The DTC Collective is a community that brings together influential, global voices in retail to actively reimagine, reshape, and redirect digital retail to put the shopper first — all in an open, collaborative space that formerly only happened behind closed doors.

In 2020, the DTC Collective was created in response to several simultaneous events: the growing popularity of global data regulations, the elimination of third-party cookies, and the accelerated digital adoption that accompanied the global pandemic.

Now, more than ever before, there is a need — and an opportunity — to openly collaborate on previously behind-closed-door insights and strategies that put the shopper first, and allow retailers to drive business growth, remain competitive, and thrive.

In April, the DTC Collective came together to discuss their unique takes on the shopper-first approach — a growing priority for brands as they transform to meet the shopper wherever they are. Here are some highlights from the April 2022 session.

How do retailers orchestrate more seamless customer journeys to meet the shopper on their terms, turf, and timeline?

Retailers need better customer orchestration to provide seamless journeys for their shoppers and meet those shoppers in the moment — and that all starts with being able to activate first-party data and gain the right view into both critical shopper and product signals.

However, a persistent focus on data aggregation can prevent brands from acting on their most critical data — and lump individuals into static and potentially outdated segments, personas, and categories.

To meet shoppers with always-on, authentic experiences that have the right combination of product, content, and offers at every touchpoint, you have to take a step back and look at your organizational structure.

For example, consider how your IT team is set up and if it supports shoppers as they move through their journey with your brand. Is it cross-functional and aligned with business objectives, or project-based and siloed? IT needs to enable collaboration on test-and-learn projects, extract value out of data, and activate data to drive revenue.

Start with the org

"MEMBERS OF THE COLLECTIVE STATED"

Shorten the distance between action and consumer-facing ideas — and you'll address your data gaps.
Organizations need to develop an approach around IT and business teams to identify projects and functions that can show results and diminish silos. Hypotheses can come from IT, business leaders, and customer experience teams — and then be put into a prioritization framework for testing.

Answer the question: Why are you digitally transforming?

Retailers need to digitally transform, but tech stacks are extremely complex, and simply adding new tech does not equate to digital transformation.

The transition from traditional processes to a digital framework is complex — and companies need to recognize why having a holistic digital infrastructure is important before determining where to go from there and setting up a specific roadmap with testing.

For example, are you digitally transforming because of pressures from your board — or to create the kind of in-the-moment agility needed to respond to rapidly evolving shopper needs? While the former will create a sense of internal urgency that may bypass short-term obstacles, the latter will provide tangible outcomes that you can prove in repeat purchases and higher revenue.

MEMBERS OF THE COLLECTIVE STATED

Knowing that the data you’re using and collecting is critical. The worst thing we could do is train models with bad data that we just grabbed somewhere because it was laying around.

Rethink your measures for success — and find the “connective tissue” between business and tech

Companies must work toward solutions that make sense for the entire organization, which means empowering teams to work together with not only a common vision — but a shared language and agreed-upon measures of success for projects across IT and marketing teams.

Digital transformation projects and infrastructure roadmaps mean very little if they’re not contributing to sustained, predictable revenue growth over time. When you focus both IT and marketing projects on increasing identification, first purchase rate, and repeat purchase rate — you not only increase revenue, but lifetime value and profitability for the business.

For example, it’s worth considering having individuals who can translate IT projects and analytics into tangible insights for making critical business decisions around customers, inventory, and pricing. This creates alignment for more effective test-and-learn motions within marketing — and is critical to improving decision-making across the org.
Stay flexible while driving acceptable returns on investment

Retailers need to be more efficient with spend, but it’s not easy to effectively forecast — or understand attribution and incrementality — under rapidly shifting macroeconomic conditions.

For example, a Lending Tree survey shows that 36% of consumers went into some form of debt during the holiday season in 2021 — and retailers are seeing the ramifications of this in shopper behavior. With factors like this affecting the purchasing power of the dollar — not to mention the highest inflation rate in 39 years, a radically unbalanced seller’s market, and soaring mortgage rates — it’s critical for retailers to stay nimble, agile, and be able to optimize on the fly.

MEMBERS OF THE COLLECTIVE STATED

Knowing that the data you’re using and collecting is critical. The worst thing we could do is train models with bad data that we just grabbed somewhere because it was laying around.

As marketing budgets get squeezed, teams want to have more control over spend and the levers they’re pulling to drive revenue. Brands need to be able to prioritize tools that give them visibility through transparent test-and-learn capabilities — and quickly experiment between different channels and campaigns to improve their efficiency of spend.

Takeaway: Move at the Speed of the Shopper

A pragmatic shopper-first approach is about more than data aggregation and digital transformation. It starts with looking at gaps in your organization, your tech, and your ways of measuring success so you can activate critical shopper and product signals. Cultivate individualized experiences that resonate with your shoppers — and meet them on their terms, in their moment.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE DTC COLLECTIVE AND BECOMING A MEMBER.