

## Recognizing the Channel



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Some companies do not consider the future until it is here, and by then it is too late. Anticipating trends and doing the research to validate your beliefs is only a part of what it takes to be a market leader. Sadly, many just want to be next, letting others shoulder the risks, but too few want to be first.

Much has been reported about the proactive and reactive ways operators are tackling consumers' meal planning notions with their go-to-market plans and executions. Approaches range from in-store sandwich kiosks, hot and cold food buffets, and prepackaged meals to a la carte departments, arrays of cold case meals, and an assortment of diverse regional and cultural flavors, each designed to satisfy the mixed bag of meal planning tactics coded into the DNAs of time-starved shoppers.

Now is the time for front runners to take the next step and recognize Retail Foodservice as a discrete distribution channel, associating with it management, c-level, and manufacturing titles. No need to wait until consumers' meal planning routines are irrevocably dictated by those "bullish" companies like Amazon, Walmart, Alibaba, Kroger, and numerous regional giants that are already re-shaping the landscape of food marketing.

The Retail Foodservice I foresee is measured by revenue drivers like sandwich kiosks or prepackaged meals, each with its own P&L strategy, a much stronger and proactive approach towards growth incentives. This differs from the foodservice and retail channels that clarify their P&Ls for accurate performance measurements with one tracking foodservice business segments and the other retail category distinctions.

Recognizing that Retail Foodservice is not an isolated supermarket department nor an add-on to traditional foodservice will improve revenue opportunities, inspire more accurate market research, and streamline logistics. Staffing the channel with positions of responsibility and accountability to growth performance will also deepen the commitment to maintain the energy of its growth potential. As channel players, manufacturers' and operators' visions will be clearer as they create go-to-market strategies that draw direct benefits from:

- More cost-effective budgeting for growth
- Improved food safety
- Better understanding equipment needs
- A clearer picture of logistics management
- Better market research
- Improved go-to-market planning and execution by harmonizing both traditional "push" channels with the "pull" of Retail FoodService
- Improved product development

Go-to-market alignment with the channel you want to target, as well as the market segment within it, is key to any forward thinking strategy. But, in today's evolving Retail Foodservice channel it is most important for leaders to launch the target strategy they will need in order to establish market positions that focus on consumers' lifestyles and needs as they, too, evolve.

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