

# Save A Lot modernizes retail operations with connected retail supply chain and merchandising from SymphonyAI



## About Save A Lot

Founded in 1977, Save A Lot is one of the largest discount grocery store chains in the U.S., with approximately 750 stores in 32 states. True to its mission of being a hometown grocer, Save A Lot provides unmatched quality and value to local families. Customers enjoy significant savings compared to traditional grocery stores on great tasting, high quality private label brands, national brand products, USDA-inspected meat, farm-fresh fruits and vegetables, and other non-food items.

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## Strategic goals

As Save A Lot progressed on a strategic transformation from grocery retailer to bannered wholesaler, it sought a best-in-class, end-to-end technology partner to provide connected retail to best support its transition as well as its owner/operator retail partner network. CIO Jennifer Hopper and Chief Merchandising Officer Trey Johnson crafted a holistic vision that would give the company enhanced business agility, efficiency, and scalability, setting it up for long-term success with its new business model.





## Business challenge

Save A Lot set about modernizing its entire retail operations stack as it transitioned from a hybrid retail/wholesale to a pure wholesale model. A major goal was to modernize their MDM and core merchandising services system to replace a legacy system that resided on aging hardware and software. Hopper and Johnson also wanted a modern, easy-to-maintain, fully integrated end-to-end platform that would serve its retail partners well and better engage shoppers across all of its nearly 750 stores. They sought a vendor partner who would enable them to scale and grow to support existing and future retail customers with a roadmap vision that would give Save A Lot business agility to keep pace with its changing business model, customer behaviors, and demand patterns.

Its existing supply chain platform was dated and required significant maintenance. Hopper and Johnson took the opportunity to look for a supply chain management and optimization system that would provide retailers with real-time inventory visibility, including best-in-breed data synchronization to centralize ownership and data flows for business agility.





## Solution

The Save A Lot team sought an innovative vendor partner who would modernize Save A Lot's supply chain and lay the foundation for a complete retail/wholesale operations transformation. They recognized SymphonyAI as a leader in cloud-based technologies leveraging AI with an innovative end-to-end vision for connected retail, while at the same time enabling incremental adoption.

Save A Lot liked the SymphonyAI connected supply chain, which provides the ability to support an omnichannel environment as well as unified order management and complete store and channel insights. With SymphonyAI Demand Forecasting AI, Save A Lot would also gain more detailed, current insights into true shopper demand signals to drive its inventory planning and allocation.

The end-to-end system, on a foundation of SymphonyAI Master Data Management, would give Save A Lot organization-wide intelligence, greater supply chain agility, and improved decision-making.

Looking ahead, Save A Lot wanted to modernize its space planning software to give Retail Partners visibility and analytical capabilities to optimize store layouts. Their existing on-premises system was dated and difficult to maintain, and it was difficult to add new Retail Partners.

With a strong and trusted relationship already established in the supply chain arena, Save A Lot turned to SymphonyAI for space optimization as well to transition towards its end-to-end connected retail goal. Tom Burkemper, Save A Lot's VP of DSD and Merchandising Services, liked the SymphonyAI's shelf and floor planning capability plus macro space optimization for the ability to generate scenario-based category sizing recommendations and estimated sales and margin impacts from resets.

Transitioning from a hosted platform to a SaaS solution provides real-time updates, scalability, and improved collaboration, allowing teams to work seamlessly regardless of location. Additionally, this shift enables Save A Lot to tailor layouts based on each store's specific configuration and shelf capacity, ultimately maximizing efficiency and sales potential.

Ultimately Save A Lot selected a broad range of SymphonyAI connected retail products, from supply chain master data management, order management, core merchandising, and vendor portal, through demand forecasting AI and distribution center replenishment. Save A Lot also opted for shelf and floor planning, and macro space optimization, in addition to retail operations including allocation, store operations, and store mobility.



## Program approach

SymphonyAI and Save A Lot designed a five-phase program that would provide incremental adoption with ROI at each phase. The joint project team set aggressive deadlines, beginning with master data management (MDM), order management, and inventory management core merchandising and supply chain.

The supply chain team worked diligently to meet timelines, creating a powerful, central MDM to serve as a cornerstone for subsequent phases. The SymphonyAI supply chain design enabled Save A Lot to share ordering processes and status with buyers, warehouse partners, and retail partners, improve forecasting and optimizing the end-to-end supply chain, all on a scalable cloud architecture. With their bannered wholesale model, Save A Lot is highly focused on providing high service and empowerment to their retail partners, and the ease of ordering and inventory visibility provided by SymphonyAI was important.

As the team moved into implementing floor and shelf space planning, it was able to source comprehensive store and product data from the SymphonyAI MDM system already in place. The integration of point-of-sale data provided a real-time comprehensive view across stores to feed planogram generation.

Today, the Save A Lot team is building planograms and floor plans catered to the retail partners' store layouts. The system also provides flexibility for individual store locations to add additional items that may not be on the central floor plan to cater to its shoppers' preferences. For example, stores with larger numbers of Hispanic shoppers may add items that cater to those shoppers' specific preferences. Local data feeds back through the space planning system to the Save A Lot team so that all records are consistent and in sync.

Burkemper embraced the internal champion role, working closely with SymphonyAI to construct an aggressive but comprehensive project plan. The joint team worked diligently to hit all milestones and went live as scheduled, on time and on budget.





## Results/value

From the beginning, Save A Lot and SymphonyAI established a very collaborative relationship, with good engagement from the executive level all the way through to the project teams,” said Hopper. “There’s mutual trust that we are working together productively to advance Save A Lot’s business goals, and SymphonyAI has proven itself as a trusted advisors for our long-term transformation journey.

With connected merchandising and supply chain, Save A Lot and its Retail Partners have complete insight, down to the store-item level, into what they sell and where they’re selling it.

The 360-degree system enables Save A Lot to view and optimize the entire supply chain, from ordering the right items and quantities from its suppliers to ensuring that each Retail Partner has exactly what it needs, when it needs it. Retail Partners do all their ordering through the modernized system, which provides a maintenance-free end-to-end supply chain view with improved automation and accuracy.

For space optimization, the Save A Lot floor and planogram designers are excited about SymphonyAI’s sophisticated and easy-to-use planning capabilities. The space planning team also worked closely with the director of SymphonyAI’s Learning Center to ensure that store users were well-supported with training as space planning rolled out to nearly 750 stores with 4400 users.



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**Jennifer Hopper,**  
Save A Lot CIO



## Results/value (cont.)

We've gotten great feedback on the SymphonyAI system from our store users, who find it very user-friendly and who got great training from the Learning Center," said Stephanie Dillon, Save A Lot Director of Merchandising Services.

The Save A Lot space planning team can conduct all relevant communications within the floor planning system, including being notified when a floor plan has been implemented and any issues along with their resolutions, eliminating the need to navigate back-and-forth between emails and planning systems. The macro space optimization recommends the optimal amount of space to give key categories for retailers while leaving some allocation for localized products. The team has about 5000 planograms to choose from, enabling them to cater to each store's individual requirements. With frequent store resets as part of their shopper-aligned model, Save A Lot benefits from the increased automation and centralized system.

Together, SymphonyAI's end-to-end supply chain and space planning capabilities enable Save A Lot and its Retail Partners to reduce waste and measurably decrease out-of-stocks, increasing shopper satisfaction and margins and ensure the right items in the right place at the right time.



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**Stephanie Dillon,**  
Save A Lot Director of  
Merchandising Services







## Customer **next steps**

Save A Lot is implementing SymphonyAI Demand Forecasting AI to dramatically increase forecast accuracy and automate time-consuming processes. In addition, they are implementing distribution center replenishment to speed and automate the purchasing process for their distribution centers. The AI-based end-to-end connected platform will enable Save A Lot to provide better service levels for status and inventory updates with their retailers and enable both Save A Lot and its Retail Partners to minimize inventory carry while still meeting revenue and unit goals, reduce costs.

Save A Lot is also transitioning to a SymphonyAI distribution center replenishment system, which will reside on the MDM backbone. The SymphonyAI MDM will ultimately be the centralized system of record, so Save A Lot can move beyond data silos and have organization-wide data access and consistency.

