



A Guide to Improving Supermarket Operational Efficiency

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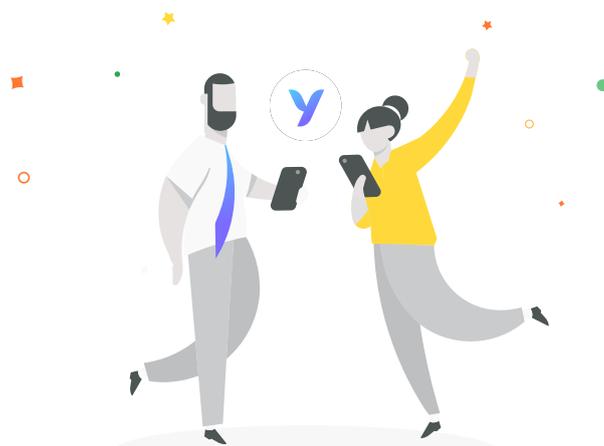
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Introduction

Operational efficiency starts with people.

To reap the benefits of operational efficiency - a better customer experience, reduced costs and organizational agility - supermarkets need to focus on frontline employees.

Over the last year, supermarket employees have become safety enforcers, fulfilment experts and difficult situation handlers - in addition to the mammoth task of keeping stores running.

The pandemic has pushed stores to their maximum operating capacity. But it's also exposed and intensified inefficiencies within supermarkets.

This has created a perfect storm for supermarket teams :



Managing rising consumer demand and expectations :

- ▶ **Safety.** [54% of consumers](#) are stressed by shopping in-store and want to get in and out as soon as possible.
- ▶ **Convenience.** [69% of consumers](#) value this most when shopping in-store.
- ▶ **Availability.** Consumers expect shelves to be fully stocked. Groceries are now a source of both comfort and novelty, and consumer expectations have never been higher.

Inefficient processes :

- ▶ **Outdated procedures.** Customer-facing technologies like mobile checkout and curbside pickup have transformed stores, but behind-the-scenes processes used by store teams haven't changed in decades.
- ▶ **Too many priorities.** Customer safety is the highest priority, leaving employees little time for anything else.
- ▶ **Lack of support.** HQ doesn't have visibility into store processes, so there's nowhere to start to make things easier for frontline teams.

Overwhelmed employees :

- ▶ **Stress.** [70% of customer-facing employees](#) say the COVID-19 pandemic has been the most stressful time of their careers.
- ▶ **Abuse.** [1 in 3](#) store employees face abusive behavior from customers every shift.
- ▶ **Risk.** Customer-facing employees are [5x more likely](#) to test positive for COVID-19 than non-customer facing employees.

A ruthless focus on store operational efficiency will help you navigate your frontline teams through this perfect storm.

Here are 4 ways to get started.

1. Digitize Task Management

There's a lot riding on the quality of in-store task execution.

Customer experience, compliance, health and safety, brand loyalty and sales all depend on how well supermarket teams execute on tasks like :

- Checklists
- Product recalls
- Planogram implementation
- PoP setups
- Incident reports
- Inbound delivery inspections
- Daily, weekly and monthly COVID-19 procedures

But tasks like these also involve a lot of admin work like printing, emailing and filling out forms by hand. This prevents employees executing quickly and accurately on things that, while important, just require following instructions.

These tasks are inefficient because they're difficult for employees to get done. Digitize them to make fast, accurate task management easy.

How does non-digitized task management contribute to the “perfect storm” ?



- ✗ **Managing high consumer demand and expectations :**
Admin work takes employees away from making sure customers have a safe and smooth journey through the store.
- ✗ **Inefficient processes :**
Non-digitized task management reduces accuracy, damages compliance and prevents HQ from getting feedback from stores.
- ✗ **Overwhelmed employees :**
Non-digitized tasks take more time and effort to complete, adding to already unmanageable workloads.

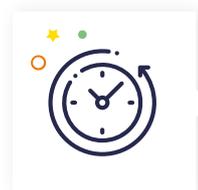


Symptoms of inefficient supermarket task management :

- Use of paper, especially for checklists
- Use of multiple platforms and tools for the same task - including Excel, PowerPoint, emails, calls, intranet and faxing forms to stores
- Frequent trips to the back office for printing, emailing, report compilation, and taking calls from field teams
- Limited feedback from stores on task completion
- Different metrics recorded by each store because procedures aren't standardized

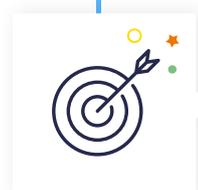


Digitizing task management boosts operational efficiency by :



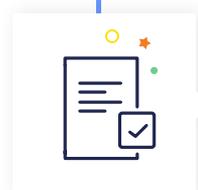
Saving time

Teams can re-allocate time saved to higher-value tasks, like helping customers.



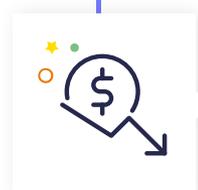
Improving accuracy

Digitization automates manual data collection, checklist completion and report generation, all of which are prone to human error.



Improving compliance

Digitized task instructions are clearer, so compliance is easier to achieve the first time.



Reducing costs

Costs from printing, phone bills, and IT maintenance can be shifted to other areas of the business.

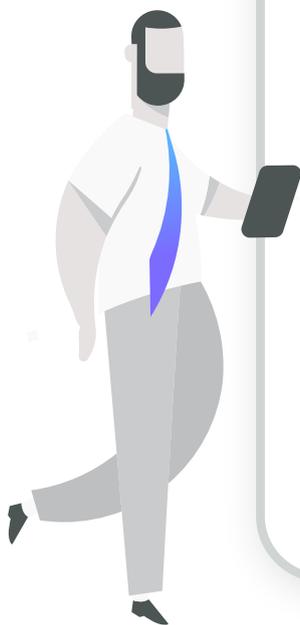


Improving store support

Digitization gives HQ and field teams visibility into task completion, meaning they can provide better support ASAP.

4 ways to digitize supermarket task management :

- Centralize all tasks in one digital platform
- Choose a mobile-first platform, so employees can access instructions wherever they are
- Automate data collection and report compilation
- Monitor task execution metrics (task completion rate, time required to complete tasks) so operational efficiency is continuously improving



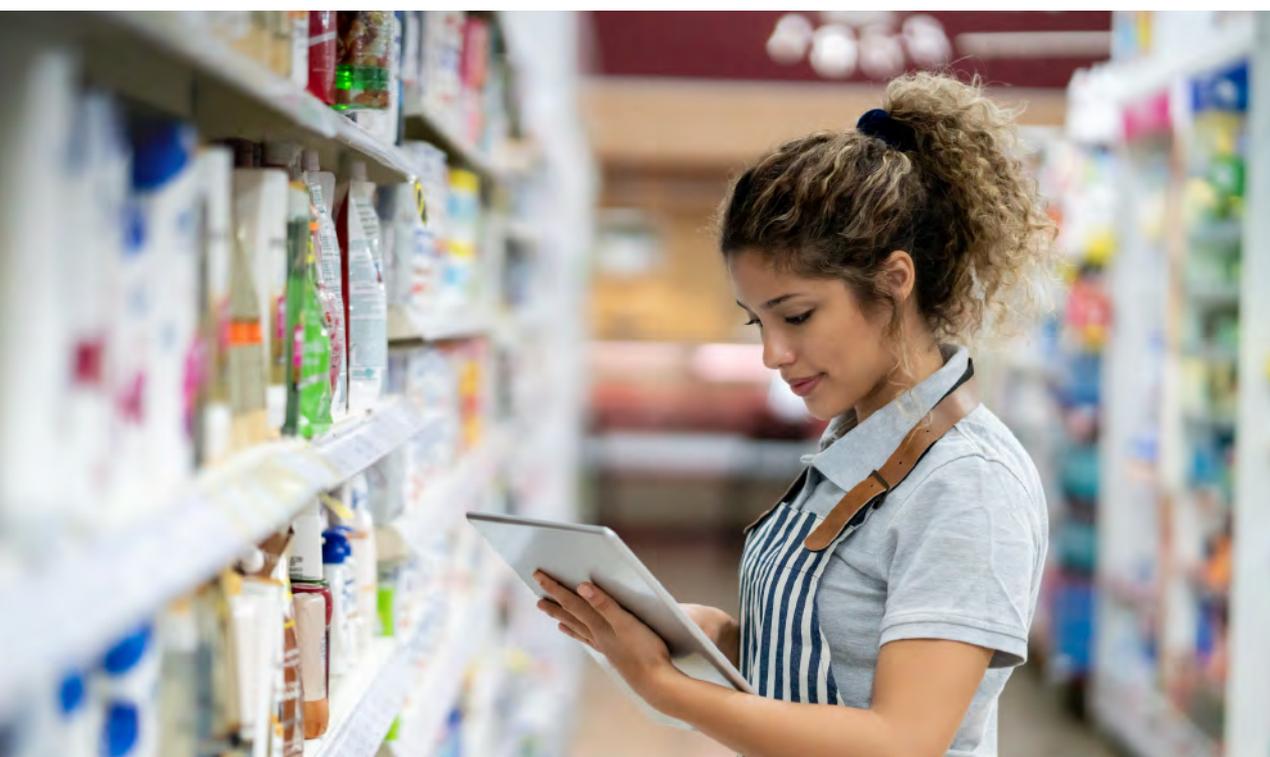


An example of digitized task management

A product has been recalled and must be removed from all shelves immediately.

HQ creates a digitized task for the product recall, complete with a step-by-step checklist. HQ marks the task as urgent, so it appears at the top of store teams' to-do list for the day.

Store teams complete the checklist on an app, including photos where necessary. HQ now has complete visibility into which stores have and haven't completed the recall processes.



2. Streamline field team processes to better support stores

In-person contact with frontline teams - most commonly through store visits, audits and walkthroughs - are like a regular doctor's checkup for store operational health.

Stores need far more of these checkups in 2020, but field teams aren't able to provide them. That's because they can't be everywhere at once, and COVID-19 has made field team travel impractical, and sometimes even impossible.

Managing store operations in person is the default for most retail networks. But it's also damaging store operational health.

On the other hand, using tech to manage store operations remotely increases contact between field and store teams. Ultimately, this boosts operational health.

How do inefficient field team processes contribute to the “perfect storm” ?

✗ **Managing high consumer demand and expectations :**

Field team knowledge of frontline conditions depends on them being there in person. As a result, they can't give supermarket teams the support they need to adapt.

✗ **Inefficient processes :**

Field teams are a link between HQ and stores. When field teams aren't there in person, HQ has no visibility into which store processes need to be improved.

✗ **Employee overwhelm :**

Supermarket teams don't receive enough support, communication and coaching from field teams. This is especially relevant when audits and visits are done on an ad-hoc basis.

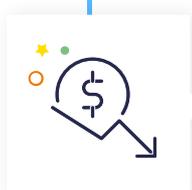


Digitizing field team processes boosts operational efficiency by :



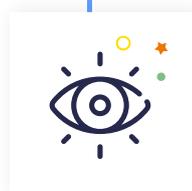
Broadening field team coverage

Field teams can cover more stores without having to travel.



Reducing costs

By only making in-person visits when it's absolutely necessary, revenue saved from gas, phone and hotel bills can be reallocated to other areas of the business.



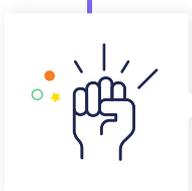
Enhancing visibility

A broader coverage of stores means a broader and more up-to-date knowledge of what's going on in those stores. Field teams know which stores are struggling and need extra support, so they can make the most impactful use of their time.



Fixing more issues, faster

Fewer emails, calls and visits are needed to fix issues. Field teams catch issues as they come up instead of uncovering them weeks or months later during a visit.



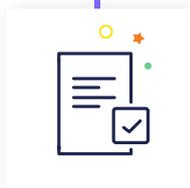
Increasing store autonomy

With more support from field teams, supermarket employees can catch more issues sooner. This empowers them to take ownership of improving processes and customer experience on their own.



Making in-person visits more impactful

Visibility into store performance and access to historical data makes the in-person visits that do occur much more effective. Area managers know what they're getting into and what areas to focus on before they arrive.



Increase compliance

HQ has a clear overview of store compliance and can make sure each store is on the same page, which helps the entire organization avoid fines.



5 ways to digitize field team processes :

- Digitize audits.** That means no more time-consuming paper checklists and spreadsheets, and much more time left to focus on supporting and coaching stores.
- Supplement in-person audits with remote store visits.** Field teams complete remote store visits using a combination of instant messaging, live video and delegating simplified checklists to store managers.
- Assign store action plans and reports.** Store teams complete digitized action plans and checklists assigned by field teams.
- Define store metrics for field teams.** Determine which criteria every field manager should use to assess store performance (e.g. compliance), and set up a consistent scoring system.
- Monitor store metrics remotely.** This helps field teams get a quick overview of store operational health, so they can focus their limited time on supporting the stores that need their help the most.



An example of digitized field team processes :

A remote store visit/audit

1. A field manager assigns self-evaluations to store teams. These checklists are simplified versions of what the field manager would cover during an audit.
2. The field manager reviews the completed checklists, gives feedback, and organizes phone or video calls with supermarket teams if necessary.
3. Self-evaluations are compiled into an audit report, scored and then stored to help prepare for the next audit.

The Remote Store Visit Process



Complete
'self-audit' report



Give feedback
and action plans



3. Automate manual expiration date tracking

Since the start of the pandemic, a trip to the supermarket is the highlight of the week for many of us. Imagine finding a fun new recipe - only to discover half the ingredients are out of stock or expired.

Operational efficiency is all about maximizing outputs while minimizing inputs required. And if there's one thing supermarket teams do every day that's the antithesis of operational efficiency, it's manually tracking product expiration dates.

And while expiration date tracking is technically a task, it's such an inefficient one that's so central to supermarket performance and customer experience that we're giving it its own section.

Manually tracking expiration dates every day increases shrinkage, reduces profit and increases food waste.

What parts of expiration date tracking should supermarkets automate ?

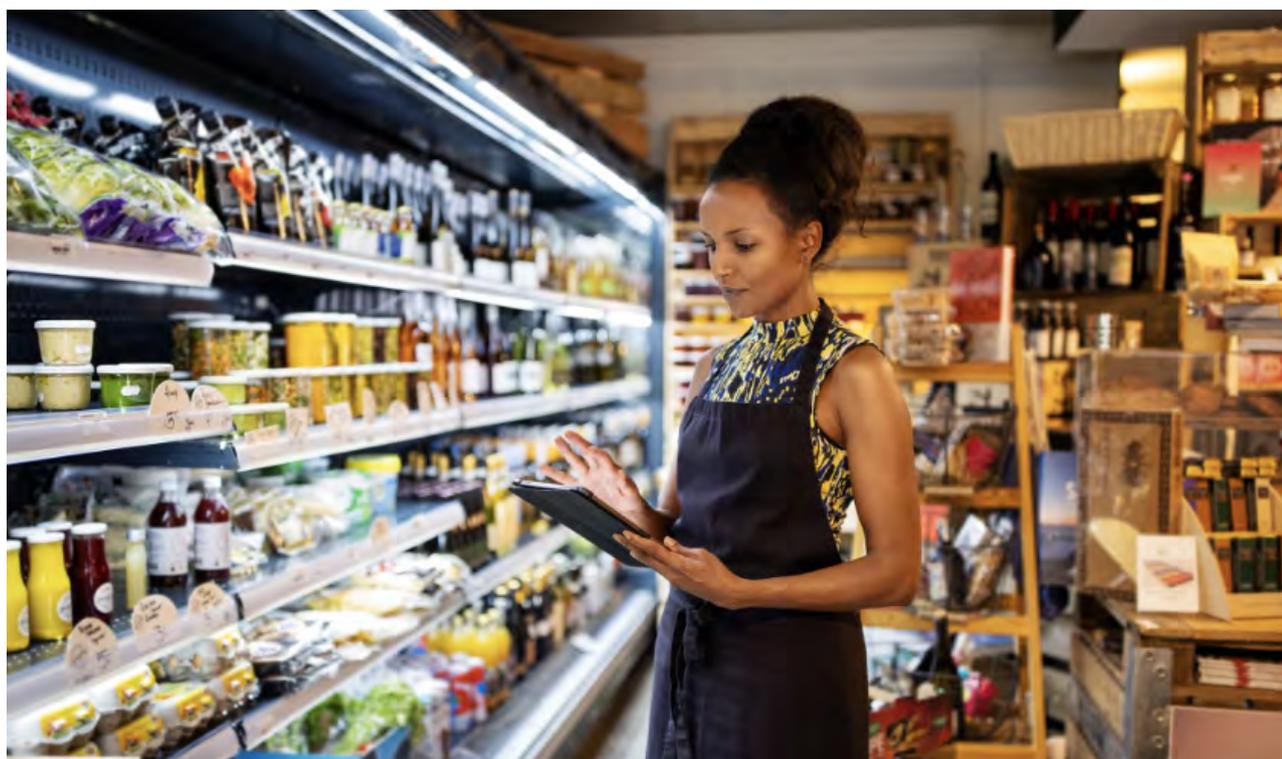
- Taking inventory of expiration dates
- Daily checking for expired or soon-to-expire products
- Finding products to discount or worst case, throw away

Using tech to automate this severely outdated process not only makes every supermarket more efficient, but improves customer experience, brand image and customer loyalty.



How does manual expiration date tracking contribute to the “perfect storm” ?

- ✘ Managing high consumer demand and expectations :**
When expired products cause out-of-stocks, are discovered by customers on shelves, or aren't discounted quickly enough, customers don't have a good experience.
- ✘ Inefficient processes :**
Manually checking labels is the most time-consuming and inaccurate way of completing a process that's so central to quality and customer experience.
- ✘ Employee overwhelm :**
Employees are under a lot of pressure to keep shelves well stocked during the crisis. Time spent checking hundreds of product labels increases workloads, which increases stress.

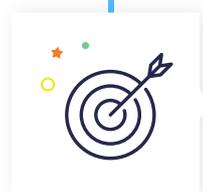


Automated expiration date tracking technology boosts operational efficiency by :



Saving time

Employees know exactly which products are close to or already expired, and exactly where to find them on the shelf. Instead of checking 100% of products, employees focus on the 10% that are close to expiration.



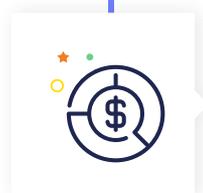
Improving accuracy

This is the most stressful time to be a supermarket employee. On top of that, human error is likely to occur frequently with manual tasks, pandemic or not.



Reducing waste and shrink

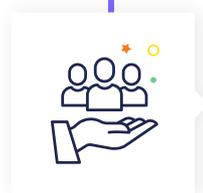
Employees quickly catch products close to their expiration dates and discount them. Instead of food being thrown out, value-hungry customers save money.



Increasing margins

[Trillions of dollars](#) are lost every year because of food waste.

Discounting soon-to-expire products recuperates margins that would otherwise be lost.



Improving employee experience

By simplifying one of the most tedious parts of working in a supermarket, you're investing in your employee experience. And that leads to better retention and a better employer brand image.

An example of automated expiration date tracking

With the help of an expiration date tracking app, an aisle manager does an initial inventory by scanning barcodes.

Every day afterwards, employees get an alert on their mobile device letting them know which products to either discount or discard. Pro-tip: choose an expiration date tracking software that integrates with digital labels, so the ones that need to be checked are easier for busy employees to spot.

Because expiration date management is now fully digitized, store managers have complete visibility into every shelf. Every store manager can be 100% certain that there are no expired products left on shelves. That means no frustrating kitchen counter moments for shoppers once they get home.



4. Combine store tasks and communications to engage employees

Engaged employees are efficient employees. They're more productive, make [60% fewer errors](#) and are [21% more profitable](#) than their unengaged peers.

Engaged employees are no happy accident in stressful customer-facing roles during a pandemic. Retailers need to rethink the status quo - especially when it comes to store communications.

Combining store task management with internal communications engages employees and boosts operational efficiency in the process.

The problem is, most retail organizations lack the tools to connect with frontline teams in this way. Instead, they rely on emails, outdated LMS and intranets.

How do disconnected store tasks and communications contribute to the perfect storm ?



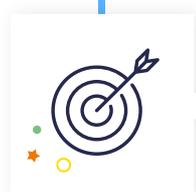
- ✗ Managing high consumer demand and expectations :**
Employees aren't kept in the loop and miss out on knowing how other stores are handling surging consumer demand. Instead, they wait for information to trickle down from above.
- ✗ Inefficient processes :**
Employees aren't the first to know about urgent changes to processes and announcements. This slows teams down in a time when guidelines and policies are changing in a flash.
- ✗ Employee overwhelm :**
Employees feel isolated from the rest of the company. And since any communications they do get come through multiple channels (email, intranet or through a manager) they also feel bombarded.

Combining store communications and tasks boosts operational efficiency by :



Saving time

Employees spend less time looking for information. They know what needs to be done, why it needs to be done and how to do it.



Improving accuracy

Similarly, getting more information and context around that information means it's easier to complete tasks perfectly the first time.



Boosting productivity

Employees get more tasks done faster, and have time for more skilled work.



Engaging employees

Employees are connected to company news, updates, and the bigger picture.



An example of unified store communications and tasks

A curbside grocery pickup system is about to be rolled out across the store network. HQ sends out a targeted announcement to relevant store employees using a mobile-first platform.

Employees get a push notification, so they know the announcement is urgent. HQ turns on read receipts so they know which stores and employees aren't up to date.

The announcement is combined with digitized task instructions for implementing the new pickup procedures that employees complete digitally.



Key Takeaways

Operationally efficient supermarkets can quickly adapt to sky-high demand and expectations, tackle inefficient processes and reduce employee overwhelm.

To increase supermarket operational efficiency, grocery retailers should :

- ✓ Digitize task management
- ✓ Digitize field team processes
- ✓ Automate expiration date tracking
- ✓ Unify store tasks and internal communications

By improving operations, grocery brands aren't just improving performance - they're investing in the people who make that possible.



About YOOBIC

200+ retailers including Redner's Market, Lidl, Carrefour, Monoprix, Vitalia and more are using YOOBIC's digital workplace to boost store operational efficiency.

Digitized, streamlined task management refocuses field and frontline teams on what matters - boosting compliance, supporting employees and helping customers.

Customizable dashboards and digitized processes give regional and HQ teams the visibility they need to improve operational health - even if it's remotely.

A unified platform for internal communications and team training creates an engaged, knowledgeable and agile frontline workforce.

AI-powered analytics constantly improve the in-store experience so it exceeds consumer expectations.

See for yourself how YOOBIC can help your stores thrive in retail's high-pressure, high stakes reality.

GET A DEMO

