



# Driving Operational Excellence in Grocery

Empower your  
people, automate  
manual processes,  
and gain market  
share

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# Today's opportunity for grocers: People and Process

No industry has dealt with more challenges and crises lately than Grocery (and we're not just referring to the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic). Grocery brands are currently faced with workforce shortages, supply chain challenges, inflation, and an economic recession to boot.

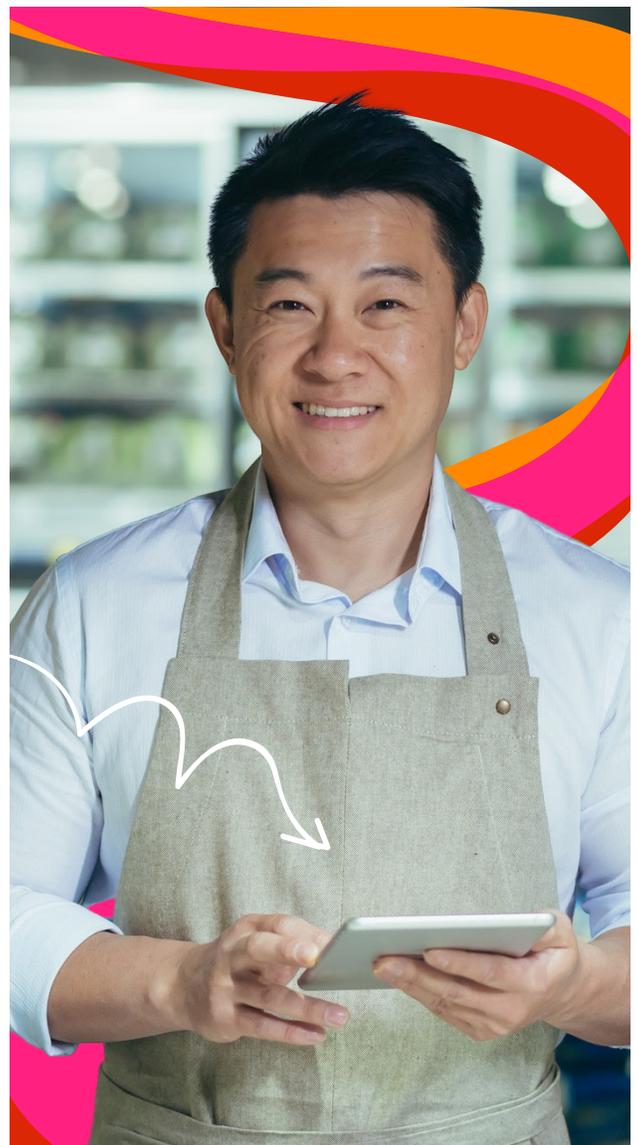
With so many areas ripe for operational improvement, it's easy for grocery technology leaders to feel overwhelmed. However, this period of uncertainty means there's massive market share up for grabs. Winning grocers will invest in technology that enables two main tenets of their business: people and process.

## People

The grocery industry is experiencing a labor shortage. High turnover rates and difficulty attracting new employees are still making it hard for grocers to maintain a consistent workforce. Those that can have begun to offer higher wages and more benefits to retain employees and avoid burnout. But not all grocery brands have the resources to do this.

Fortunately, many employees are also looking for employment opportunities where they feel connected to the brand, connected to their team, and believe they can have a voice that influences the company's success. These employees don't just want to punch a clock - they want a career that is engaging and fulfilling.

Best in class grocery brands are building strategies to personally connect with their employees and allow them to influence the future direction of the company. Through transparent communication, they ensure associates understand the brand's values, and can make connections between, for instance, the day-to-day work they do and the positive influence their company has in their local community.



## Process

The grocery industry has always been marked by constantly shifting customer demands. From meal kit delivery services to online shopping experiences, the key to success in the grocery industry is adaptability and innovation.

But recent inflation has caused rampant changes in buying behavior. Shoppers are more discerning, more price sensitive, and more likely to shop in person. This shift, in turn, creates a huge opportunity for grocers to innovate and win market share.

To stay agile and thrive in this competitive landscape, grocery stores are embracing technology to enhance the customer experience, streamline operations, and improve employee productivity. From mobile apps to self-checkout kiosks, grocery stores are undergoing a technological revolution that promises to change the way we shop for food.

But it's not enough to simply slap technology upgrades on top of an unsteady, aging infrastructure or muddled brand vision. Grocers that have managed to come out on top are the ones who leverage their foundation of brand loyalty and adjust their strategies quickly to bring these investments to life in the right way, ultimately enticing shoppers to travel to their physical stores.

## Winning Strategies: Three Grocery Case Studies

1



**Southeastern Grocers**

**HQ:** Jacksonville, FL  
**Store Count:** 590+

In a recent keynote, Southeastern Grocers President and CEO Anthony Hucker shared how his company's people-first approach to every issue helped it accomplish, "a powerful cultural transformation that is boldly visible in black on the balance sheet."

The Florida-based grocer committed to transforming into a people-first culture – chiefly by listening to and addressing employees' issues and concerns – and has now boosted employees' trust in leadership by 30%.

2



**HQ:** San Antonio, TX  
**Store Count:** 430+

H-E-B, a beloved Texas-based grocer, recently edged out Amazon as the top U.S. ecommerce grocery retailer according to dunnhumby's Retailer Preference Index.

How can a regional grocery store overtake an internet behemoth? According to the study, H-E-B had "the highest level of emotional connection and online share of wallet among their customer base." In other words, H-E-B customers were most loyal, the least willing to take their dollars elsewhere because they adored the brand. A brand was born out of the in-store experience.

3



**HQ:** West Des Moines, Iowa  
**Store Count:** 280+

Iowa-based super regional Hy-Vee is pushing the boundaries of what the grocery customer experience looks like, and shoppers are loving it.

As reported in Progressive Grocer, Hy-Vee's newest stores feature a large footprint — between 105,000 and 125,000 square feet — and amenities like full-service meat counters with a chef's station, pubs with a sit-down bar, and even Wahlburgers restaurant locations (which has become a key Hy-Vee partner.)

# Enable your associates with an Operational Excellence Platform

Today's grocery CIOs are faced with a plethora of technology offerings - from electronic shelf labels to shopping cart scanners - all focused on improving different aspects of the customer experience. But the retailers who want to stand out from the crowd should use technology to empower their employees to deliver a better customer experience and feel more connected to the brand they work for.

The best new technology you can deploy this year is technology that enables your people to deliver on your strategy. It should give them time back by automating manual processes, it should increase their depth of knowledge through communication and training, and ultimately it should support the implementation and adoption of every single other in-store technology on your current roadmap.

The best new technology you can deploy this year is an **Operational Excellence Platform**.

## The real questions Grocery CIOs should be asking:

Instead of focusing on specific functionality or criteria, strategic grocery CIOs should look at technology investments through a broader lens of enablement. Specifically: How can technology enable our process AND our people in stores?

### PROCESS:

How can technology...

- Help guarantee the return on investment across every aspect of our team's tech roadmap?
- Ensure our stores know exactly what's expected of them?
- Enable our store teams to stay on track, so we reach our company goals?
- Reduce noise so store teams can focus on the most important revenue-driving projects?
- Automate manual processes to save labor dollars and give employees more face time with customers?

### PEOPLE:

How can technology...

- Improve employee retention and job satisfaction?
- Help manage, motivate, and inspire a large and diverse grocery workforce?
- Be used to streamline employee training and onboarding?
- Collect employee feedback and insights that can be acted upon to improve the overall customer experience?



An operational excellence platform brings together communications, task management, resources, insights, and more – so teams not only have the information and tools they need to execute faster, but they also feel connected to the brand and inspired by their work.

In order to achieve operational excellence, grocers need a solution that effectively connects people and processes - **and an operational excellence platform does just that:**

### Top-Down Communications:



#### PROCESS

Communicate promotions, last-minute recalls, HR news, and other information that drives day-to-day employee workload in a targeted and timed manner.

#### PEOPLE

Connect daily tasks to broader company vision and goals, share company-wide wins and highlight career paths in an engaging, visually-rich way.

### Task Management & Store Audits:



#### PROCESS

Automate the time-consuming "pen and paper" processes and lighten stores' email while also standardizing key workflows with a mobile platform that's easy-to-use and can integrate with teams' current tech stack.

#### PEOPLE

Empower employees by giving them clarity into everything that needs to be accomplished, from today's tasks and audits to next week's promotion, so they know what to expect and can take ownership of their time.

### Two-way messaging & Chat:



#### PROCESS

Provide stores with a dedicated channel to instantly relay customer insights back to corporate - so you quickly understand what's working (and what's not), and your brand can pivot from one initiative to the next.

#### PEOPLE

Give store employees the ability to take part in business and personal conversations with their peers, their managers, and HQ.

### Surveys & Forms:



#### PROCESS

Automate manual processes, like incident reporting, saving employees time.

#### PEOPLE

Give employees a voice: solicit feedback from the frontline and measure engagement on a regular basis.

### Knowledge Base:



#### PROCESS

Improve productivity by giving frontline teams a centralized location to find all of the evergreen resources they need to do their jobs, accessible from the sales floor on a mobile device.

#### PEOPLE

Onboard new hires quickly and improve 90-day retention with easy to find onboarding resources and in the moment learning opportunities.

### Analytics & Reporting:



#### PROCESS

Understand the work that's getting done in stores in real-time to make data-driven decisions. Correlate this data with sales and HR analytics to better understand broader revenue and retention metrics.

#### PEOPLE

Empower your field leadership and HQ business partners to be more strategic by giving them access to real-time data, so they can make adjustments as they roll out initiatives.

### WFM integrations (Shift Swapping and Clock Content Control):



#### PROCESS

Digitize the manual task of managing shifts and last-minute coverage while also remaining compliant with employment laws.

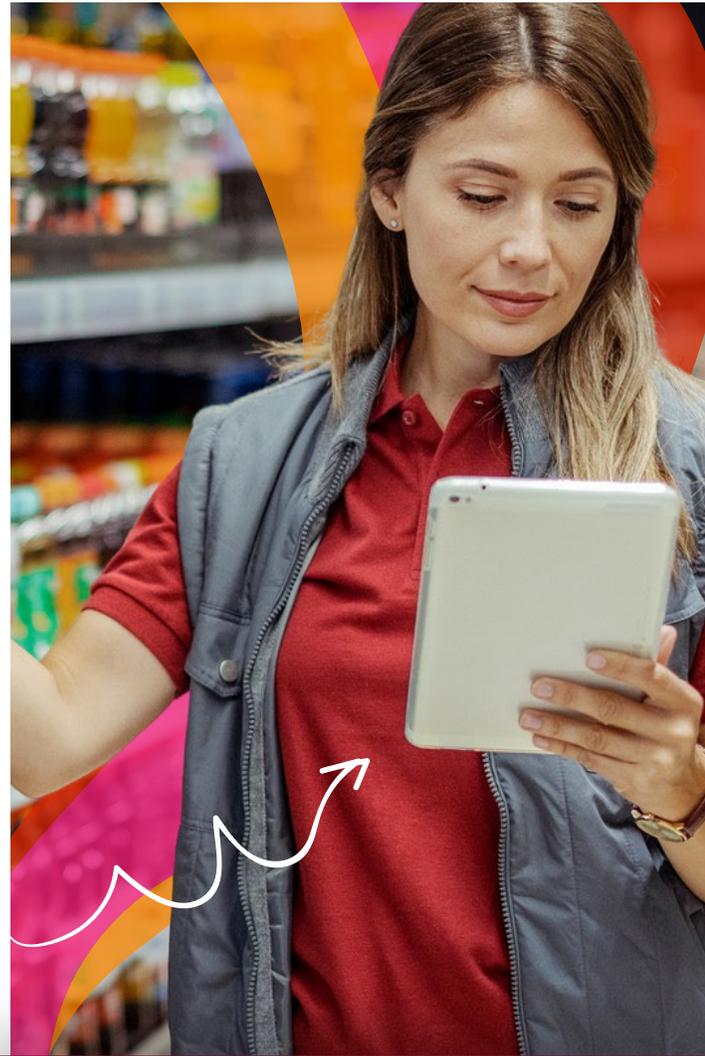
#### PEOPLE

Empower your frontline associates to manage their own schedules and trade shifts on their own time.

## Making the right choice: A buyer's checklist

There are many different communications, task management, and audit platforms on the market. Which ones truly drive operational excellence? When conducting your initial search for vendors, here are some key features and functionalities to look for:

- ✔ **Ability to get the right message, to the right people, at the right time.** The solution should be accessible, mobile-first, and feature targeting capabilities to deliver messages and tasks to specific audiences.
- ✔ **Robust reporting and insights.** The solution should serve up reporting on adoption, usage, readership, task completion, engagement, and more - ideally in easy-to-use dashboards that are accessible to every level of the organization.
- ✔ **Integrations and open API.** The solution should offer integrations to critical systems your teams already use, like HRIS and WFM platforms.
- ✔ **Unlimited access for all store employees and locations.** In an industry with large teams like grocery, it's important that your solution's pricing structure doesn't inhibit you from giving access to all employees within each store.
- ✔ **Workflows that work for stores.** The ideal solution will be built by people who worked in retail and can speak your stores' language. Beware of platforms that over-engineer tasks or build with a Headquarters audience in mind.
- ✔ **Customer references.** The best way to guarantee that a solution works is to ask current customers for their experience. A good vendor will provide several customer references if asked.
- ✔ **Ongoing support post-implementation.** The best solutions offer in-app support and take the burden of ongoing administration and maintenance work off of your IT teams for the duration of your contract.



**“We want to make sure we understand the ever-changing taste and preferences of customers, but we also want to make sure we are preparing our team members to give customers world-class service during their interaction with us... We want to make sure that those team members have the capability, the technology, the information to serve customers to make sure that the in-store experience for customers is world-class.”**

- Kirk Ball, CIO



## Strategies for avoiding a complex implementation

With so many technological investments to juggle this year, taking on yet another implementation might seem like too much to bear. But there are two things you need to know about an Operational Excellence Platform:

You actually need it the most because it's the technology that guarantees the success of all those other technologies.

... and, if you play your cards right, it's not that hard to implement.

1



2



## Make it easy on your store teams

Grocers everywhere have to improve their digital and in-store capabilities in order to keep pace with rapidly changing customer expectations. And while many of these technologies will be successful, other projects may incur cost overruns or suffer from low adoption. That's why, in order to ensure your investments in new technology are worthwhile, CIOs and technology leaders must first lay the proper foundation to enable the employees who bring those technologies to life.

In other words: to upgrade your technology, start by enabling your field teams to execute.

A true Operational Excellence Platform quiets the noise and prioritizes the work for field teams. It puts everything in one place and gives employees the context they need to get their jobs done. It gives you the agility you need to have more control over your business. It allows you to pivot quickly, roll out strategic initiatives and ensure your whole company is aligned.



Want a step-by-step guide that walks you through how to conduct a successful technology roll-out to stores? Download our free resource:

**The New Retail Technology Roadmap:  
How to get things right the first time around**





## Make it easy on yourself

If an Operational Excellence Platform can dramatically improve the likelihood of successful technology roll-outs and adoption in stores, is it worth adding another implementation to your roadmap?

Yes, because **it doesn't have to be difficult**. Here are three ways you can quickly and successfully ensure you'll have the infrastructure in place to support an agile stores technology roadmap:

1

Leverage technology vendors as partners. Instead of spending months building a convoluted RFP, reach out to vendors who actually build the type of technology that enables retail store teams to operate and execute. Focus on outcomes-based requirements (“How would your technology improve our store execution by 25%?”) instead of prescriptive feature requirements (“Can you send messages to employees at X time under Y conditions?”)

2

Test and learn. The absolute best way to prove your business case with little risk? Ask that your vendor partners let you test their solutions in a risk-free way (or with as small of a financial investment as possible). As digital technologies evolve and become more commonplace in the physical store environment, more and more solution providers are willing and in favor of a pilot period. Ensure these technology partners are also open to feedback and willing to make changes and improvements based on your needs.

3

Lean on your vendor partners for change management support. It's not unheard of to ask your solution provider exactly how they themselves will support the change management that'll be required to get 90%+ adoption across your store users. Nowadays, several vendors know how to speak the language of change management to help ensure that their customers' users are ready, willing, and able to adopt the new technology.

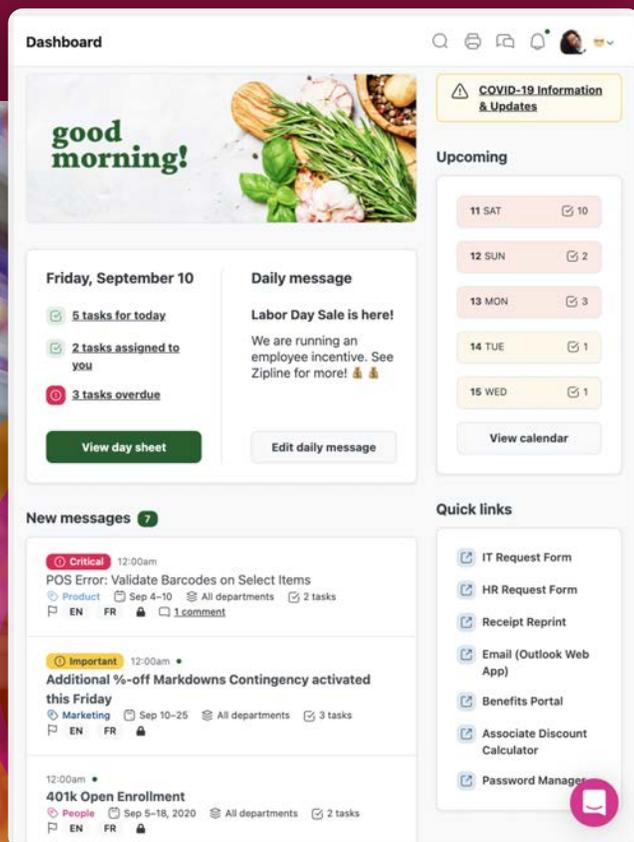
# Zipline: The #1 Solution for Grocery Operational Excellence

Ultimately, your stores need to *get stuff done* - and the fanciest communication app in the world isn't worth a penny if it can't drive operational efficiency, automate manual processes, and enable teams to work more effectively. The best solution helps teams focus on what needs to be done *today*, prioritizes work, and gives upper management real-time visibility into execution rates.

Zipline is how best-in-class grocers bring brand strategies to life in stores. A unified platform for operational excellence, Zipline brings together frontline communications, task management, resources, insights, and more—so everyone feels connected to the brand and inspired by their work.

Today, nearly **80 brands** like The Fresh Market, Hy-Vee, and Festival Foods depend on Zipline to align and empower their store teams worldwide.

**Reach out** to learn how Zipline can help you outsmart your competition today.



# Zipline

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