

The FMCG main market - deploying technology in the new normal



By [Andrew Dawson](#)

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Globally, the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) market had to quickly adjust to the challenges that came with conducting a business in a world of social distancing, hand sanitiser and masks.



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Today, most formal retail outlets operate effectively within the parameters of prescribed health protocols and measures. However, for the informal sector, also known as the main market and its suppliers, the transition is more complicated.

The multi-supplier challenge

The very nature of main market business is personal; it's built on the interaction between manufacturers, sales representatives and owners which rely heavily on forged relationships throughout the distribution channel.

The challenge, therefore, is how do you keep servicing the main market, which is also known as informal markets such as street vendors and spaza shops, whilst meeting social distancing and other protocol requirements?

Break bulk buyers that requires smaller stock volumes face similar challenges. These companies provide an important service to main market retailers, spaza shops and other businesses. They purchase and repackage goods from the main distribution centre into smaller containers and baskets, saving on previous space and inventory costs.

Again, break bulk suppliers' service to main market business is hands-on as the packages must be delivered. Furthermore, supply and demand relationships are also built on personal interaction.

It is therefore clear that the distribution channel faces a conundrum. How do you create a safe environment for your sales teams whilst ensuring that the main market, which has considerable buying power, continues to procure goods from your organisation?



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Technology it is

Enter technology and its ability to reinvent your operations in a manner that keeps the distribution channel happy and profitable. Empowering main market retailers and spazas to generate their own orders through a technology platform is an important step that will significantly benefit your business.

How you may ask? For one, your sales representatives will have more time to focus on growing and strengthening

customer relationships without having to physically interact (on a daily basis) with main market clients to generate orders.

Technology such as integrated self-service modules, which are compatible with most operating system (OSs), will provide main market businesses with line-of-sight on what products they've ordered in the past, which they can simply reorder and add additional goods.

This in turn gives main market businesses the autonomy and ability to manage their requirements.

To enable the above, it is important that a robust technology solution is provided that will benefit all parties, ensuring business relationship transparency throughout the supply chain.



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Practically, there is currently a plethora of applications that allows main market businesses to order products. These applications can be embedded on a smartphone or notebook, however, the trick is it must be able to provide information. This includes the discount level a specific product is on, where it is coming from and number of days it will take to deliver.

Similarly, suppliers must be able to mine the relevant customer data, obtaining access to live intelligence that will enable them to change strategies, fill gaps in the market and discover why products aren't selling or moving very fast.

If data is the new normal than live insights to the data is the new differentiator.

Ultimately, ensuring that the distribution channel to the main market and back flows efficiently will go a long way in looking after a part of the economy that offers significant buying power. Technology, if deployed correctly, will solidify and future proof your main market business.

ABOUT ANDREW DAWSON

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