

The Grocer

NEW START FOR CATEGORY MANAGEMENT

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SIR; Category management is failing to fulfill its potential for the great majority of grocery businesses.

A really sound concept has been turned into a complex, jargon-laden, number crunching exercise. This is out of reach for most grocery businesses and ineffective for many larger ones.

Ninety per cent of commercial people in grocery businesses are sceptical, disillusioned, or plain hostile towards category management. The main culprits are a handful of management consultants who, for their own ends, have created and peddled incredibly complex methods.

We need to see a new form of category management which gets back to the sound basics: suppliers and retailers working together to develop total category profits by better understanding consumers.

This new form of category management needs to be drastically simplified, less obsessed with process, and more clearly focused on results. It needs to be faster, slicker, and cheaper than the current approach. Focused analysis needs to replace massive data trawling exercises and there needs to be increased emphasis on qualitative information and working at retail store level. In this way, category management may start to fulfill its potential for the majority of grocery suppliers.