



Retail Business Services

Trends & Insights Team Tunes in to Hot Topics

July 21, 2020



Meeting shopper expectations means more than offering the freshest food at the lowest price – it means understanding them. That's why John Shaw, Director of Sourcing Support, has worked hard to develop the Trends and Insights team within Retail Business Services, the services company of Ahold Delhaize USA.

"The team supports the Sourcing Department, and it assists our peers and our whole organization by providing data that enables them to make better decisions surrounding customer demands," Shaw said. "It's all about how we innovate and progress our organization to the next level."

The team was established in 2019 and its members come from a variety of backgrounds, including fashion and design.

"I call them 'the Cool Kids,'" Shaw joked. "This team is very social media savvy and is really paying attention to the Millennial generation – a group that's purchasing power keeps growing."

The goal is to truly understand what trends are popular with consumers – and why.

"Simply put, we use insights to influence product decisions," said Venita James, Trend & Insights Manager. "Our process starts with an understanding of the consumer's shopping attitudes and behaviors. We then use a variety of tools to understand social and cultural shifts and identify trends in color, product and design. We interpret these trends to align with the behaviors of consumers and to provide assortment and experience recommendations to the brand category teams."

Armed with that data, category teams can work to develop new items that shoppers will love.

"People no longer just want the cheapest product," Shaw said. "They want the right product. They want the product that really resonates with them. We're trying to bring in new products before anyone else can. These products are interesting items that the customers wouldn't see at other places, and before they would see it with the competitors of our brands, so they enjoy coming into brand stores."

The combination of financial data and knowledge of trends helps identify patterns with seasonal events, limited time items and other special offerings. It also helps the brands focus on what items will be successful where.

"It's all about the user experience," Shaw said. "Someone in Washington, D.C. is going to make different shopping decisions than someone in rural North Carolina."

These insights have become especially important this year through the coronavirus pandemic.

"With COVID-19, things aren't the same as they used to be," Shaw noted. "Customer expectations are changing. So how do our brands change their assortment so that those expectations are being met?"

"COVID-19 has created a pause in normal life, leading people to consider what things they want to return to normal," added Denise Groves, Trends & Insights Analyst. "Consumers are seeking good news and happiness more than ever, so the design direction focuses on the use of bright colors and positive sayings on ordinary objects to offer a much-needed sense of optimism, build loyalty and create a more joyful in-store experience. Grocery

shopping is a necessity, but by creating a sense of optimism, we hope it's also a little more enjoyable.”

No matter what the future holds, the Trends and Insights team will work hard to stay ahead of the curve and provide shoppers with the products that resonate with them. Keep an eye out in your local brand store for exciting new items coming this fall.