



How to Win the Retailer Sell-In



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The buyer you are presenting to this autumn

September and October are sell-in season: brand days, category vision presentations, JBP conversations and range reviews.

This year's buyer arrives under pressure, with promotions at 31.3% of grocery sales, own label past half of grocery volumes for the first time, and a margin squeeze that sharpens every simplification target. Buyers under pressure will naturally lean hardest on the suppliers who bring evidence-based growth stories.

This guide is your sell-in preparation: what to do before the meeting, and what to do if the retailer says no.

31.3%

of grocery sales are sold on promotion. More promotional dependence is a hard sell to this buyer.

Over 50%

of grocery volumes are own label for the first time. The value frame on your fixture is not set by you.



The pre-sell-in checklist

Twelve

weeks out

- ☐ **Confirm the format and the dates.** The review scope, submission template, deadlines, decision date and relay date, or the brand day agenda and who owns the decisions that follow it. If nothing has landed, work from last year's dates and start anyway.
- ☐ **Pull your current shelf position.** Facings by SKU by store cluster, share of space against share of sales, and what actually changed at the last relay. What you think is on shelf and what is on shelf are often different things.
- ☐ **Request the meeting slot.** Late slots risk being presented a decided range.

Eight

weeks out

- ☐ **Build the category vision.** One headline growth opportunity for the retailer's category, with your changes as the mechanism. It is the same story across brand days, JBPs and range reviews, and if it reads as a defence of your own SKUs, rewrite it.
- ☐ **Run transferable demand analysis on every vulnerable SKU.** If it goes, does the shopper switch within your range, switch to a competitor, trade out of the category, or leave the store? A delist that loses the retailer shoppers is a different conversation from a delist that tidies the fixture.
- ☐ **Assemble decision tree evidence.** How shoppers actually navigate the fixture, what they substitute, where they give up. This is what layout arguments stand on.
- ☐ **Draft the proposal.** What you are adding, what you are defending, and what you would concede. Deciding concessions now means you can trade them for something later.
- ☐ **Commission any evidence you do not have.** If your new product innovation case rests on a forecast, this is the last realistic point to put it in front of real shoppers before the decision.

Four

weeks out

- ☐ **Build the counter-planogram.** Not a wish list, but a workable fixture at cluster level that delivers your category vision and can survive space planning's scrutiny.
- ☐ **Rehearse the meeting against the three pushbacks.** Assign each one an owner and an evidence source.
- ☐ **Produce a one-page leave-behind.** The category opportunity, the three changes that unlock it, the evidence behind each.

One

week out

- ☐ **Refresh every number to the latest period.**
- ☐ **Confirm who is in the room and who answers what.**
- ☐ **Pre-write the follow-up skeleton,** so the real thing can go within 48 hours of the meeting.



If the buyer pushes back

Every sell-in produces pushback, whether you are presenting a category vision at a brand day or defending a range in review, and this autumn looks likely to produce more of it than most.

01 “Your data says one thing. Ours says another.”

WHY THEY SAY IT

The retailer trusts their own EPOS and loyalty data over your panel data, and they have reason to. It is a census of their shoppers, and yours is a sample of everyone's. When the numbers disagree, yours usually lose.

THE COUNTER THAT FAILS

Re-presenting the same analysis with more conviction. If your evidence class lost the first time, volume rarely changes the verdict.

THE COUNTER THAT WORKS

Switch evidence class. Bring something their EPOS cannot produce, such as shopper-level behaviour, observed substitution, tested response to the actual proposed change. EPOS tells the buyer what sold. It cannot tell them what shoppers would have done under a different fixture.

02 “That SKU is in the tail. It’s going.”

WHY THEY SAY IT

By rate of sale, they may well be right. Tail rationalisation is one of the easier wins on a buyer's simplification target, and this year's margin pressure has made those targets harder.

THE COUNTER THAT FAILS

Arguing the SKU's rate of sale is better than it looks, or promising promotional support to inflate it. With 31.3% of grocery sales already on deal, more promotional dependence is a hard sell to this buyer.

THE COUNTER THAT WORKS

Move the question from the SKU to the shopper. Transferable demand analysis answers what actually happens when the SKU goes: if demand transfers within the category, the delist costs little; if the shopper walks, the buyer is trading a tidy fixture for lost baskets. Quantify what the delist does to the buyer's category number, and you have turned your problem into their decision.

03 “There’s no evidence shoppers want this.”

WHY THEY SAY IT

Because often there is not. Buyers have been burned by supplier forecasts often enough that a forecast alone can read as hope with a number attached.

THE COUNTER THAT FAILS

A bigger forecast, a national media plan, or category norms from a market the buyer does not run.

THE COUNTER THAT WORKS

Evidence from real shoppers responding to the real proposition, ideally on the retailer's own shelf layout. A trial that shows who bought it, what they stopped buying, and what it did to category spend answers the buyer's real question, which is whether it sells incrementally. If you do not have that evidence at week 8, get it. If you are reading this at week 2, it is the first thing your follow-up should commit to.

Where Vazen can help win your next sell-in

Four products on one data foundation, built on real data from real stores. Each one answers a different part of the sell-in.



Coplan

Before the sell-in

Know your shelf position. Coplan shows your products on every shelf: facings, distribution and layout by store cluster, and what actually changed at the last relay. Your preparation starts here, with your real position.



Ask Vazen

Building the argument

Answer the question the same day. Ask Vazen answers shelf and sales questions in plain language. Share of space against share of sales, cluster by cluster, in the time it takes to type the question.



Studio

Proposing the alternative

Build the fixture of the future. Studio builds planograms on the same data foundation as the analysis, so the fixture is workable at cluster level rather than a wish list.



Testing

When the retailer says no

Test it. Testing puts your proposal in front of real shoppers on a virtual shelf and reports what they bought, what they substituted and what it did to category spend. It is the evidence behind all three pushbacks.

One platform underneath all four

The same shelf and shopper data foundation sits under every product, so the analysis, the planogram and the test all describe the same shelf.





Talk to us before your next sell-in

If you are preparing a brand day, a category vision or a range submission this autumn, we can show you your real shelf position in the time it takes to have the conversation.

WEBSITE

vazen.com

EMAIL

hello@vazen.com

ADDRESS

Level 2, Beyond The Bower
207 Old Street
London EC1V 9NR

