Get more impact from your store visits today:

Why real-time data and actionable
insights are no longer optional

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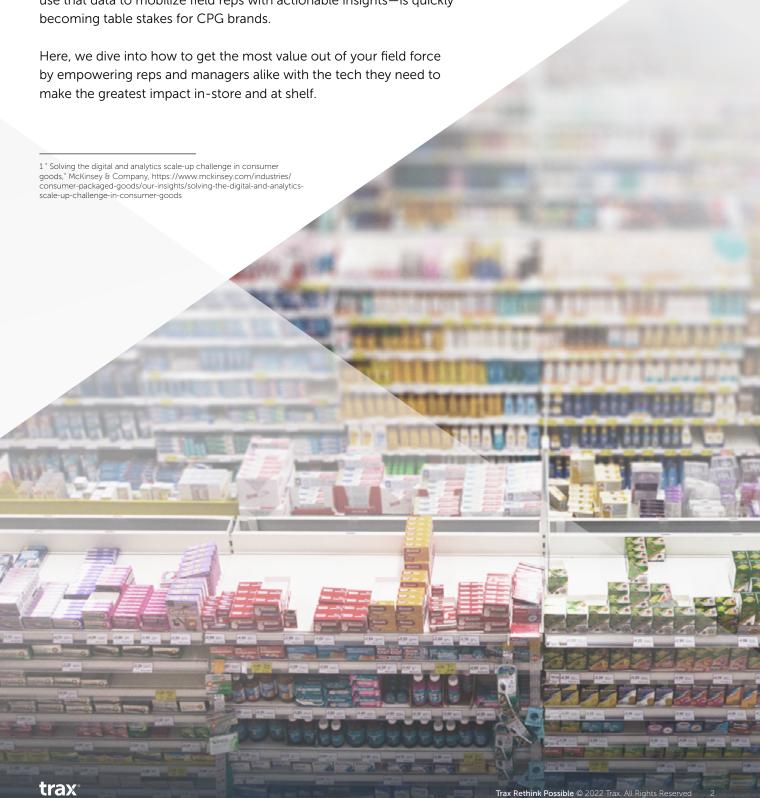
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Introduction

Today, CPG brands are practically required to be a technology-friendly demographic to remain competitive. Considering the sheer volume of in-store products being moved and data being collected[1], the ability to dial into what's happening in store and at the shelf—and use that data to mobilize field reps with actionable insights—is quickly becoming table stakes for CPG brands.

Here, we dive into how to get the most value out of your field force by empowering reps and managers alike with the tech they need to make the greatest impact in-store and at shelf.

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1 " Solving the digital and analytics scale-up challenge in consumer goods," McKinsey & Company, https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/solving-the-digital-and-analytics-scale-up-challenge-in-consumer-goods

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Redefining
the store visit

With increasing frequency, CPG brands amass large amounts of data about sales and shopper behavior and use sophisticated automation and digitization tools to make use of that data at the store level, if not the shelf level. Then, during the store visit, field representatives connect with store managers, identify opportunities to improve execution, and fix the shelf at every store visit to drive the maximum impact on those key performance indicators (KPIs).

However, adopting this type of technology goes well beyond a tactical approach. It's not just boosting the effectiveness of store visits. Rather, leveraging automation and digitization technology signifies something much more significant and strategic. It represents a shift in how CPG brands understand the interactions between shoppers, their products, and the retailer at the store level—and it opens the possibilities of what brands can do with that intel.

As a matter of survival, CPG brands and retailers are compelled to be a part of a digital and analytics (DnA) transformation[2] that will update and optimize the entire ecosystem of the CPG product[3] — and it all starts with empowering field representatives at the shelf level.

2 " The digital future of manufacturing consumer packaged goods," McKinsey & Company,
3 "How Big Data is Changing the Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) Industry: 3 Strategic Business Priorities," NTT DATA, https://nttdata-solutions.com/us/global-blog/how-big-data-is-changing-the-consumer-packaged-goods-cpg-industry-3-strategic-business-priorities/

The smart store visit

A key element of retail execution is the in-store visit that CPG field sales representatives make at each retail location. Field representatives work to fix gaps in in-store execution, while at the headquarters, supervisors and sales managers use the data collected to optimize the performance of their field force.

But even the most successful brands face common challenges like...

- Implementing a unified way of measuring and reporting on in-store execution

- Finding image recognition solutions that will adapt to their processes and operations

- Securing image recognition vendors that will provide data and actionable insights back to the brand

"Here's a hard truth: The business processes consumer packaged goods (CPG) companies have used for decades aren't going to "cut it" in the age of big data analytics. New — digitally native — competitors are using this transformative technology to better understand consumer activity and deliver what shoppers really want. It's a key differentiator in a market where consumers are more demanding, more selective and less brand loyal."

Harris Fogel, Global Vice President, Consumer Products at SAP[4]

4 "How Big Data is Changing the Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) Industry: 3 Strategic Business Priorities," NTT DATA, https://nttdata-solutions.com/us/global-blog/how-big-data-is-changing-the-consumer-packaged-goods-cpg-industry-3-strategic-business-priorities/

Where products are placed in-store and on-shelf is an important sales driver for CPG brands. That's why the role of the field representative will have inherent, ongoing value amid seismic shifts in the retail space. But when these visits are planned in a time-based approach and conducted manually, CPG brands introduce avoidable problems and challenges — and miss out on some of the most meaningful benefits of digital transformation in retail.

Here's a look at just what's possible when field representatives are empowered with the shelf-level data they need to conduct smart store visits:
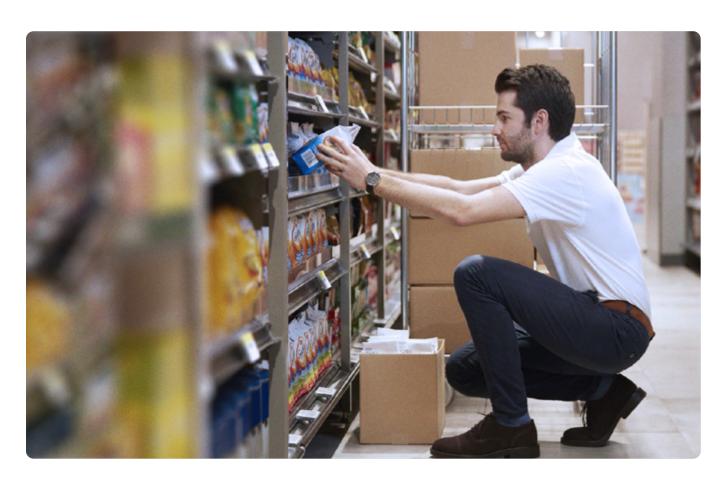
The manual field visits of yesterday

When conducted manually, sales managers usually use dashboards to assess the performance of key sales drivers. They also use these dashboards to surface the root causes of poor performance and direct field activities.

The challenge with manual store checks is that they rely on data that is already outdated by the time it gets to you. Without real-time visibility into the actual conditions of the store, sales managers often fail to prioritize effectively, which can result in shopper attrition to competitor brands.

To add insult to injury, the results of manual store visits are often inaccurate, partial, and not immediately actionable. Even when a CPG identifies the right stores to visit at the right time, many continue to face challenges due to several common pitfalls, including:

- **Not having a unified way of measuring and reporting on in-store execution.** The results of store visits — data with an incredible potential value — cannot be aggregated and analyzed effectively. This makes it very difficult to respond promptly to in-store conditions.

- **Using technology-focused Image Recognition (IR), rather than solution focused.** Image recognition technologies have the power to do many things, but this also means that many IR solutions fail to contextualize the technology and encapsulate it with years of experience and in-store execution best practices. The result is often overly complex systems that create more problems than they solve.

- **Trying to do too much in-store, but not having enough time.** When trying to improve distribution and share of shelf, a brand will send its field reps to collect data from the shelf. But with so much data to collect reps are often short on time to execute in-store.

When there are too many stores to visit or too many decisions to make during a store visit, field representatives often are not equipped to prioritize. Meanwhile, sales managers do not have the visibility into the store that they require to conduct proper route planning. When left to make execution decisions in a data void, the result is an important job done poorly by field reps — if at all.

Without access to SKU-level data, field reps are unable to understand the availability of the core range of products and have limited visibility into whether products are getting their fair share of space. Meanwhile, sales supervisors are unable to uncover the root causes of out-of-stocks and have limited visibility into assortment compliance. Moreover, supervisor teams are unable to pinpoint the cause of execution gaps, nor measure team members' performance and contribution to these gaps.

"So many things can affect a CPG brand's product on the shelf, from the pandemic to supply-chain issues," says Pavel Popkov, Product Commercial Lead at Trax Retail. "Without real-time insights, a brand cannot make decisions in response to what's really happening at the shelf. By the time data is collected and considered manually, it's no longer accurate."

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Smart store visits are a must to optimize your field force

Store visits empowered with real-time insights open a world of possibilities that enable field representatives to be more effective by focusing their time on the actions that matter most. As a result, smart store visits offer CPG brands incredible potential for insight, efficiency, and ongoing impact.

During the store visit, in-store execution solutions that leverage image recognition technology, empower field representative to make smart decisions when faced with unexpected situations like missing signage, missing product, promotional issues, or other issues that may pop up in-store. Furthermore, data from this kind of solution gives sales managers insight into how efficiently store visit actions are performed, where the gaps in the process are located, and how the field representative could be coached to improve their performance.

When your brand is empowered with real-time in-store visibility and insights, you unlock the true potential of the retail shelf—and ultimately create transformative shopper experiences. You can make a once inefficient and cumbersome manual process efficient, effective, and impactful.

Here's what store visits can look like when they are successfully optimized, and the kind of results CPG brands see after the fact:

Benefits of the smart store visit

Reduce stock-outs and increase sales

Accurate real-time insight into what's happening on the shelf shortens the feedback loop between stock-outs and re-stocks. The result is that products are in stock more frequently when shoppers arrive at the shelf to buy.

Get actionable insights and recommendations at shelf

Field representatives have access to smart, data-supported recommendations for choosing the most appropriate next step, ensuring that the most impactful decisions are made at the most impactful locations.

Improve collaboration with retailers

By automating manual checks, sales representatives have more time to use store visits strategically, for example, to connect with key decision-makers when it comes time to ask for additional displays or to run a promotion.

Scale quickly with a flexible, on-demand workforce

Get into stores in days, not weeks, by pairing real-time data with a flexible workforce that you can scale up or down as needed. By augmenting your existing field force with on-demand representatives, growing your distribution and fixing merchandising is a breeze.

Improve shopper engagement and experience

Shopper experience issues can be spotted and resolved quickly based on actual store conditions. As a result, the shopper experience is not impeded by stock-outs, incorrect placement on the shelf, or missing promotions.

Replace instinct with data-driven decisions

Leverage a consistent flow of data to inform your sales strategy. Goals for field reps can be based on data-driven priorities rather than intuition. And, you'll have concrete data to evaluate and improve field rep performance.

Just consider the experiences of two brands that partnered with Trax to improve retail execution and conduct smarter store visits.

What happens when you improve retail execution and conduct smarter store visits

Molson Coors Canada unlocked insights into how their product was presented on the store floor as well as helping facilitate coaching between sales managers and sales representatives. Ultimately, Molson Coors was able to improve in-store execution and revenue.

"Trax helped us improve execution at retail and be more selective with our execution priorities."

Joao Donato,
Senior IT Business Partner, Molson Coors

2%
Uplift in revenue

14%
New KPIs unlocked

3%
Share growth at pure fridge outlets

Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company standardized measurements and enabled alignment on commercial priorities in Russia. The result was an increase in the company's national execution index and on-shelf availability.

"We have reduced audit time by 40%, but we still track 400 SKUs in stores nationwide."

Coca-Cola Sales Leader

6.3%
Increase in National execution index

71%
Supers above

90%
on-shelf availability (OSA)

Checklist for the best solution

The best solution for your brand will help you prioritize which stores to visit and which actions to take with SKU-level data. Look for a tool that will enable your sales managers — and, by extension, the whole company — to implement faster store checks, better execution, have access to more reliable data, empower your field teams, achieve store targets and build better customer relationships with every store visit.

Here's a brief checklist for identifying the best image recognition solution for your brand:

Guarantees a single, centralized way of measuring and reporting on in-store execution across the board

Has a proven track record of building in-store execution solutions for global brands

Helps field representatives become more autonomous in store and better at what they do

Integrates with other solutions in your tech stack, such as salesforce automation or order-taking solution

Make every store visit count

Is your brand prepared for a digital shelf? Do you have the data you need to give shoppers the experience they're looking for? For many brands, the answer is no. They're still struggling to act on data that is out of date, manage data that is fragmented across multiple systems, and mobilize their field representatives in the most effective way possible.

And that's why it's critical to consider updating your in-store execution strategy with a solution like Trax Field Optimizer.

Smart store visits give you a unified way of measuring and reporting on in-store execution, allowing you to harness and analyze key drivers and opportunities and make visits smarter every time you make them. With Trax Field Optimizer, the process of collecting that data doesn't have to make a dent in your present-day operations — the out-of-the box functionality blends seamlessly with your existing processes.

Make every check-in count by empowering your field representatives to conduct smarter store visits. Capture and keep the data you get from those check-ins, and use them to close execution gaps and improve the experience shoppers have with your brand. And, over time, see the whole picture come together: faster store checks, more reliable data, increased availability — and higher sales.

✕field optimizer™

Empower your field force with real time actionable insights at shelf.

Find out more ❯❯

✕®CPG NXT

For over a decade, we've helped some of the most successful CPG brands globally win in store. Now, we're making it easier than ever to harness our best practices through Trax CPG NXT, our next generation suite of computer vision powered solutions.

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