

What 12 Small to Mid-Tier Supermarket Executives Shared at Groceryshop 2025: The Data Challenges They're Facing

"If we can't understand our customers, how do we compete?"

That question came up more than once during our conversations with 12 small and mid-tier supermarket executives at Groceryshop 2025. These weren't formal interviews—they were honest, open discussions. And while each retailer had their own story, a few consistent themes emerged. What we heard was a mix of frustration, resignation, aspiration, and cautious optimism.

One thing was clear: data is no longer a nice-to-have. It's central to how these retailers think about loyalty, growth, and staying relevant. But the journey toward becoming truly customer-centric? It's complicated—and often overwhelming.

What We Heard

1. Reporting Still Feels Harder Than It Should

Many executives talked about how difficult it is to get the reporting they need. Their systems often feel rigid — POS systems offer limited reporting, dashboards can't handle the nuance, and valuable data gets stripped out just to make things work. It's not that they don't want to be agile; it's that their tools make it hard to be.

2. Shifting to Customer-Centric Thinking Is a Big Leap

There's a strong desire to move beyond just transactions and start seeing the business through the lens of the customer. But that shift isn't just technical — it's cultural. It means rethinking how value is defined, how teams operate, and how data flows across the organization.

3. Tier-One Tools Feel Out of Reach

Several retailers expressed admiration for the capabilities of larger chains. But when they look at the price tags of enterprise solutions, the conversation often stops there. It's not just about cost — it's about fit. There's a sense that many tools weren't built with mid-tier realities in mind.

4. AI Is Intriguing — but Also Intimidating

AI was everywhere at Groceryshop. And while it sparked curiosity, it also raised concerns. Retailers are interested in what it could do for analytics and personalization, but they're wary of complexity, reliability, and whether it's truly accessible for them. For some, the sheer volume of tech on display felt more overwhelming than inspiring.

5. Flexibility Is Valued More Than Ever

Interestingly, a few executives said they're leaning toward smaller, more agile vendors. They want partners who understand their constraints and can deliver practical solutions — without the overhead of a massive platform. It's not about chasing every feature; it's about developing a partnership that works.

The Takeaway

These conversations weren't about chasing the latest buzzwords. They were about figuring out how to move forward in a way that feels achievable. For small and mid-tier supermarkets, the question isn't *"Should we transform?"* — it's *"How do we do it in a way that fits our reality?"*

The answer won't come from mimicking giants. It'll come from finding solutions that match their scale, their speed, and their ambition.

What encouraged us most was how these conversations ended. Nine of the twelve executives we spoke with were genuinely intrigued by the 11Ants approach. Comments like *"This seems too good to be true"* and *"This would solve a lot of problems for us"* weren't just flattering — they reflected a real hunger for solutions that feel achievable. It was a reminder that while the challenges are real, so is the openness to new ways forward.

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