



# Shelf planning innovation fuels shopper satisfaction

AWG partners with technology leader SymphonyAI to improve retailers' planogram performance, store execution and sales

## Challenge

Retailers are operating in a world where the elevated expectations of customers and their fast-changing product preferences have created new merchandising challenges. Customers want it all — local products, the hottest new items, a breadth of assortment, fully stocked shelves — and they can be unforgiving when those needs aren't met.

## Solution

While customers have never been more demanding, the tools available to help retailers operate their businesses and plan and execute merchandising strategies have never been more powerful. Shelf planning is a great example of an area where technological innovation is enabling retailers to have success managing the complexity of satisfying customers' broad range of heightened expectations. To improve the performance of category planning teams and the ability of retailers to execute in stores AWG uses the best-in-class shelf planning solution from retail technology leader SymphonyAI. The solution automates the process by which store clusters and resulting store-specific planograms are generated. It also enables the flexibility of store-specific shelf layouts that ensure must-stock items are always included, and that SKU adjacencies and merchandising rules are observed, so customers have a consistent and localized experience at the shelf and the items they want are always available.



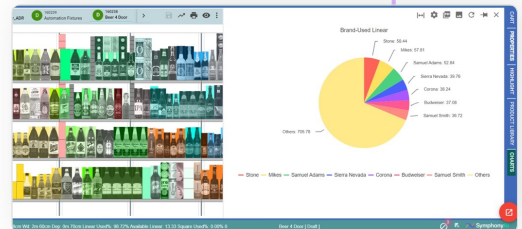
## Benefits and results

While shelf planning is not a new concept in retail, it is the technological innovation, improved workflows and decision-making accuracy that enables retailers to win with customers in the aisle. For example:

- The shelf is a dynamic environment where shoppers make planned and impulse purchases, and store associates stock shelves to satisfy in-store shoppers and also pick products to support their online channel. Such an environment requires consistent execution of optimized planograms which are unobtainable without leveraging technology.
- SymphonyAI's shelf planning solution generates store-specific layouts that accurately reflect category strategy and customer needs, along with SKU adjacencies while adhering to physical constraints and incorporating merchandising guidelines. With a streamlined and connected approach that is easily deployed, retailers avoid siloed space planning that's disconnected from upstream assortment decision-making and potential mismatched space allocations.
- Category planning teams gain efficiency as processes are automated such as the creation of store clusters and store-specific planograms. Doing so ensures shelf layouts include “must-stock items” and SKU adjacencies and merchandising rules are observed so customers have a consistent and localized experience and the items they want are available.



The biggest benefit AWG members get from using shelf planning is the ability to customize shelf sets in each of their stores. Their optimized assortments will best fit their customer needs and the retailer can measure the performance of those shelf sets, which would also include DSD and third-party supplied products,” said Brian Adams, AWG’s Director of Category Management Execution. “Being able to plan for these additional items in a customized planogram environment ensures better efficiencies at shelf with stock status and reset execution projects.



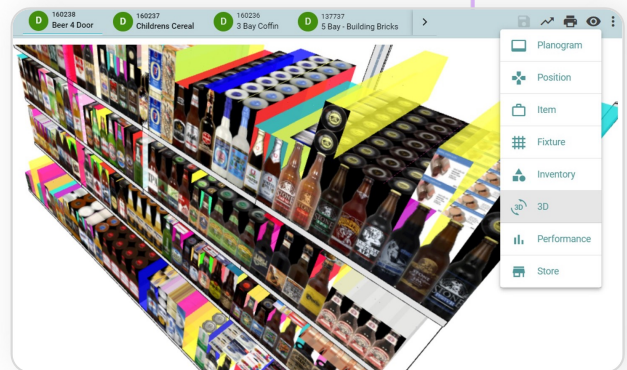
## Future plans

Shelf planning is a powerful advantage for AWG members, but the realization of benefits depends on adoption of base planograms and customization when needed.

Going forward, AWG plans to make further investments in innovation to ensure members have the tools and technology to improve processes, maximize efficiencies and enable assortment optimization at the shelf.



A one-size-fits-all option doesn't always work for every member when you have members with a diverse portfolio of demographically unique stores, which is why we have greatly improved our base offerings over the last couple of years by including multiple shelf set size offerings," Adams said. "The addition of this planogramming service will greatly increase the adoption of planograms by our members, given their ability to add their own customizable features and assortment for each store in their portfolio."



## About **Associated Wholesale Grocers, Inc.**

Associated Wholesale Grocers, Inc. (AWG) is the nation's largest cooperative food wholesaler to independently owned supermarkets, serving 1,100 member companies and more than 3,500 locations throughout 33 states from 9 wholesale divisions. Consolidated sales for AWG in 2023 were \$12.4 billion. In addition to its cooperative wholesale operations, the company also operates subsidiary companies that provide certain real estate and supermarket development services, health and beauty care, general merchandise, pharmaceutical products, specialty foods, and natural and organic products.



## Why shelf planning?

Effective shelf planning is essential for success in today's highly dynamic retail environment. At its most simplistic level, shelf planning provides retailers the ability to communicate to stores the assortment of products and placement of those products within stores. Shelf planning is essential for grocers because it ensures that the stores execute the overall strategy of the category. "The planogram is created by analyzing the performance of products, analyzing new products and aligning the quantities on shelf to meet consumer demand between delivery schedules," said Gina Hargrave, SymphonyAI's head of solution success for assortment and space. "This creates operational efficiency for stores, so they know where products are placed and with how many facings but also creates a clean easy to shop retail environment for the consumer."

Using an advanced shelf planning solution enables retailers to:

- Deliver customer-centric, space-aware assortments that resonate with shoppers elevated expectations for new, local and in-stock.
- Create planograms for store clusters or individual stores.
- More efficiently build planograms thanks to faster onboarding of new users and elevating the proficiency of experienced employees.
- Provide easy access to the most up-to-date planograms via IOS or Android devices rather than static PDF files.
- Achieve simplified and collaborative workflows that increase speed of approvals and provide real-time assurance that planograms are executed in stores.
- Ensure created planograms will fit the space available across different store sizes.



A good example of how grocers can maximize the value of shelf planning involves aligning product facings and quantities on shelf to delivery schedules. Doing this will make sure products are in stock on the shelf and help eliminate waste by reducing the quantities on the shelf for slow selling items — the combination of which drives sales and increases profitability for retailers."

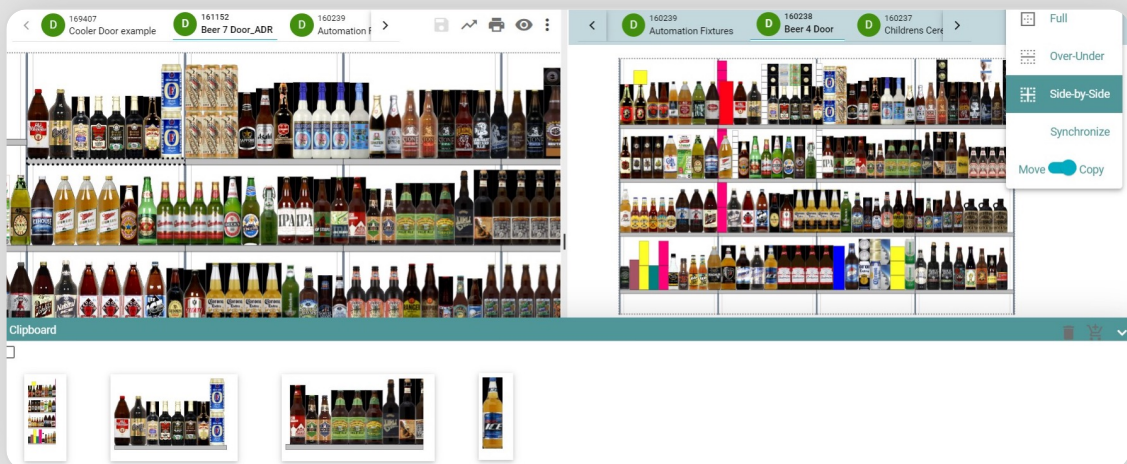
Gina Hargrave, Head of Solution Success, Assortment and Space for SymphonyAI



## Solution

The key advantage of the SymphonyAI shelf planning solution is how it facilitates collaboration and communication among AWG, retail members and individual stores. All parties are able to access a shared platform to ensure consistent communication and collaboration. In terms of collaboration, SymphonyAI's shelf planning solution facilitates communication between AWG and retail members on the most critical of

merchandising decisions. "AWG members can now see AWG created planograms in the platform and modify them for their specific store needs," Hargrave said. "This includes adding DSD items or regional items retailers source outside of AWG. This drives better in store execution, improves on shelf availability and reduces waste."



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Discover how SymphonyAI's [shelf planning](#) and other best-in-class [assortment and space solutions](#) help retailers grow sales.

