

NATIONAL RETAIL LAUNCHES, 2026

Landing Kroger, Target or Whole Foods is the starting line, not the finish line.

Here's why the next 90 days decide whether you keep the shelf.

30 → 300+

Kidfresh's store count in Canada this month. In the same week, Bizzy Coffee went into every Kroger division, Queen St. Bakery reached 200+ Target stores and Loonen went national at Whole Foods.

Landing the buyer is not the hard part.

Keeping the shelf is. From day one, the retailer is watching one number: velocity, the units you sell per store, per week.

1 in 4

new CPG products are no longer bought a year after launch. About 40% are gone within two years. Smaller brands in big categories face the highest risk.

Investors are reading the same scorecard.

Margin, velocity and repeat purchase. A big store count with weak velocity is not a milestone. It's a liability.

WHAT BREAKS AFTER A NATIONAL LAUNCH

It's rarely the product. It's the operating system around it.

Supply and fill rate

The first order is rarely the hard part. The second and third are. A short shipment leaves holes on the shelf right when the buyer is watching.

Cash

You pay for inventory, slotting, promotions and freight months before the retailer pays you. Growth you can't fund is a countdown.

Trade spend

Promotions drive trial. Without discipline, they also quietly erase your margin.

Consumer pull

The retailer gives you the shelf. It doesn't give you the shopper. Nobody in your new markets has heard of you yet.

The team

The people who won the national deal usually aren't set up to run it. Nobody owns the weekly sell-through data.

THE 90-DAY PLAN

Days 1 to 30

See the data.

Confirm you're on shelf and priced right in every store. Set up weekly sell-through by store and SKU. Lock supply for two cycles. Build a 13-week cash forecast.

THE 90-DAY PLAN

Days 31 to 60

Drive trial where you're weakest.

Put demos, coupons and retail media behind your low-velocity stores. Cut every promotion that didn't move units. Call your buyer before they call you.

THE 90-DAY PLAN

Days 61 to 90

Prove the case for more space.

Show velocity by store cluster, repeat purchase and margin after trade spend. Then decide your next move: add, cut or hold.

This is where a fractional COO or CMO fits.

The work is intense, specific and time-bound. Every promotion is a marketing choice and a cash choice at the same time. One experienced operator can build the machine while the founder keeps selling.

The launch is the starting line.

Treat it as a 90-day operating sprint and your win has the best chance of becoming a business.

Full piece: marc-drucker.com