

# Zipline



**The Next Generation  
of the Grocery Workforce  
is the Community.**

Are your Store Communications Ready?

# The role of grocery store workers changed significantly during the pandemic. No longer viewed as simply staff members who fill shelves and operate cash registers, grocery workers took on a new importance: essential workers, who were often also called on to learn new omnichannel skills.

This shift has not been without its challenges or added stress. In fact, 2 in 5 retail workers were considering leaving the industry as of last summer, [according to](#) field enablement platform provider Zipline.

But the challenges are manageable, especially if retailers look to open, consistent communication as a means of retaining grocery employees and keeping them engaged and happy in their jobs. And retailers are making headway. Through the pandemic, Zipline has seen a 40% increase in communication among its retailer customers, co-founder and CEO Melissa Wong [said](#).

The result of these factors has been the formation of the next generation of the grocery workforce: a community of essential employees who, when they are given the right communication tools, feel happier, more loyal and more prepared to tackle every aspect of their jobs.



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## Navigating the shift in the grocery workforce

In March 2020, as the pandemic began, employees in grocery stores became frightened of getting sick at work.

Because of this, it became more important for grocery chain executives to focus on how to take care of their employees. That meant communicating about how they were keeping staffers safe, offering pep talks, adding safety measures and fostering a real sense of community among members of their workforce.

To successfully lead workers through the pandemic, grocery leaders also needed to start emphasizing regularly how essential their workers had become in consumers' everyday lives.

## Focusing on communication

Communication became more critical than ever. But, up to that point, communication in the grocery industry, as in many other areas of retail, had been fragmented; it mostly consisted of emails, in-store signage, store huddles and other outdated methods of communication.

To remedy this, some retailers found that a platform like Zipline was a useful tool because it puts store communications all in one place, with an easy-to-understand dashboard. And such tools make a difference: One grocery chain that implemented Zipline **achieved** 90% adoption and execution rates. Whereas, typically, only about 29% of directives are executed correctly by stores.



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“Our goal is to ease communication challenges for brands so employees in the field are safe and empowered to do their best work, which has never been more critical,” said Wong.

For instance, grocery chain Hy-Vee deployed Zipline’s communication platform in the early days of the pandemic. The platform quickly became the retailer’s primary communication method, and in turn helped its stores stay open at a pivotal time.

Incorporating Zipline into their communications strategy meant Hy-Vee executives could communicate directly with store associates and track the execution of constantly changing store protocols, health and safety guidelines, best practices and in-store tasks. And due to the nature of Zipline’s setup, Hy-Vee was able to implement the technology quickly.

“Zipline allows our corporate team to communicate with every single employee to make sure everyone receives the same message and executes new protocols or receives the latest company news in a timely fashion,” **said** Jessica Ringena, Hy-Vee’s senior vice president of finance and business strategy.

“Thanks to Zipline, I know our associates feel taken care of,” Ringena **noted**. “We use the platform to help them do their jobs better and alert them when there’s an important update, product recall or task. But we also use [it] to let them know how things are going, how we’re keeping them safe.”

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## **Customizing communication**

At the height of the COVID-19 crisis, grocery store teams were overwhelmed with new procedures and changing guidelines. To be successful in this environment, leaders needed to find a way to connect all employees and offer top-down, consistent messages on everything from health and safety to training and shop floor protocols.

“Store associates bring their best selves to their jobs when they understand their company’s vision and how the work they do impacts those goals. We see this every day with grocery front lines who go above and beyond their daily tasks to impact customers and bring a brand vision to life,” Wong said.

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“For the most part, we are such a better company because of how we communicate today,” Hy-Vee President and CEO Randy Edeker **said**.

Edeker has used Zipline to connect with every associate, every week, via a video message, to show his appreciation and support for Hy-Vee’s workforce throughout the pandemic.

Centralizing all communications on a single platform this way means every employee is on the same page, in real-time. This helps eliminate confusion because all associates have access to the same information.

At the same time, the information every employee receives is personalized to their role, store, region and country. Management can even talk directly to individual stores about specific things, without sending the information out to others, to whom it’s irrelevant.

For Hy-Vee, Zipline has also been a one-stop shop for storing resources on pandemic policies and procedures so associates can access them easily.

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## **Ensuring communication goes both ways**

Successful store communication is not just about keeping employees engaged, but also keeping leadership teams informed: Retail executives stand to benefit from receiving insights directly from store employees. Research from Zipline **found** that 43% of grocery workers do not feel consistently heard when making suggestions to retail headquarters, which means companies have the opportunity to create a more inclusive atmosphere for their workforce if employees believe their voice matters.

Through Zipline, executives can receive real-time reporting from stores, so they know whether store teams are following guidelines or whether there are any issues occurring at the store level. Executives can also access insights from all levels of employees. They can even run surveys – and see who's responded – to ensure they're getting meaningful information from their store teams.

Meanwhile, district managers can see for themselves who's accomplished what, via access to real-time reporting that is delivered to their mobile phone, tablet or laptop.



## Fostering the workforce community

The transition to becoming essential workers has created new needs for grocery employees, who as a group have grown and bonded together over the past two years and formed a close-knit community.

Grocery retailers that take steps to realize the potential of meaningful communication with store employees typically find the employees are dedicated to and invested in the brand. They feel valued, motivated, loyal and excited to bring a great experience to shoppers.

“The key is to find a way to strike the right balance between autonomy and guidance. Overcoming that challenge depends on the communication between the brand and its store managers, and the store managers and their employees,” Wong said.

Beyond the workforce, there is another community for grocers to consider – the community at large in which they operate. If a grocery store has empowered its employees through training and communications, each store worker should be able to answer customer questions and help shoppers with their various needs, thus providing a great shopping experience.

“The aim is to give department and store leaders tools that provide them liberty to lead and run their stores effectively, without technology getting in the way,” said Jeremy Baker, chief technology officer and co-founder of Zipline.

## Conclusion

In today's consumer environment, it's imperative that grocery retailers are prepared to support this next generation of grocery workers and communicate with their teams digitally. Tacking notes on a break room corkboard is no longer a sufficient way to communicate with store workers.

With everything in one place on a platform like Zipline, grocery team members can easily access information and messages, and management teams can ensure that everyone has received the messages.

Informed employees feel valued, which makes customers feel more valued and can ultimately help boost retailers' profits.



# About Zipline

Thanks to increased consumer demand, it's clear that more complex tech roll-outs are now table stakes in the grocery industry. Brands that want to keep up will need to continually push for newer, better, cutting-edge customer experiences. Implementing those types of initiatives, quickly and at scale, can be difficult without the right communications and task management platform in place.

At Zipline, we believe that clear, effective in-store communication is crucial for a successful omnichannel strategy. It's the key to fostering a more agile workforce, and ultimately the only way grocery retailers can guarantee consistent, precise execution. Digital solutions are proven to drive higher execution because they ensure everybody gets the same message at the same time. Zipline ensures that policies and procedures from HQ are seen, understood and completed on time, with the reporting to prove it.

With so many brands developing an omnichannel strategy that will last, this is the perfect time to evaluate your current communication and task management tool.

To learn more about how Zipline can enhance your omnichannel strategy, email us at [meetzipline@getzipline.inc](mailto:meetzipline@getzipline.inc), or visit us at [getzipline.com/grocery](https://getzipline.com/grocery).

