

ROAD TO NRF'27

JANUARY 10–12, 2027



📍 **BOOTH 6703**



THE LENS · WALKING INTO JAVITS · PART 1 OF 7

Before Javits: What Journey Are You Trying to Improve?

Before you evaluate a single demo at NRF '27, know what you are trying to fix, for the customer and the associate who live with it every day.

THE SHORT VERSION

Most retailers walking into Javits already have initiatives in mind: a POS or ERP replacement, a new pricing engine, loyalty or checkout upgrades, AI agents, or retail media. The risk is not a lack of options. It is walking into demonstrations without a clear picture of the problem those demonstrations are supposed to solve.

Start with two or three initiatives that matter most to your business. Name the customer or associate experience that needs to improve. Note where time is lost, where unnecessary work is created, and where revenue is being missed.

WHY IT MATTERS

A store-level story makes the point. A customer came into a Verizon store angry over a billing problem and ready to leave. Fixing it took more than one visit, a review of account history, support from several departments, and a district manager. The root cause was on both sides: the customer's usage, and how services had been set up. The customer did not get every charge removed, but they understood what happened. Some of the longest relationships in that business began with situations like that.

The lesson for technology selection: a better tool helps, but someone still has to understand the problem before the tool can help.

WHAT THE ARTICLE ASKS YOU TO DO

1. **Bring different perspectives into the conversation.** Operations, merchandising, IT, architecture, customer experience, and product owners each see different priorities. A frontline manager you respect can ask the question no one else thought to ask: what happens on a busy Saturday when something goes wrong?
2. **Look past the happy path.** A checkout demo that works as expected tells you little. Find out what happens when a promotion fails to apply, a loyalty card will not scan, or a pin pad stops cooperating, and whether an associate can resolve it without starting over.
3. **Count the value to everyone.** Technology has to deliver business value. Ask who else benefits, including whether associates share in any new revenue and whether customers get something they want in return. You can hit a KPI without creating much value.



TAKE THESE THREE QUESTIONS TO EVERY BOOTH

1. **Can you show us what happens when something goes wrong?**
Not just the ideal demonstration. Show us how an associate or customer gets through an exception.
2. **What does this change for the customer and the associate?**
What gets easier, what gets added, and where does the value come from?
3. **What would it take to make this work in our environment?**
Think integrations, existing systems, training, and what changes between a pilot and a broader rollout.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOR NEW YORK

- ☐ Write down the two or three initiatives you are walking in to evaluate.
- ☐ Name one customer or associate experience you want to see improved.
- ☐ Invite one person from frontline operations to review the questions beforehand.
- ☐ Decide who will own the follow-up, and what a useful answer looks like.

USE THE GUIDE

The CRA Technology Exploration Guide walks through priorities, customer and associate journeys, exceptions, frontline impact, value, adoption, technology, and follow-up. Answers stay on your device until you copy them out, so use the copy button and save them in your own planning documents.

COMING UP IN THE SERIES

Part 2 looks at how stores are being redesigned around discovery, engagement, and convenience. Part 3 asks whether new tools are empowering associates or adding work. Parts 4 through 7 cover AI and checkout, in-store retail media, inventory and returns, and the systems that have to work together.

WHO TO BRING

- **A frontline manager** you respect. Ask: what happens on a busy Saturday when something goes wrong?
- **Operations and merchandising.** Look at the workflow and the workarounds people already use.
- **IT and architecture.** Test the integrations, and ask what changes between a pilot and a full rollout.
- **Customer experience and product owners.** Walk the journey end to end, not just one screen.
- **An outside voice.** A consulting partner or colleague who will ask the question nobody else thought to ask.



Read the article



Open the guide

ABOUT CAMBRIDGE RETAIL ADVISORS

We aren't software vendors, and we aren't theoretical consultants. CRA is a specialized retail advisory firm of seasoned industry operators who have lived with the systems, led the implementations, and solved the operational friction. Strategy, system selection, and execution grounded in real retail experience. Read the full article at cambridgeretailadvisors.com.

See us at NRF '27, Booth 6703.