

NRF '26 RETAIL'S
BIG SHOW

**We can
show you
what's
next...
find it
all in
the Expo.**

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January 11-13 | NYC



Surviving NRF: A Retail Insider's Guide

Because three days at the Javits can feel like three weeks.

Every January, tens of thousands of retailers descend on New York City for NRF: Retail's Big Show — equal parts inspiration, information, and sensory overload. Between the keynotes, the miles of booths, and the constant hum of "let's connect," even the most seasoned retailer can feel overwhelmed.

At Cambridge Retail Advisors, we've attended and presented at NRF for more years than we'd like to admit. So, from one retail insider to another, here's our no-nonsense guide to surviving (and thriving) at NRF.

Set Your Intentions Before You Land in NYC

 **If you walk in without a plan, NRF will eat your schedule alive. Success starts with preparation!**



Define Your Goals

Are you shopping for new tech? Looking for inspiration?
Networking for your next initiative? Pick two or three priorities and stick to them.



Research & Plan

The floor is massive! Plan your route like it's Disney World.
Research sessions and exhibitors that align with your goals.



Book Meetings Early

Vendors' calendars fill up fast. If you're serious about a solution, get on their schedule now.



Build in Breaks

You'll need them — trust us. Schedule downtime to recharge between sessions and meetings.

Pace Yourself on the Expo Floor

Javits is a marathon, not a sprint. You'll hit 20,000 steps before lunch, so strategy matters.

Smart Survival Strategies

- Comfortable shoes are non-negotiable
- Don't try to see everything — focus on must-see booths and leave time for spontaneous discoveries
- Ask for the quick demo unless you're truly interested in the 30-minute deep dive
- Take notes on exhibitors and solutions — everything blurs together by Day 3
- **Download the NRF app** – It's the best way to navigate the floor and track sessions without wandering aimlessly



"Think of NRF like retail — it's all about strategy, timing, and knowing when to pause for coffee." - **Marty Whitmore, Managing Partner at Cambridge Retail Advisors**

Master the Art of the Coffee Chat

Some of the best insights happen outside the sessions — in the lobby, in line for coffee, or during after-hours events.



Be Curious

Ask other attendees what they've seen that impressed them. Learn from their discoveries.



Be Concise

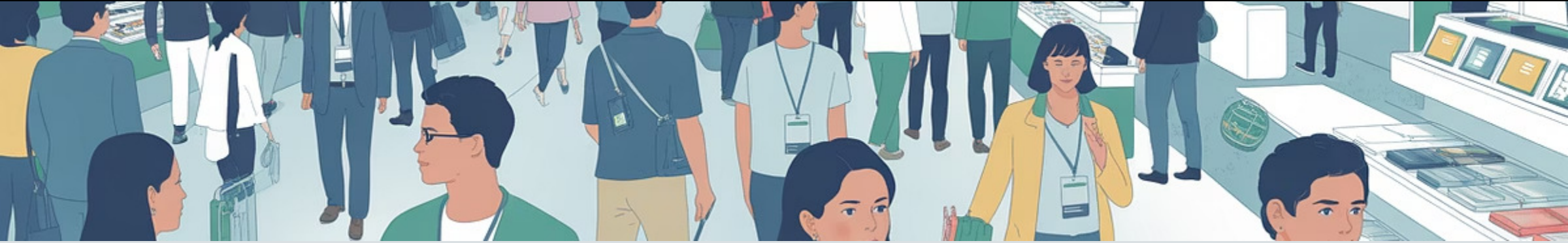
Have your 10-second intro ready: who you are, what you do, and what you're hoping to learn.



Be Kind

NRF can be exhausting — a friendly conversation can make someone's day and spark a valuable connection.





Take Inspiration, Not Overload

You'll hear about AI, retail media networks, omnichannel experiences, and predictive everything. It's easy to get swept up.

Listen for Trends, Not Buzzwords

The magic happens in what's possible for your business, not in the biggest booth. Focus on practical applications.

Don't Compare to Giants

NRF is where billion-dollar retailers show off. Your opportunity is to take those ideas and scale them intelligently for your brand.

Ask "How" Questions

How could this work in our stores? How does it integrate with what we already have? Make it actionable.

- ☐ **Pro Tip:** Follow up before the glow fades. Organize your notes, separate the "interesting" from the "actionable," and share what you learned with your team while it's fresh. - **Ken Belanger, Vice President at Cambridge Retail Advisors**



Your NRF Survival Kit

Pack smart. You'll thank yourself later.

-  **Portable charger (and a backup)**
-  **Business cards or LinkedIn QR code ready**
-  **Refillable water bottle**
-  **Snacks — Javits food lines are legendary**
-  **Layers (January in NYC = unpredictable)**
-  **A sense of humor**

Final Thought...

NRF isn't just about discovering the next big thing — it's about connecting with people, ideas, and possibilities that will shape the year ahead. Approach it with curiosity, manage your energy, and give yourself permission to step outside for five minutes of quiet when you need it.

"Javits may run on chaos instead of coffee — but we've got your NRF game plan covered. Stop by booth #5320 for a quick shot of insight with our Cambridge Coffee Corner crew!" - Sarah Pelton, Partner at Cambridge Retail Advisors

Connect with Cambridge Retail Advisors

As the countdown to NRF 2026 continues, one thing is clear — the show remains the single most important event for anyone shaping the future of retail. It's a test of focus, endurance, and strategic clarity.

Those who prepare thoughtfully will leave not only inspired, but ahead of the curve. Make time to connect with the CRA team and let's turn your NRF experience into a competitive advantage for the year ahead.

Visit us at Booth #5320

Want to continue the conversation? **Reach out today or stop by booth #5320 at NRF** to meet our team — or even join us for an espresso-sized Cambridge Coffee Corner chat!

Contact Us Today

Book a Meeting at NRF



CAMBRIDGE COFFEE CORNER



 Last year's NRF crew! We're gearing up for an even more exciting show — **bigger booth, fresh design, and even more of the same trusted team** bringing strategy, insights (and smiles) to booth #5320!