



10X, Twice: Mindsets for Scale .

BY SPINS & C.A. FORTUNE



INTRODUCTION



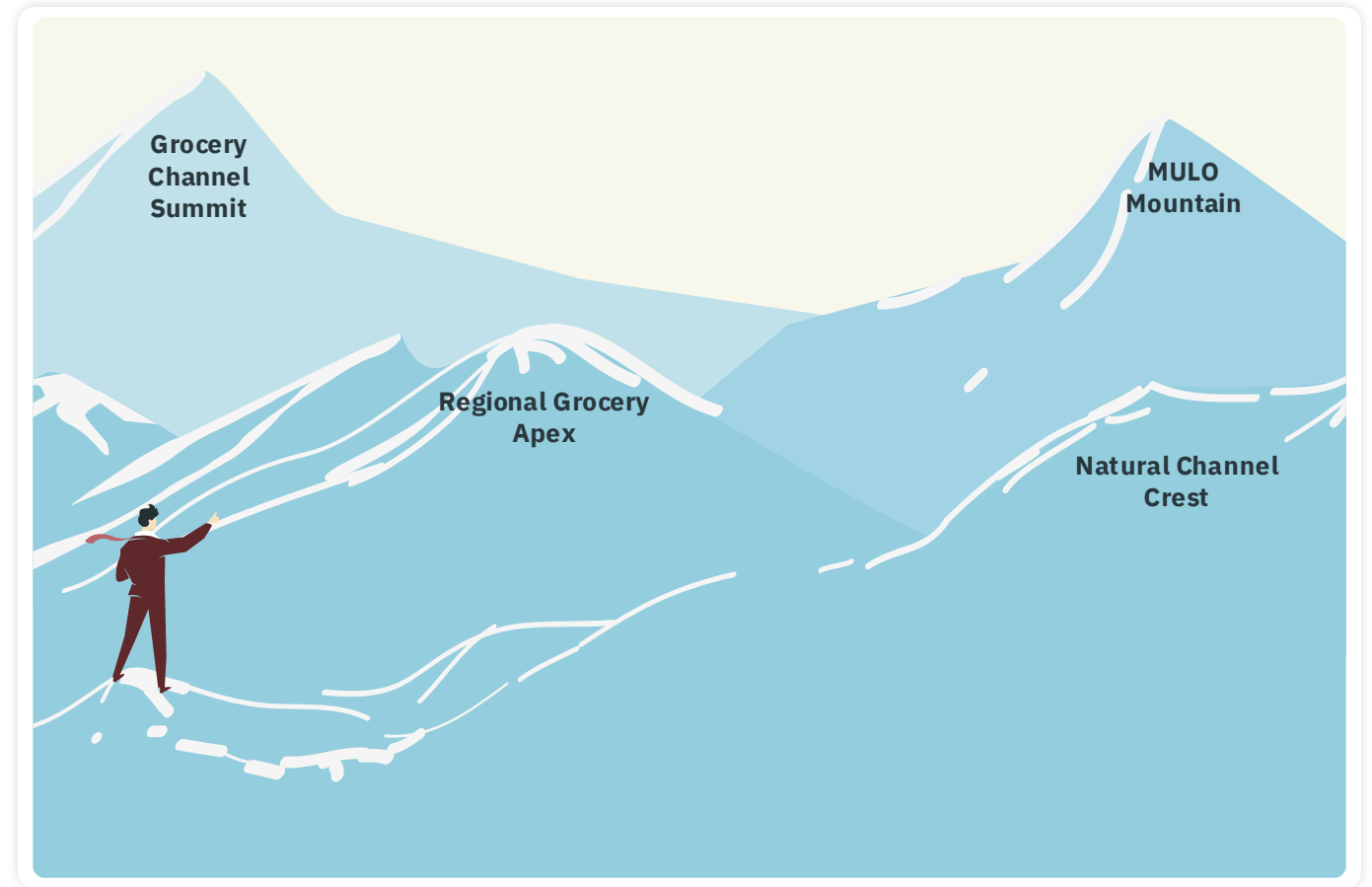
You've done it.
You've made your first
\$1M in sales.

Your first million in sales is a huge milestone – definitive proof many customers enjoy the fruit of your labor.

You've climbed the first hill, but higher peaks are now in view.

What does it take to 10x your business again and again?

Read on to find out.





INTRODUCTION

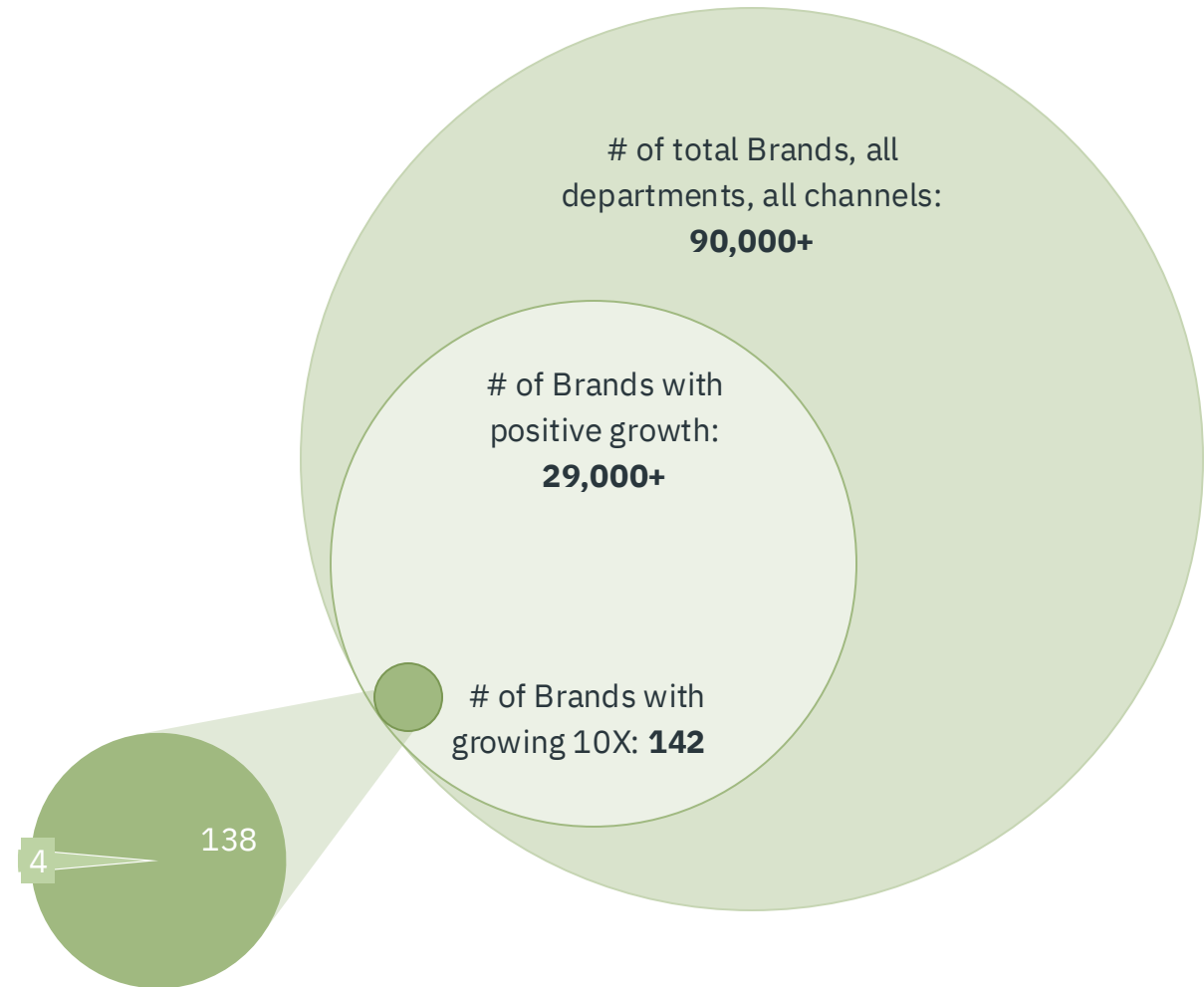


The Top Scaling Brands

While many CPG brands are growing, only 142 out of over 85,000 are scaling at 10x – that’s less than 1 percent of brands!

Here we are defining scale as a period of rapid, sustained, 10x growth over three years.

Scaling is incredibly difficult and requires different strengths or “mindsets” at different times.



138 Brands scaled 10X from \$1M to \$10M;
4 Brands scaled 10X from \$10M to \$100M.



INTRODUCTION

The Top Scaling Brands Have Similar Mindsets

A mindset is a combination of things: **goals, strategy, communication and relationships.**

The mindset best suited for businesses wanting to 10X from \$1M to \$10M is very different from the mindset used to 10X from \$10M to \$100M.



Mindset



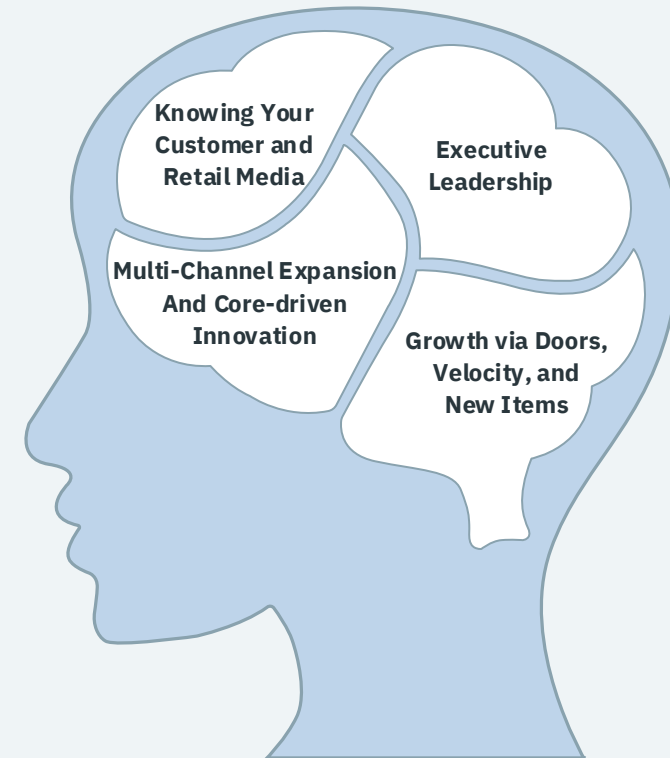


Simply put, it's the difference between **Hustle** and **Precision**

\$1-\$10M “Hustle” Mindset



\$10-\$100M “Precision” Mindset





INTRODUCTION

The Common Truth Between Hustle and Precision

Scaling at 10x requires margin for fuel.

Early-stage brands often need to **“buy” velocity, awareness, and shelf space** before they can achieve the efficiencies that make scale possible. That can mean offering aggressive promotions, paying slotting fees, or taking calculated risks. All of these compress margins in the short term but fuel the **distribution footprint and consumer trial** needed to hit a volume threshold where efficiencies kick in.

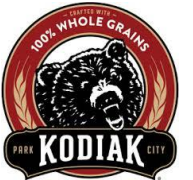
Beyond this, there are two **distinct mindsets**, one for each phase of growth.





SPINS & C.A. Fortune Are Pairing Up To Share Their Knowledge & Experience

SPINS and CA Fortune has seen many brands grow and thrive. This deck is based off our observations and experience helping those brands adopt the right mindset to succeed.





Executive Summary

These are the key strategic differences and foci for each scaling mindset.

	SCALE PHASE	TOP GOAL	CHANNEL STRATEGY	PORTFOLIO FOCUS	MARKETING & TRADE SPEND	ARCHETYPE
	“Hustle” \$1-10M	Know Your Buyer	Going hard where your key buyer shops	Identify heroes; Refine what’s working and reinvest	Get the basics right, both online and in-store	Scrappy Entrepreneurs
	“Precision” \$10-100M	More doors, higher velocity	All fronts; Multi-channel & Omnichannel	Scale core products; Innovating in new but close categories	Consistency; use Retail Media	Experienced Executive Leadership



Hustle: The \$1-10m Mindset



Figure Out Your Buyer

A **clear understanding of your customer** makes it easier to identify which retailers align best with your brand. If you know the answer to “Who buys your stuff?”, you’ll be better equipped to **prioritize the right channels, make the right products, and design and target the correct creative, to 10X your business.**

Find out what key qualities your buyers have in common – and how they’re unique from the competition.

Consumer Demographics: SnackCo vs. Total Snacking			
	Consumer Demographics	SnackCo Buyer Index	Total Snack Buyer Index
	Income Household Income \$100K+	150	107
	Generation Gen Z	141	91
	Younger Millennials	274	99
	Older Millennials	173	100

Where Do Those People Shop?

Now is the time to build up your B&M network. Where should you start: Natural, Regional, or big Conventional stores?

Compared to big conventional retailers, the **cost of doing business with Natural Channel & Regional retailers is usually less – and their customers are usually less price sensitive.**

However, there will be upfront costs like promotional spend and free fills. Wherever you go, buddy up with your category manager or buyer.



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Retailer Fit Checklist

1. Are they aligned with your mission?
2. Does your customer base shop there?
3. What are the costs of getting on the shelf – free fills, minimum order quantities, demos, et cetera?
4. Do the margins work?
5. Will you stand out on shelf, or get lost next to similar or bigger brands?
6. Will your distribution network support them?
7. Will working with this retailer close off opportunities with other retailers?

“Our retail buyers...aren’t just distribution points, they’re strategic partners. Their feedback has **shaped our formats, our packaging, even our innovation roadmap.** We treat them like collaborators, not just gatekeepers.”

– Megan Buick, VP Sales, Porta



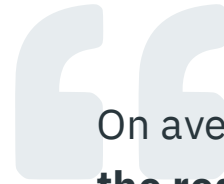


Amazon as a Testing Ground

For “hustle” brands, eCommerce is often the first and most important channel. It serves as both a **learning lab and a launchpad to test product-market fit**, pricing, packaging, and messaging before investing in brick & mortar distribution.

Amazon is also key for many scaling brands – sometimes as a major revenue source, but also as a **discovery and credibility driver**. Being searchable and purchasable on Amazon lends legitimacy and provides a broad market signal to retailers and investors.

Success on crowded marketplaces like Amazon often comes down to making large investments at all stages of the funnel – from brand awareness, to decision-making, to conversion, but will come at a price.



On average, **scaling brands can spend the first 12-18 months in the red**, but it's necessary to build the foundation for adoption and higher profitability later.



– **Joe Hesketh, VP, eCommerce**
Growth Solutions, SPINS

Find The Heroes, Then Tinker

At this point, your product lineup winners will be clear. **The majority of your sales will come from a minority of products – usually 2 to 3 winners.**

This is your opportunity to make changes and streamline your portfolio. Ask yourself: what resources could you free up if you eliminated the lower-performing items, and how could you repurpose those resources to scale faster?

Sales data results can help guide your decisions but give equal airtime to your partners and customers too.



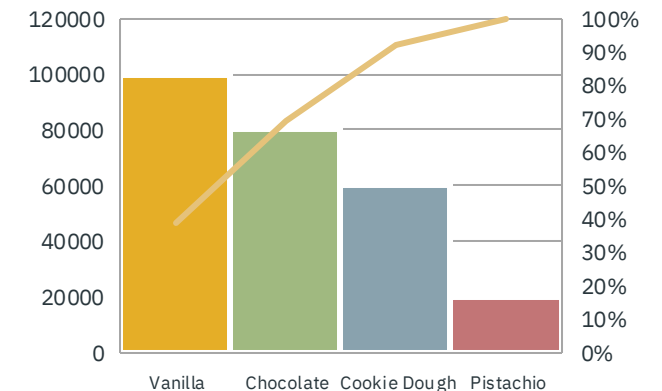
We review customer data as a team every month. We look at feedback from **reviews, support tickets, and online comments**, and use that input to guide continuous improvements — whether that's **refining recipes, enhancing packaging, or making updates** based on what our customers are asking for.

– Megan Buick, VP Sales, Portia

Case Study: Kill Your Darlings

Company X sells four flavors of ice cream: Vanilla, Chocolate, Cookie Dough, and Pistachio. Each flavor costs \$3 to make and sells for \$9 except for Pistachio, which costs \$5 – those nuts aren't cheap! Pistachio is the weakest selling flavor and the most expensive to produce. **By eliminating Pistachio, the company would save \$100k in production costs.** Company X could repurpose those funds for marketing Chocolate and Cookie Dough, invest in ads or campaigns, or fund promotions like endcaps, sampling and deep discounts.

Portfolio Pareto Chart (Units)



Analyze your portfolio with a Pareto chart, which compares sales volume with share of portfolio sales. In the above example, Pistachio is the lowest of both. Is it worth keeping?

Marketing Focus: Great Website, Social, Packaging – check!

You're probably too small to have a dedicated marketing lead, so most likely this responsibility rests on the shoulders of the CEO, founder, or perhaps a lucky intern.

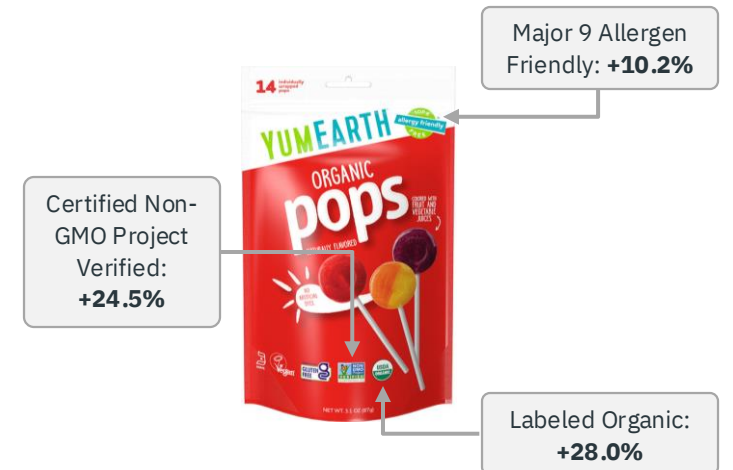


Marketing Checklist

- **Website:** Sounds basic, but – have one! And make sure it's **up to date**. Store product locators are great for customers trying to find your product.
- **Social Media:** Pick a channel or two and feed it constantly. **Paid ads, partnerships, sponsorships**, and other content will help build up your customer education and loyalty.
- **Packaging:** Your packaging can always be better – fine tune the messaging and call outs. **Make sure that your primary differentiator is the “hero” of the package**, and the supporting differentiators are in the right spot. What truly makes you unique? It should be instinctually known after a single, brief glance.

Big Claims, Big Numbers

Are your label claims performing well? Make sure to **highlight growth of key attributes if they are outperforming the subcategory average**. In this example, the candy subcategory is performing at 9.0% baseline growth. Any attribute performing better than baseline is worthy of mention in a pitch deck or sell story.





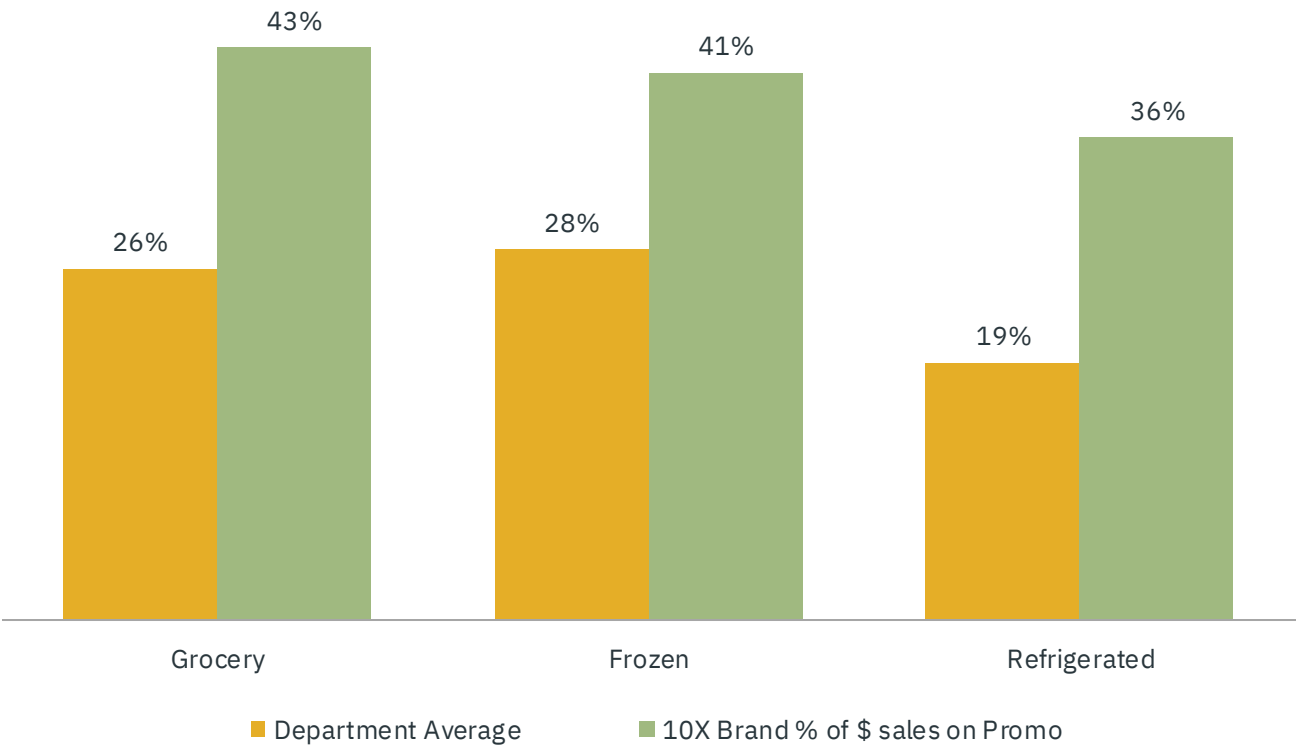
Plan For Heavy Trade Spend

For “hustle” CPG brands scaling at 10x, promotions can be a very important element of the brand’s growth strategy. Promotions are one tool to help drive trial of a product – other significant levers of driving trial can be social media campaigns, influencer partnerships, sampling events, or limited-time offers/seasonal drops.

The most common question we hear is, “**Are our promotions working?**” Understanding that takes time. In the short term, looking at % lift or increases in base sales for the 12 weeks after the promotion compared to the same period before the promotion can add clarity. Over the longer term, swings in market share or brand switching studies can prove or disprove if a strategy is working.



Sample of Scaling Brands vs Department Average:
% of \$ on Promo





Speed Dial

At this stage, founders speak to these key people frequently. Make sure you are prioritizing them.

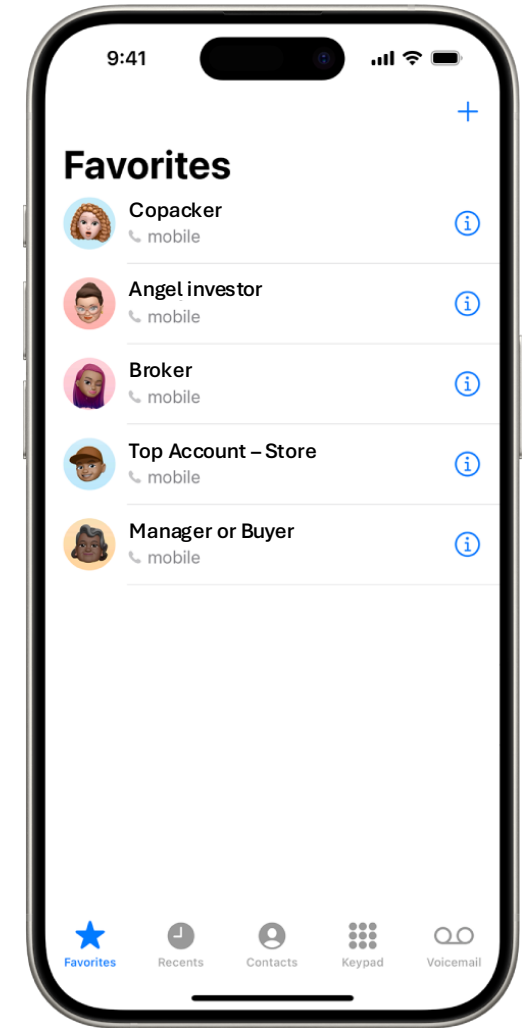
- Co-manufacturer
- Source of funding
- Sales agency / broker



Q: What qualities do you look for in a broker to help scale your business?

“We looked for partners who **believed in our long-term vision — not just a quick win.** We wanted people who understood premium, frozen, and differentiated products, and had the trust of key retailers.”

Megan Buick, VP Sales, Porta





Precision: The \$10-100m Mindset



Velocity, Distribution & Innovation

Get ready to do the impossible: keep a relentless focus on U/S/W (velocity) while also opening up new channels and launching new items. It's hard to do!



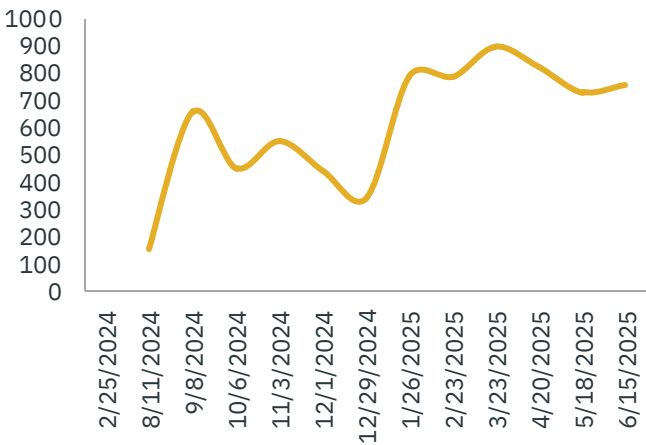
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Reasons To Improve Velocity

- **Retailer Credibility:** Sustained velocity proves consumer demand, helping maintain shelf space & justify expansion into additional SKUs or stores.
- **Retailer-Specific Sell Story:** Velocity benchmarks vary by retailer. Tailoring specific channel velocity story helps build trust & show you understand their business.
- **Better Negotiation Power:** Gives you leverage in category reviews (eye-level, buy level.)

The Velocity Journey

For most fast-scaling brands, dollar or unit velocity charts **starts strong, dips a bit, ticks up, and then stabilizes**. Peaks and valleys at the later point of the graph can reflect seasonality or promotional activity. Below is a chart of a brand's average weekly \$ per store selling per item trended over two years.



Multi-Channel Expansion

Now it's time to grow beyond your first retailers. **Take your momentum and roll it into what you're doing next.**

Next is expansion into the conventional grocery channel; regional chains to start with (Publix, Kroger) – and then win at other chains in their in the same area or CRMA.

In addition to standard channels like Grocery, Mass and Club, many brands also start focusing and flourishing in other channels like Food Service, Military, Dollar, or International, airports or school districts, or alternative retailers like HomeGoods, TJ Maxx, or World Market.



Early success in the natural and eComm channels and partnering with our best-in-class agency partners helped us to take our story to new heights.

– Rick Pickering, SVP, YumEarth

Channel Mix Changes Over Time

Many brands start in one friendly channel (natural, regional grocery, or eCommerce) but over 2-3 years, conventional grocery or mass stores are responsible for a majority of sales and volume. Most brands split the sales leader role into multiple geographic (East vs West) or store focus (Natural vs Conventional) roles. In the below example, a brand may start with a few regional grocers, banners or regions, and then add to that base over time with different types of accounts.





From eCommerce to Omnichannel

Now eCommerce becomes less about experimentation and more about integration and scale, shifting from being the main growth driver to a supporting pillar of an omnichannel strategy. **Consistency across platforms, digital shelf optimization, and aligning online efforts with in-store promotions are now the focus.**

Amazon becomes a true revenue channel at this stage, **requiring a dedicated team or agency partner to manage inventory, advertising, reviews, and platform compliance.** The brand invests more heavily in Amazon’s ecosystem like sponsored search, DSP ads, and brand storefronts to win share and maintain visibility.

Meanwhile, pure DTC sales platforms typically play a smaller role, reserved for limited-edition drops, influencer collaborations, or community engagement.

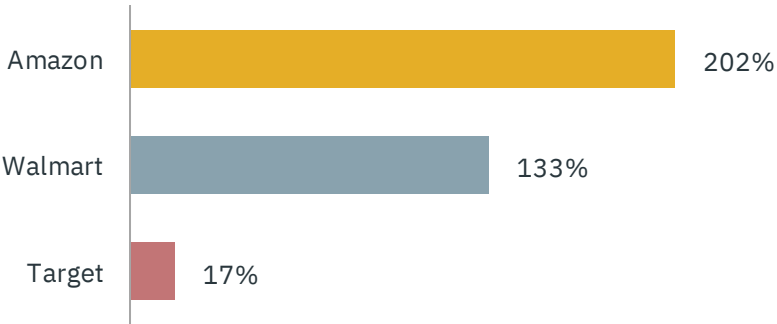
Growth via Alignment: Prime Day

Unlike in physical retail, price comparisons in eCommerce are easy to do - just a few clicks and customers can compare prices. In recent years Walmart and Target have decided to match Amazon's Prime Day period in summertime, hoping to capture some of the attention - and sales - generated by Prime Day.

Instead of prioritizing only Amazon, consider matching the discounts put forth on Amazon for other large eCommerce retailers. One brand SPINS worked with this year did just that as was able to see large lifts across multiple platforms simultaneously.

Pricing parity helps eliminate confusion among customers. By making offers across all channels match, this brand not only eliminated customer confusion but built a customer-centric strategy that engaged shoppers on their preferred platform.

Prime Day Sales % Lift vs Baseline



Scale Your Core Products

While it's important to have “new news” when you meet retailers, don't rely solely on innovation to grow.

First, stick with core working SKUs and grow your distribution/ACV as much as you can. Next, consider taking those winners and reformatting them; for example, Mass or Club retailers like Target or Sam's Club might want **larger pack sizes** along with different pricing and margin structures.

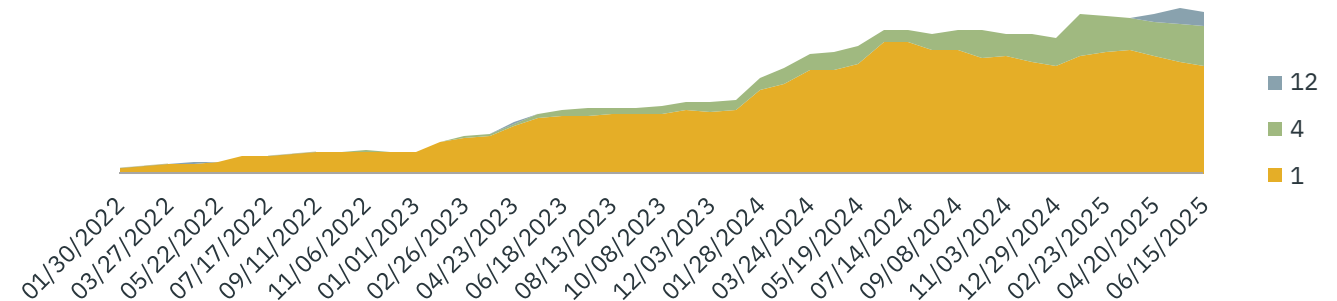


Our packaging is also a differentiator. We have **multiple sizes in each platform** that all have fun and colorful packaging.

– Rick Pickering, SVP, YumEarth

Larger Formats, Bigger Sales

This brand scaled sales of their unique product by gradually introducing four-packs and twelve-packs. Single servings helped build trust with consumers, and the later introduction of multipacks added a value element for frequent users.





Incremental Innovation

Instead of flooding the market with a wide array of new items, fast-scaling brands are narrowing their focus. Innovation teams are doubling down on investments, with increased R&D budgets and long-term innovation pipelines. This reflects a growing awareness that innovation is about **long-term incrementality, precision and purpose.**

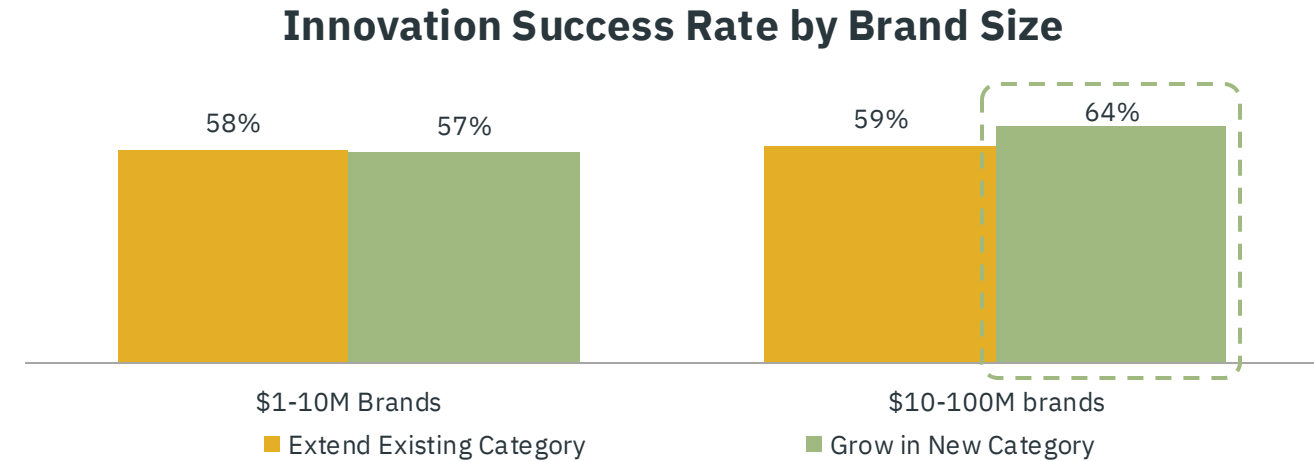
The main incremental innovation pathways are:

- **Sideways Stretch:** Finding new pockets (special diets, new flavors) in your current category.
- **Attribute Adjacency:** Leveraging your unique differentiator into an adjacent category (going from granola to granola bars.)
- **New Category Contender:** Same as above, but in a faraway category (think Oreos – jumping from the cookie aisle to collabs with Coca-Cola and protein powders. Licensing deals can work here.)

[Read more about innovation strategies here \(link to June Content\)](#)

Close, But Not Too Close

The chart below shows the success rate of innovation for all stages of brand by their original starting category or a new category. Brands above \$10M in sales see **greater success in new parts of the grocery store.**



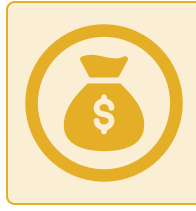


Pushing, But Also Pulling

By this point, many companies will have a CMO, Marketing Director, or an agency in place. Professionals come in to set strategy and deploy tactics to not only push products via promotions, but also to pull in customers to the store or platform.

Usage of retailer platforms like Walmart.com, Target.com, and Kroger.com **drive in-store velocity** and strengthen retailer relationships. Participation in **retailer media networks** like Instacart Carrot, Walmart Connect or Kroger Precision Marketing is common and sometimes required.

How Retail Media Works in 5 Steps

**01**

Brand pays retailer to advertise on their platform;

**02**

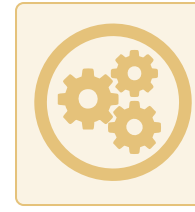
Brand chooses who to target based on what they've bought, searched for, or browsed;

**03**

Ads appear in search results, category pages, email, off-site ads, or even on in-store screens or shelf tags;

**04**

Shoppers buy product and performance/ conversion is tracked;

**05**

Brand optimizes and scales what works by tweaking targeting, creative, or budget.



Speed Dial

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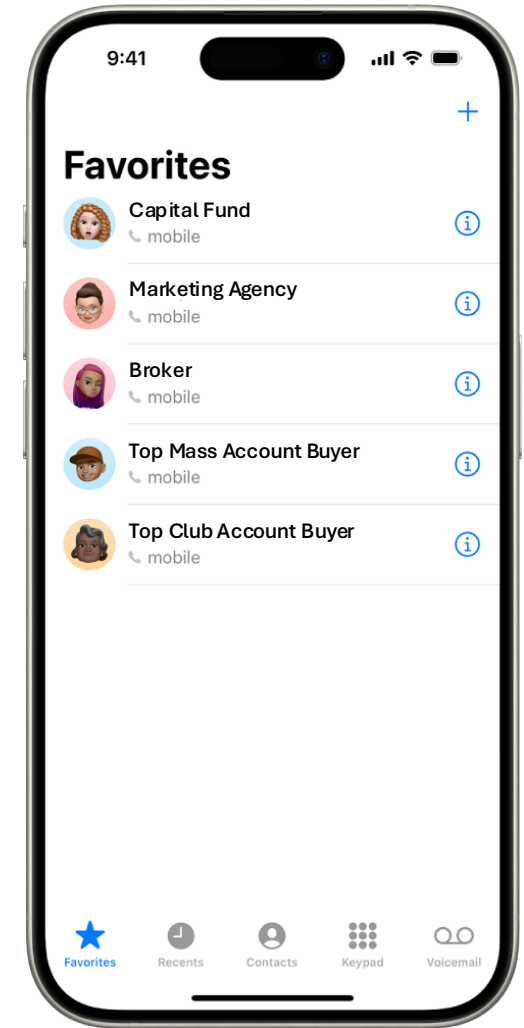
- Private Equity firm
- Sales agency partner/ broker
- Top customers



Q: What qualities do you look for in a retailer or broker to help scale your business?

“We look at agency partners as an extension of our company and sales team. It was important for us to have mutual respect and trust of each other. We also wanted a partner that was an expert in our natural space and had great relationships with our customers and within the industry.”

Rick Pickering, SVP, YumEarth





Let's end with a closing question from our two leaders.

Q: If you could do it again, what is one thing you'd do differently?



“What works when you're small doesn't always scale. Part of that is **knowing when to bring in experts** in the areas where you're not the expert and trusting them to help take the business to the next level.”

Megan Buick, VP Sales, Porta



“Work with our partner to **invest more in capacity** so we were better prepared to meet the increasing demand.”

Rick Pickering, SVP, YumEarth



Summary

These are the key strategic differences and foci for each scaling mindset.

	SCALE PHASE	TOP GOAL	CHANNEL STRATEGY	PORTFOLIO FOCUS	MARKETING & TRADE SPEND	ARCHETYPE
	“Hustle” \$1-10M	Know Your Buyer	Going hard where your key buyer shops	Identify heroes; Refine what’s working and reinvest	Get the basics right, both online and in-store	Scrappy Entrepreneurs
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It takes an **agile mind and opportunistic personality** to scale a company. Start by defining what your goals are and then adopt the correct methods to achieve those goals.

Success in CPG is accretive and does not come overnight – it's the result of many hours of **difficult, creative, relationship-led** work over time.

Thank you, from SPINS, C.A. Fortune, Porta & YumEarth