

PLAYBOOK TO GET YOUR ECOMMERCE PRODUCT INTO STORES



2020 IS THE YEAR OF THE OMNICHANNEL EXPERIENCE - A GOOD ARGUMENT FOR PLACING eCOMMERCE PRODUCTS IN-STORE.

2020 is the year of channel diversification. Having your ecommerce product as an online-only offering will limit your growth. But how can companies move from virtual retailer to the intensities that come with an in-store brick and mortar product launch?

There is a good way and there is a bad way to approach moving your ecommerce product into a retail establishment. This playbook will help you work smarter and have greater success.

DIGITAL BRANDS NEED A PHYSICAL PRESENCE

The news of retail's death has been greatly exaggerated. Sure, J.C. Penney, Gap, Sears, and Walgreens closed stores last year. [Business Insider reports](#) more than 9,300 store closures in 2019. [CNBC called it](#) a “record.” It was not the kind of attention any retailer would want, of course. However, there are signs that something is going on beyond store closings. Retail is kind of like a caterpillar cocooning; at some point, it's going to reemerge as something else.

[The Progressive Grocer](#) says, despite the popularity of in-home delivery and ecommerce, 99 percent of customers still shopped in a retail store last year. Why?

61%

went to the store for an immediate purchase.

55%

wanted to experience the product before they purchased it.

50%

said they wanted to get ideas from browsing.

49%

had in-store coupons they wanted to use.

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These customers said they wanted the personalized care that comes from an in-store experience. All the CPG marketing in the world can't change that craving for the human (not online) shopping experience.

How should marketers focused on CPG branding handle these trends? The answer seems to be omnichannel marketing that transitions products from ecommerce platforms to physical store shelves.

HOW TO GET YOUR eCOMMERCE PRODUCT INTO RETAIL STORES

Don't cold call or email retailers without researching your targets. That's flailing, and it's not attractive on the dance floor or in your efforts to expand your brand.

Instead, carefully research your targets by category, location, and the brands sold. While there are platforms to help you do this, the truth is most of what you need is already online. Even looking at social media feeds will help you reverse engineer what's important to the retailer—and this is a key point.

While you can go to the retailer with a standard CPG branding pitch, you'll be more effective if you show the retailer what's in it for them. What unmet customer need does your product solve? How can your product drive more store traffic? How does your brand fit the retailer's ideal customer profile? Go in armed with a roadmap showing how your product could successfully capitalize on ecommerce successes and bring more business to the retailer by melding those two CPG branding techniques. If you don't know the store's floor layout, product display metric, and product categories you are going in unprepared.

In today's fickle consumer environments, retailers are looking for ways to stay relevant. It's a selling point for an omnichannel effort merging your ecommerce successes with the traditional retail experience.

Once you have this roadmap, then and only
then should you reach out to retailers.

TOP EIGHT TIPS FOR SELLING PRODUCTS TO RETAILERS

Once the research is complete, we have eight suggestions for how to actually pitch your ecommerce products to retailers.

- 1. Tell a compelling story.** Come on. You've seen Shark Tank. Retailers, like all CPG branding experts, look for a compelling story that will resonate with consumers. Is there a "greater good" mission behind your product? Were online sales extraordinary? Why did you found the brand? Is your company strongly focused on sustainability?

All of these compelling human stories will resonate with retailers as much as a startling increase in new product sales. If you create an emotional connection between your product, retailers, and the target audience, you will sell more stuff and drive more in-store traffic—which is a win for everyone.

- 2. Consider local businesses as a conduit.** While this might not scale well, local businesses are a good first retail experience, allowing you to start small before hitting up the bigger brick and mortars.

This could include working with franchisees, who straddle the line between local representation and national impact. Key questions to ask are: "Who handles purchasing for the franchise?" and "Do you offer a local manufacturers program?"

See if you get these smaller fish to try stocking your sample products to gauge customer interest. Then tailor your CPG branding efforts to drive sales. Note that a key selling point, particularly for small companies, is your efforts to promote in-store traffic.

- 3. Next step? Local storefront for a national chain.** Even some big-box chains allow some discretionary spending at the local outlet. It's a great testing ground that evolves your CPG branding efforts out of the local environment to get to know a big-box chain. This could provide a critical testing ground to show the big players at corporate that your brand can compete at a national level.

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- 4. Use local processes to learn what you need to know.** Having a direct relationship with a middle manager of a big-box chain will give you a valuable understanding of how behemoth retailers run the show. Then you can move into wider distribution, potentially.

You may also work with a retail broker to get a leg up, but this connection will cost you in commissions and promotion fees.

- 5. Consider trade shows.** These pay to play opportunities, while not cheap, provide you with a room full of potential retail buyers. Since we're talking big bucks to set up a booth at these events, carefully choose your show for audience ROI. You'll need a striking booth, which doesn't necessarily require a Mini-Cooper giveaway or a massive flat screen.



Trade shows are an excellent medium to attract retail buyers.

Recommended: Hire a professional booth production company to help your CPG branding efforts make their mark.

Before the show, send out CPG branding materials to entice buyers to your booth. At the show, make sure you maximize every second on the show floor. Have you been to trade shows where the salespeople in the booths are eating or looking at their electronic devices as you walk by? One word: No. Engage, promote, and sell by creating buzz at your booth. After the show, follow up with everyone to have a better chance of closing the deal.

6. Use social media. If you're trying to get your brand into a retail store, don't discount the power of social media to create buzz around your products. Use social influencers to help get the attention of retailers and ease the way into your initial conversations with brick and mortar.

7. Leverage the tripod sales technique of emails, phone calls, and in-person visits. While these are standard sales techniques, they are still very effective. Couple these efforts with a tangible sample of your product and be very creative in your approach.

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Keep in mind that cold calling rarely works anymore but that hard work, persistence, and good follow-through can still win the day. Do not be discouraged if you send 50 emails, leave 100 voicemails, and only get one or two callbacks. This type of response is actually decent. **(Sorry.)**

- 8. Work on your leave-behinds.** Always leave a one or two-page sell sheet, which is really a brochure or a flyer designed to show the value of your product. Each sell-sheet should be customized to the retail category, or do a possible deep dive into your target audience and how it will benefit from a partnership with your ecommerce product. Here's what to include in your sell sheet:

- 1. The wholesale and retail price of the product(s).**
- 2. Any discount tiers (100 units vs. 500).**
- 3. High-quality photos of your product and a bullet list of product benefits for the retailer and its customers.**
- 4. Testimonials from wholesale customers if you have them.**
- 5. Reviews and ratings from any direct customers.**
- 6. Any intellectual property rights such as patents.**
- 7. How to order, your ecommerce website address, and any contact details.**

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Unless you have a CPG branding initiative and product that's so hot you need a first responder, think of this effort to move toward national retail distribution as a long-game, not a one-hit-wonder.

CPG BRANDING AT THE RETAIL LEVEL

As you're working to move your product to store shelves, it's important to also make sure you're ready for the brave new world of brick and mortar. Be prepared for different requirements for how you stock and sell your products, including:

- You may need to hold on to a higher volume of on-hand stock.
- You may need financing for the entire order to ship on a 90-day retailer credit.
- Understand that liability on cancellations or returns are your responsibility.
- Pass any testing requirements the retailer requires.



Be prepared for different requirements for retail store sales and be ready to scale up.

Be prepared to work with retail marketers to ensure your point of differentiation on the crowded shelves of the retail store. [The latest research shows](#) that word-of-mouth remains important to CPG marketing. Using promotion to increase market buzz will help you gain traction in a retail setting. Some tactics include:

Digital Ads

- Keep customers aware of product availability both in-store and on-line.
- o **Tactics:** In-store coupons, digital/mobile banners/online videos/paid search

Social Media Ads

- Inform customers of the availability of products online and in-store.
- o **Tactics:** Facebook ads, Instagram social, YouTube product launches

Direct-to-Consumer Promos

- Create consumer buzz about transitioning from eCommerce to in-store.
- o **Tactics:** Emails, social media, banner ads, AdWords

In-Store Signage for CPG Branding

- Draw consumers to your products by using in-house advertising tools.
- o **Tactics:** Use shelf blades or other in-store displays to create interest. If possible, consider store sampling in a limited but targeted geographic launch.

Flex CPG Branding Techniques

- Drive trial launches with specific channels. Measure success, then flex with the markets.
- o **Tactics:** Use coupons and rebates, podcasts and videos to get creative in your in-store approaches.

Retail allows us an opportunity to leverage experiential marketing techniques to elevate your product. Experiential marketing seeks a deeper connection with the consumer over a one-way approach to selling. This could include:

- Giving shoppers an in-person opportunity to learn about the brand or try out the product.
- Increasing awareness of your brand via an experience a customer will remember over a digital ad.
- Collecting real-time feedback and data. Brand experiences are good tools for marketing research. You could A/B test product packaging before product placement or try out a new flavor of a consumable item.
- Promoting your authentic brand image. Experiential marketing allows you to share your values and the brand's mission with customers.

Experiential marketing is perfect for big-box retailers because it elevates traditional (ho-hum) techniques into something the consumers will remember.

For example:

- Everyone does toothpick sampling, but you could create a pop-up shop to share the product.
- Creating an in-store event that is part entertainment and all product sales. Think on-site cooking classes or wine and cheese tastings, or some other activity that illustrates the value of the product in a new, fun, in-store event that will drive customers in-store.

All digital marketing channels can point to the in-store event. The goal is to reach the consumer in their natural habitat and engage them in new ways to build your brand. Experiential marketing techniques can create buzz in a retail store at a time when these organizations are trying to reinvent themselves. Consider these techniques when you're pitching your ecommerce product to a retail chain. Offer your retail partners' special events to drive in-store traffic, build loyalty for both your product and their brand, and potentially earn you a better position on store shelves. [Dio puts it this way:](#)

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“When you influence your audience in culturally relevant ways through brand experience, you affect a consumer's perception. You want the CPG product to become a part of their daily life. So regardless of where they shop, they'll choose your brand. It won't even be a thought; you will just be what they use.”

The goal with all of these techniques is to convince the retailer that you will work hard to promote your product in-store. This will make it a win-win for the retailer considering your ecommerce product for their store shelves.



Are you ready to take the next step to get your eCommerce product onto store shelves?

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