

2019 RETAIL INNOVATOR AWARDS

retail
TouchPoints®
SPECIAL REPORT

RETAIL INNOVATOR
awards 2019

RETAIL INNOVATOR

awards

2019

Retail and CPG leaders have gone above and beyond when it comes to innovation and technology disruption in the past year. We received more than 100 nominations for 2019 Retail Innovator Awards (RIA) and are announcing 18 winners.

This year's retail innovators are taking technology to the next level — investing in AR, VR, AI and machine learning to advance their businesses. They're also implementing employee initiatives to help deliver a higher-quality customer experience. And they are thinking out-of-the-box when it comes to influencer strategies, product delivery services, experiential retail and much more.

The 2019 Retail Innovator Award winners are grouped into six categories:

💡 **TECH INNOVATOR**

📱 **MOBILE MOGUL**

💥 **DISRUPTOR**

⚙️ **OPERATIONS OPERATIVE**

📊 **DATA GURU**

📣 **MARKETING MENSCH**

You'll be inspired and motivated by the results the 2019 RIA award winners have achieved. We were!



Debbie Hauss

Debbie Hauss

Executive Director, Content



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💡 **TECH INNOVATOR**



Doug Zarkin

VP & CMO, Pearle Vision
Luxottica

As part of new leadership brought in to revitalize the power of Pearle Vision, Doug began to look for new ways to restore the brand's reputation and premium customer experience. He spearheaded an initiative to redesign and refocus the brand's online footprint on patient acquisition. Today Pearle can connect consumers to their neighborhood Pearle Vision via their IP address. Now they can research open appointments and schedule an exam immediately, using the online scheduler that every Pearle Vision location now has in place. As a result, the brand has experienced +20% per annum growth since 2014 in its online scheduling. Zarkin and his team paired this focus with a custom reputation management solution by Reputation.com, making it more convenient for patients to set up an eye exam and research the specific doctors at their neighborhood Pearle Vision.

💡 **TECH INNOVATOR**



Gurmeet Singh

Executive Vice President,
Chief Digital, Information and
Marketing Officer
7-Eleven

Gurmeet has designed, and 7-Eleven is implementing, what he describes as a "full-stack digital transformation" of the brand. That means digital technology innovations that extend well beyond the IT function, touching every customer-facing and back-office component of the company to assure enterprise-wide acceptance and integration. The Digital Technology Team at 7-Eleven executes on a mobile-first approach that merges lightweight and flexible apps and mobile web experiences with highly configurable and scalable application programming interfaces (APIs). Key innovations Gurmeet has driven include the 7REWARDS® app. 7REWARDS has initiated "retail-tainment" by building an omnichannel augmented reality (AR) experience. The brand partnered with FOX Studios to bring the Deadpool character to life in the app. Gurmeet also implemented Scan & Pay at 7-Eleven, and he launched 7NOW™, the brand's delivery service, which enables on-demand delivery from close to 750 stores.

💡 **TECH INNOVATOR**



Nata Dvir

EVP/General Business Manager, Beauty
Macy's

Nata and the team at Macy's have committed to revolutionizing the in-store customer experience by designing innovative physical+digital solutions across Macy's fragrance and beauty categories. In a beauty collaboration with Modiface, customers can test thousands of cosmetic products from the comfort of their homes. In the collaboration with Perch on their fragrance line, digital experiences are powered by products and activated by shopper-product interaction. These solutions integrate physical products with digital content, and they represent the strides that brands and retailers are making to reinvent the retail experience. Nata has worked her way up the Macy's corporate ladder for the better part of 13 years. In that time, she has worked across a variety of departments and categories.

 **TECH INNOVATOR**



Shrenik Sadalgi

Head of Next Gen Experiences
Wayfair

Shrenik is a polyglot developer and technology plumber. He drives engineering and software development at Wayfair to create next generation experiences in AR, VR and MR. He is working on ways to effectively engage with customers across the shopping journey — from discovery all the way to delivery — balancing cutting-edge tech with an intuitive and highly practical experience that makes sense for even the most tech-averse shoppers. Before joining Wayfair Next Gen, he spearheaded the modernization of Wayfair's mobile web experience as a part of the Client Technologies team. Prior to joining Wayfair, he helped build Horizon Mobile out of the CTO's office at VMware; helped create a pointer-based, interactive media system for TV at Hillcrest Labs; and an AR experience allowing users to collaborate and casually create music in a shared physical space.

 **DISRUPTOR**



Cynthia Sandall

CEO/CMO
ROAM Fitness

Taking experiential retail to the next level, Cynthia founded ROAM Fitness, a post-security airport gym that utilizes a complimentary clothing rental program and living showcase to promote a premium brand experience and retail sales. Customers can purchase day and annual passes. The space also offers reservable private showers and complimentary rental workout gear for men and women. ROAM has partnered with Brooks to provide running shoes and with lululemon for apparel. Passes can be purchased in advance using the ROAM app. The brand currently has its first location open in the Baltimore-Washington International Airport and is planning to expand to several other locations in 2019.

 **DISRUPTOR**



Dani Reiss

President and CEO
Canada Goose

Dani recognized that physical stores are a powerful marketing vehicle that enable brands to interact directly with customers and tell their story unfiltered. That's why, at a time when many retailers were closing their doors, Dani led Canada Goose to expand — to be not only a manufacturer and wholesaler of high-quality, performance luxury apparel but also a retailer that continues to open stores globally. In the stores, customers can use Cold Rooms to test the warmth and efficacy of Canada Goose products. Located in five of the 11 stores, Cold Rooms are set to sub-freezing temperatures. It is experiential retail that serves a purpose. The Cold Room debuted in Tokyo in 2017 and expanded to Hong Kong, Beijing, New Jersey, Boston and the Montreal flagship. Approximately 30% of customers visit the cold room when in-store.

✦. DISRUPTOR



Diana Ganz and Jeanne Foley

Co-Founders
The Groomsman Suit

Jeanne Foley and Diana Ganz founded The Groomsman Suit (TGS) to disrupt the tuxedo rental process through a direct-to-consumer e-Commerce model. From its roots, shipping out of the co-founder's apartment, to today shipping almost 100 orders a day via a fulfillment center, TGS has had an incredible trajectory with minimal funding. To date, they've completed only one fundraising round for \$400,000. By minimizing retail's traditional supply chain and establishing a direct-to-consumer distribution model, TGS has been able to price their product for half of what the competition offers. TGS has developed its own custom Fit Finder based on customer data, which has dramatically improved customers' ability to find the best size. They continue to use the data gathered to fine-tune this tool, and are working to connect it to one of the world's largest size databases to make it incredibly accurate. In addition to growing almost 250%, last year TGS opened its first showroom in Chicago.

✦. DISRUPTOR



Nicole Miller

Founder
Nicole Miller

Nicole Miller's first store opened in 1986 on Madison Avenue in New York, and **Nicole Miller** the company was launched in 1992. It grew rapidly and now comprises the collection and her atelier, as well as numerous other categories including footwear, jewelry, activewear, home, kitchen and bath. Nicole is both an innovator and disruptor. She sees the world of retail going through a transformation. "Things are changing all the time and they're changing at a very rapid pace. Clearly, the department stores are suffering greatly. I think a lot of the high-end retail web sites have taken a lot of their business away. The focus has switched from celebrities to influencers. Influencers are now the new celebrities."

✦. DISRUPTOR



Stuart Landesberg

CEO and Co-Founder
Grove Collaborative

Stuart Landesberg was destined for a career focused on sustainability from the time he was a young child and his home was filled with more products from Seventh Generation than any other brand. Fast-forward to today: Landesberg operates Grove Collaborative, a brand of homecare products focused on consumers' health and wellness, as well as environmental concerns. Stuart and his team depend on customers to become influencers and get the word out about the brand. Thousands of "regular people," not celebrities, have stepped up to "speak about Grove and how it has impacted their lives," he noted. The brand provides Grove Guides to shoppers to help them understand the products and select the right ones for their families. The company also offers a flexible subscription service with optional auto-shipment.

 DATA GURU**Doug Jennings**

VP, Data Analytics and Customer Insights
Lowe's

To move toward becoming locally relevant with better merchandising capabilities, Doug and his team built a framework that would leverage AI/ Machine Learning, merchandising knowledge, as well as feedback from stores and operations to decide the optimal assortment. The framework was designed to be capable of storing, processing and measuring all necessary information. After winning the trust of leadership, he brought together people with different skill sets and built the desired app in just few months. Outcomes include:

- Improved sales and margins;
- More relevant localized offerings that address customers' preferences; and
- Ability to leverage data and technology to make critical business decisions.

 DATA GURU**Ekta Chopra**

VP of Information Technology
e.l.f. Cosmetics

With more than 6.7 million followers across six social channels, e.l.f. Cosmetics seeks to meet customers' needs where they engage with the brand. Under Ekta's leadership, e.l.f. has implemented AI-driven e-Commerce initiatives that have increased sales through Predictive Sort, as well as uncovered previously hidden customer data. E.l.f. chose Salesforce Marketing, Commerce and Service Cloud to help customer service agents more proactively resolve cases in less time. These initiatives have not only increased sales through Predictive Sort, but have uncovered previously hidden customer data, such as product purchase trends and other buying habits. This pursuit of a holistic customer view has resonated with consumers, resulting in a conversion increase (on par with Black Friday averages) and a 50% decrease in daily customer service tickets.

 DATA GURU**Michael Relich and Miles Barger**

COO and VP
Lucky Brand

By embracing predictive analytics to optimize inventory and modernize its supply chains, Lucky Brand has demonstrated that it can successfully meet consumer demand across all channels and down to the individual stores. As part of a strategic effort to diversify its denim apparel roots to manage a vibrant collection of lifestyle products, Michael, Miles and their team made an aggressive push to grow the multi-channel distribution network and build a complex e-Commerce network — placing strong emphasis on inventory optimization. Recognizing the limitations of historic allocation and fulfillment processes, the brand implemented Select, a cloud-based, predictive analytics SaaS platform designed to optimize overall inventory portfolios in stores and across the supply chain. This approach to Lucky Brand's ship-from-store fulfillment program has resulted in a seven-figure sales upside, with overall turns improving across stores at a higher margin than before.



MOBILE MOGUL



Mohit Gulrajani

SVP, Omnichannel Strategy
& Operations
Brooks Brothers

Mohit has pushed the Brooks Brothers organization toward more flexible mobile in-store tools. In the past year, he has been an executive sponsor for a clienteling app from MadMobile, as well as providing a training platform and store reporting, accessible through both tablets and phones. The clienteling app has outreach tools that are new to the Brooks Brothers organization. These outreach tools let associates text their customers with everything from product suggestions to reminders for in-store pickups. Stores have sent more than 5,000 messages to customers in the pilot, with great success stories in connecting with customers and growing the brand's custom suiting business. On the back end, the solution drives in-store traffic and sales. Mohit also is continuously exploring new technologies, recently launching pilots for Amazon Pay and AI search tools.



OPERATIONS OPERATIVE



Arnold Leap

CIO
1-800-FLOWERS.com, Inc.

Under Arnold's leadership, 1-800-FLOWERS.COM, Inc. has created a gifting destination that truly resonates with shoppers. Since developing a unified platform to support the company's multi-brand strategy, customers are enjoying a streamlined experience, including having a better understanding of the variety of products available to them through the 1-800-FLOWERS.COM, Inc. portfolio of brands. This innovative solution has translated to a surge of customers shopping across multiple brands within the 1-800-FLOWERS.COM, Inc. portfolio. In fact, multi-brand customers now account for approximately 20% of the company's total sales. This is important to the continued growth of the company, as the purchase frequency for multi-brand customers is nearly 3X higher than it is for single-brand customers, and they're also approximately twice as likely to become repeat shoppers.



OPERATIONS OPERATIVE



Cheryl Williams

CIO
Wakefern Food Corp.

Cheryl has literally risen through the ranks of both the business and IT divisions at Wakefern. She has been working on implementing AI/Machine Learning technology to advance forecasting and replenishment capabilities. The new technology is being integrated with the existing store replenishment support system, with the goals of improving order forecast accuracy and reducing labor requirements for managing store orders. The new technology is able to leverage existing systems, minimizing disruption to stores. By improving forecasting accuracy, Wakefern is improving top-line revenue by reducing out-of-stocks, and improving margins by reducing shrink and store labor requirements.

OPERATIONS OPERATIVE



Christian Spor

Director, Store Operations Services
GameStop

Focusing on improving customer engagement, Christian and his team sought to get the right information in the hands of store employees quickly. He worked with Opterus to implement task management, messaging, calendars, evaluations, knowledge base, document library, dashboard and compliance reporting. With task reporting in place, GameStop has been able to cut the time for issuing tasks to stores from hours to minutes. Mobile messaging capabilities, facilitating categorization and filtering of messages, enable store associates to quickly respond to time-sensitive communications. The company also stopped printing its monthly goals document for each store and is saving close to half a million dollars a year. Today, GameStop only needs two employees to manage more than one million documents in the system.

OPERATIONS OPERATIVE



Gianna Venturi

Chief People Officer
Eyemart Express

Gianna joined Eyemart Express in 2016 and set out to answer the question: How do you scale employee training across multiple stores at an accelerated pace, to ensure everyone has the information required to drive profitability and growth? In 2018, the company implemented Axonify, an AI-powered adaptive microlearning platform, across 1,800 users in a variety of roles. Eyemart put in place a thoughtful launch strategy that included executive sponsorship, a cross-functional support team and phased rollout. The initial rollout included four districts (10-15 stores per district). By modernizing its approach to corporate training with an AI-powered adaptive microlearning platform, Eyemart has reduced onboarding time from 35 days to 10 days, which has lowered the labor cost of ramping a new employee down to only \$1,300 on average. That's a savings of approximately \$1,500 per employee.

MARKETING MENSCH



Russell Barnett

Chief Marketing Officer
My/Mo Mochi Ice Cream

Russell Barnett is a creative marketing executive with deep experience in category-creating food and beverage items. He specializes in providing vision, direction and leadership to entrepreneurially spirited brands. Before joining My/Mo Mochi, and after a stint in the advertising business, Barnett was asked to open the U.S. operation and run marketing for an unknown alcohol beverage, Mike's Hard Lemonade. During his tenure he took the brand from inception to +\$150M in just five years. Barnett then headed marketing for Gardein, where the brand grew from approximately \$30 million to a run rate of approximately \$90 million annually before being purchased by Pinnacle Foods PF (NYSE). Additionally, he was CMO at KeVita, which was recently sold to PepsiCo PEP (NYSE). Russell has helped propel My/Mo Mochi to sales in many grocery chains, including Wegmans, Safeway, Kroger and Harris Teeter.

ABOUT THE 2019 RETAIL INNOVATION CONFERENCE

Hosted by *Retail TouchPoints*, the 2019 Retail Innovation Conference (#RIC19) is a three-day educational and networking event that aims to help retailers think differently by spotlighting the disruptors who are driving business success. #RIC19 was held May 6-8, 2019 at the Convene event space in New York City. Retail Innovator Award winners are honored at the event.

www.retailinnovationconference.com



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Longtime retail editor who loses sleep over typos. Looking forward to covering the industry as it morphs along with social and mobile developments.

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