



USA: Kroger taps Microsoft to fight off Amazon

America's largest grocery retailer and global technology company partnering to pilot two connected experience stores.

Kroger, America's largest grocery store chain, has partnered with Microsoft to create a pair of hi-tech grocery stores in order to fend off Amazon.

The collaboration seeks to redefine the customer experience using Kroger Technology products powered by Microsoft Azure. Kroger will pilot a connected store experience and together with Microsoft, jointly market a commercial RaaS product to the industry.

"Kroger is building a seamless ecosystem driven by data and technology to provide our customers with personalized food inspiration," said Rodney McMullen, Kroger's chairman and CEO.

Connected store experience pilot

The pilot stores – one in Monroe, Ohio and the other in Redmond, Washington – will leverage RaaS, establishing a way to quickly add innovations to create new customer experiences, enable higher levels of personalization through insights and enhance store associate productivity.

The digital stores will introduce innovative shopping experiences, including the latest generation of EDGE Shelf (Enhanced Display for Grocery Environment), a shelving system that uses digital displays, instead of traditional paper tags, to indicate everything from prices and promotions to nutritional and dietary information.

For store associates, a pick-to-light productivity solution can reduce the time it takes to fulfill curbside pickup orders by using visual cues to help them quickly find items. Additionally, solutions like powered video analytics will help store associates identify and address out-of-stocks to ensure customers can locate products on their shopping list.

The new pilot will guide expansion plans in 2019 and beyond.

Kroger has some 2,800 retail food stores under a variety of banner names.