agenda.

What trends or disruptions overseas should Australia be preparing for now?

There are many, but the most significant include the rise of functional foods – protein, fibre, clean ingredients, gut health products – accelerated by the rapid uptake of GLP-1 medications as consumers increasingly view food as medicine.

In the US, mushrooms and legumes are gaining momentum, partly driven by TikTok trends, with mushrooms appearing in functional beverages for immune support, focus and energy. More broadly, countries are prioritising food security and implementing policy frameworks accordingly – an area where Australia still has a lot of work to do.

How do global geopolitical or economic shifts impact decision-making at SunRice?

SunRice sources from over 12 countries and exports to more than 50 markets around the world, so agility is essential. Conditions can change quickly: export bans can limit supply, water reform policies can affect production, currency movements can alter competitiveness and rice itself is a fiercely contested global commodity.

This reality requires a diversified portfolio, a broad sourcing footprint and clear product differentiation to ensure we can maintain premium positioning where it matters.

Leadership evolution

What does it take to transition from high-potential talent (JBA winner) to global CEO?

To lead a global division, international experience is critical – living and working overseas helps you understand different markets and cultures, which fundamentally shape decision-making.

Equally important is the shift from functional leadership – centred on execution and delivery – to enterprise leadership, which requires strategic thinking, navigating complex interdependencies across regions, setting clear direction, and prioritising among multiple, often competing, demands.

What’s one pivotal moment that changed your leadership philosophy?

There wasn’t one single moment, but rather, a series of experiences that shaped my leadership philosophy. A quote that resonates with me now is, “What doesn’t challenge you, doesn’t change you.”.

Our industry can be demanding, and life can be too, but it’s through these challenges that we gain new perspectives, learn to approach situations differently and see things in a new light. Each challenge has taught me something new, and I believe we grow the most from the experiences that stretch us beyond our comfort zones.

Reflection

If you could rewrite one chapter of your career, which would it be and why?

During my time in hospitality management, I experienced significant bullying and harassment. While it shaped who I am today, it also left scars. I wish I had felt confident enough to speak up rather than assuming such behaviour was part of the industry norm.

What’s the best career advice you ignored, but wish you hadn’t?

Early on, I was advised to build external networks and cultivate internal mentors. While I’ve had a successful career, I should have invested more in these relationships. Sponsorship truly matters and can profoundly influence career progression.

Legacy

What imprint do you hope to leave on the Australian retail/FMCG industry?

My aspiration is simple: to be a visible role model for women in FMCG and ensure they receive the mentoring and support needed to succeed.

What does industry leadership mean to you in 2026 and beyond?

It means redefining what we do and how we do it. AI is creating unprecedented opportunities across consumer insights, innovation, marketing and ways of working – leaders must embrace and embed this change.

It also means being purpose-led. Research has shown that purpose-driven organisations outperform on retention, customer loyalty and long-term financial outcomes.

Finally, modern leadership requires clarity in an environment defined by ambiguity and constant change – and the ability to strike the right balance will define success.



ESRA OZEGE

How did the Joe Berry Award shape your early career trajectory and the way you approached leadership?

Winning the Joe Berry Award in 2018 was a defining moment in my career, not because it marked an arrival, but because it sharpened my sense of responsibility. At the time, I was deeply embedded in the retail ecosystem, learning how decisions ripple across suppliers, customers, teams and communities. The Award validated not just performance, but potential. The Joe Berry Award raised the bar I set for myself as a leader.

What stayed with me most from the Joe Berry experience was a mindset: stay curious, stay uncomfortable and never outsource accountability. That principle still guides how I lead today. Whether in corporate roles, in the boardroom or now as a founder, I've learned that the best leaders don't wait for permission to act. We take ownership early, ask better questions and build trust through consistency.

If I were mentoring someone entering the program now, I'd tell them this: treat every role as training for something bigger, even if you don't yet know what that is. Resilience isn't about enduring pressure quietly; it's about learning fast, adapting faster and keeping ambition grounded in values rather than titles.

How has the retail and FMCG landscape evolved since your JBA experience and what has it demanded of leaders?

Since 2018, the most profound shift I've seen in retail and FMCG is the collapse of distance between strategy and execution. Consumers move faster, data is more transparent and the cost of being slow or inauthentic is far higher. That reality has shaped my leadership style: flatter structures, faster decisions and a strong bias toward action.

One leadership lesson I learned the hard way is that clarity beats optimism. I used to believe that enthusiasm could compensate for ambiguity. It can't. Teams perform best when they understand the 'why?', the trade-offs and the constraints, not just the ambition.

Balancing commercial performance with people-centric leadership isn't a trade-off; it's a multiplier. Sustainable growth only happens when teams feel trusted, informed and invested in the outcome. Experience has taught me that culture is defined as much by what you tolerate as what you celebrate. In a fast-moving retail environment, that clarity becomes a powerful competitive advantage.

Can you tell us about your entrepreneurial leap?

Stepping out of corporate life to build my own FMCG business wasn't a sudden leap; it was a culmination. Every role, every challenge and every exposure to supply chains, category strategy and consumer behaviour felt like preparation. Harvest Pantry is the result of that journey: a brand built with intention, discipline and deep respect for how retail really works.

What surprised me most about being a founder is how personal the challenges become. Decisions carry weight not just financially, but emotionally. There were moments that tested everything from supply chain complexity, capital pressure and the sheer stamina required to keep going. Those moments didn't break the business; they refined it.





One of the most important decisions I've made along the way has been choosing the right people. Maybe not the most obvious choices, and not necessarily the closest ones at the time; but people who bring complementary strengths, shared standards and a genuine commitment to building something meaningful. I've been incredibly fortunate to work alongside a co-founder that challenges me, steadies the business when it matters and shows up with integrity when the pressure is on. In a founder-led business, that alignment is everything.

Equally important has been the power of networks built over time. Relationships formed earlier in my career, including through the Joe Berry Award and often without any immediate agenda, have become invaluable as a founder. In particular, learning from my master mentor through that network has shaped how I approach leadership, decision-making and long-term value creation. Never as a source of shortcuts, but as a steady compass offering perspective, honest challenge and clarity in moments that matter. This ecosystem of trust has been just as critical as capital or capability.

Looking forward, what will define competitive advantage in Australian retail and FMCG?

Over the next decade, competitive advantage in Australian retail will be defined by simplicity, trust and execution excellence. Consumers are increasingly sceptical of noise and increasingly loyal to brands that do what they say, consistently.

One opportunity I still see under-addressed is building products and systems that genuinely respect the end-to-end journey, from sourcing to shelf to home. Too often, innovation is cosmetic rather than structural.

An emerging consumer behaviour we continue to underestimate is how quickly families adopt brands that make life easier without compromise. Convenience, transparency and quality are no longer trade-offs. They are today's expectations.

Looking ahead, what imprint do you hope to leave on the industry?

The legacy I hope to leave is simple: proving that you can build a commercially strong FMCG business without shortcuts and that leadership is measured not by scale alone, but by the integrity of how you grow.

In 2026 and beyond, industry leadership will mean building things that last; brands, partnerships, teams and systems that stand up to scrutiny and genuinely serve the people they're built for.

EVERY INDUSTRY HAS ITS OWN LANGUAGE



By **David Shukri**
Customer Success Director,
Shopper Intelligence

You know you're about to use it when your email starts 'Hope you're well' and when you read said email back it sounds nothing like you do when you talk to your friends.

But look, it's not a bad thing. It's the shared vocabulary we've built to keep conversations polite, progress ambiguous, and relationships intact. It keeps us safe, keeps us inside the tent!

In the spirit of collective self-awareness, and for the benefit of anyone new to this industry tent, here is a short dictionary translating some of our most trusted phrases into what they often mean in real life.

Agility

The boss changed their mind again, and the delivery date moved... to next week.

Alignment

We would like you to agree with the direction we've already set.

Data-led

Show us some more numbers that support our point of view.

Forecast volatility

What happens when promotions, weather, TikTok and pay week all collide at the same time.

Good, better, best

Three prices designed so most people pick the middle one and feel good about it.

Innovation pipeline

We both know most of this will never see the light of day, but we'll show it to you anyway 'cause something's gotta stick.

Joint value pool

A theoretical pile of money we both agree exists but cannot quite locate.

Moment of truth

The point at which strategy meets a tired shopper at 6.30 pm.

Next steps

The work I just created for you out of this meeting.

Occasion-based ranging

Tell 'em it's for dinner.

Promotional intensity

How loudly we can shout 'value' before shoppers stops listening entirely.

Range rationalisation

Too many SKUs. Yours is one of them.

Shopper-centric

We all agree shoppers matters. We just don't know what they want.

Single version of truth

We'll keep going until you agree with me.

Strategic priority

Very important. This week.

Test and learn

You run the trial. We keep the deck.

So, the next time you're told your hero product fell short of its rate of sale hurdle, there was no halo effect from your incremental listing, and the funding envelope needs revisiting. Take a deep breath and smile.

Grocery is hard. Margins are thin. Shoppers are fickle. Stores are full. Everyone is under pressure to do more with less, faster and, preferably, without breaking anything that still works.

The language softens the edges. It buys time. It protects relationships.

At the same time, it's worth remembering this: the strongest relationships tend to need less translation.

Have you noticed that? They're clearer about constraints. Faster to call trade-offs. More comfortable saying no early, rather than maybe forever.

Perhaps we all have an opportunity this year not to invent better phrases, but to need fewer of them.

If nothing else, the next time someone says, 'Let's align on next steps', at least we will all know exactly which aisle we're standing in.

YOUR COMPETITORS ARE READING THIS. THE RETAILERS DEPEND ON IT.

YOU SHOULD BE A PART OF THIS TOO!



RetailWorld

FMCG INTELLIGENCE FOR NEARLY EIGHT DECADES

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

retailworldmagazine.com.au

FUELLING BRANDS • IGNITING GROWTH • LEADING THE MARKET