

Commercial Excellence Academy

by  Asbiverse Group

Optimizing Route to Shopper® Capability for Winning in Retail

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# Route to Shopper®

A Strategic Framework for  
Integrated Shopper-based Value  
Creation in the Home  
Improvement Industry

# Route to Shopper® Framework for Home Improvement

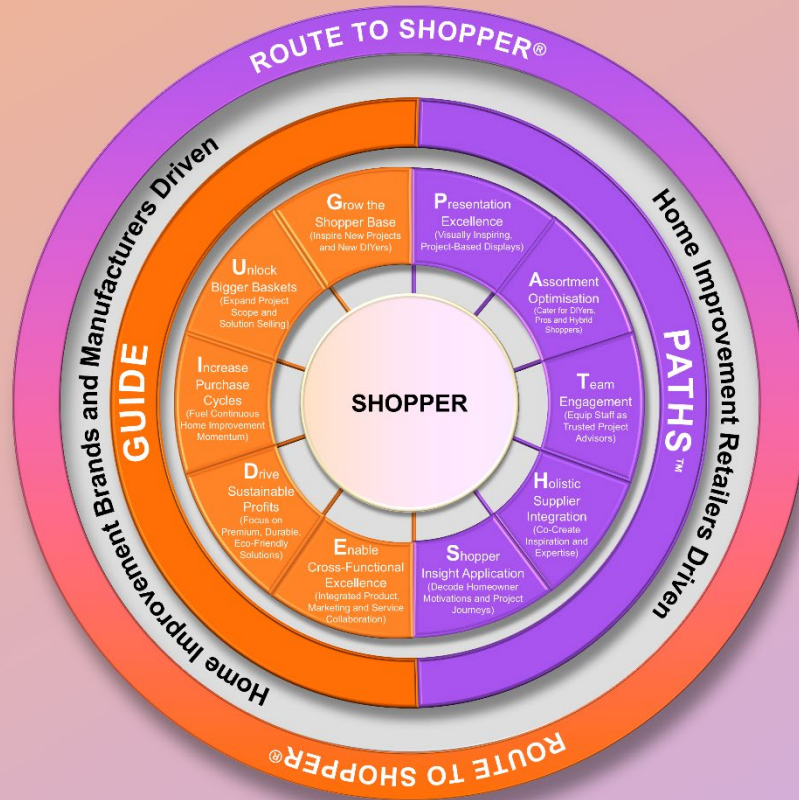
## Strategic Roadmap for Commercial Excellence in Home Improvement

*A Commercial Excellence Academy Strategic Framework*

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# The Route to Shopper® Framework incorporating GUIDE – PATHS™ for Home Improvement Industry



# Executive Summary

## What does it really take to win a shopper's consideration in a world of endless options?

In the home improvement landscape, commercial success depends on connecting brand strategy with shopper behaviour, retail execution, and channel-specific differentiation. The **Route to Shopper®** Framework provides a comprehensive capability roadmap for transforming commercial performance through deep shopper understanding and systematic execution.

This strategic positioning document demonstrates how leading home improvement organizations can leverage the **Route to Shopper®** Framework to build sustainable growth, drive stronger shopper connection, and improve commercial outcomes across diverse categories including paint, tools, flooring, lighting, kitchen/bath fixtures, and DIY supplies.

## Strategic Context: The Home Improvement Landscape

### Industry Dynamics Requiring New Strategic Approaches

The home improvement sector faces unprecedented complexity in shopper behaviour, channel evolution, and market dynamics:

#### Shopper Expectations

- Increased demand for project confidence and expertise before purchase
- Rising expectations for both physical and digital shopping experiences
- Growing focus on sustainable, eco-friendly home improvement solutions

#### Channel Transformation

- Traditional boundaries blurring between specialty retailers, big box stores, and e-commerce
- Digital-to-physical journeys becoming the norm rather than the exception
- Emergence of hybrid models including marketplace platforms and direct-to-consumer options

#### Market Volatility

- Fluctuating economic confidence directly impacting renovation project scale and timing
- Rising materials costs pressuring margins and value perception
- Labor availability affecting the DIY vs. DIFM (Do It For Me) balance

## Shopper Mission Diversity

- **Urgent Fixes:** "I need to repair a leak today" - immediacy-driven, high-stress missions
- **Dream Projects:** "I want to create my perfect kitchen" - inspiration-led, high-investment missions
- **Seasonal Refreshes:** "Time to repaint for spring" - cyclical, maintenance-driven missions
- **Value Enhancements:** "I want to increase my home's value" - ROI-focused improvement missions

These complex dynamics create both challenges and opportunities for industry leaders who can effectively connect brand strategy with shopper needs and retail execution.

## The Traditional Approach vs. Route to Shopper®

Traditional Approach	Route to Shopper® Approach
Product-centred strategies	Project-centred strategies
Transaction-focused metrics	Journey-based performance measurement
Siloed sales and marketing functions	Integrated commercial excellence
Category-specific planning	Cross-category solution development
Seasonal promotional calendars	Shopper mission-aligned activation
Channel-specific execution	Omnichannel experience orchestration

# The Route to Shopper® Framework for Home Improvement

Our dual framework approach provides both manufacturers and retailers with complementary capabilities to drive shopper-centric growth.

## GUIDE Framework (For Brand Owners & Manufacturers)



### G: Grow the Shopper Base

Expand your reach by inspiring new project initiators and solution seekers

- Target underrepresented DIY segments (first-time homeowners, women DIYers, urban renters)
- Lower barriers to entry for complex project categories
- Activate non-traditional channels for project inspiration
- Convert DIFM considerers to confident DIYers
- Expand into adjacent project spaces through solution-based approaches

### U: Unlock Bigger Baskets

Create comprehensive project solutions that drive multi-item purchases

- Develop cross-category project bundles with clear value proposition
- Create solution-based merchandising that simplifies complex projects
- Integrate complementary products across departments and categories

- Upgrade core project items through value-added features and performance
- Establish clear good-better-best architecture with compelling step-up benefits

## **I: Increase Purchase Cycles**

### **Establish ongoing improvement patterns beyond one-time projects**

- Create seasonal maintenance programs that drive regular repurchase
- Develop project extension pathways that build on initial successes
- Establish upgrade cycles aligned with home ownership stages
- Build ongoing project series that maintain momentum and confidence
- Link products to preventative maintenance routines that protect investments

## **D: Drive Sustainable Profits**

### **Shift value perception from price to performance, durability, and outcomes**

- Establish premium tiers with clearly articulated performance benefits
- Develop eco-friendly, sustainable options with compelling value stories
- Create innovation pipelines focused on DIY complexity reduction
- Build service ecosystems that complement product offerings
- Implement project-based pricing that captures total solution value

## **E: Enable Cross-functional Excellence**

### **Align internal capabilities around comprehensive shopper understanding**

- Integrate product development, marketing, and commercial teams around project solutions
- Develop joint metrics that measure cross-functional success
- Create shared shopper understanding across all departments
- Establish collaborative innovation processes that span functions
- Build integrated promotional plans that connect brand and retail activation

# PATHS Framework (For Retailers & Channel Partners)



## P: Presentation Excellence

**Transform stores and digital spaces from product shelves to project inspiration centres**

- Create immersive project displays that showcase transformation possibilities
- Implement digital visualization tools for project outcomes
- Develop cross-category project zones that simplify shopping
- Build educational displays that build confidence and capability
- Implement intuitive navigation systems for project-based missions

## A: Assortment Optimization

**Curate product selections that enable complete project success**

- Balance assortment breadth and depth across project-based missions
- Develop good-better-best architectures aligned with project complexity
- Create project solution kits that simplify purchase decisions
- Establish private label strategies that address key project value gaps
- Implement store-specific assortments based on local project demands

## T: Team Engagement

**Transform associates from product sellers to trusted project advisors**

- Develop project expertise rather than just product knowledge

- Create specialized roles focused on key project areas
- Build confidence-inspiring consultation capabilities
- Implement cross-department knowledge sharing
- Establish project solution selling metrics and incentives

## **H: Holistic Supplier Integration**

### **Partner with manufacturers to create seamless project solutions**

- Develop joint business plans centred on shopper projects
- Create collaborative category development focused on solution gaps
- Implement shared data and insights on project behaviors
- Establish co-created merchandising and promotional programs
- Build joined-up digital content and educational resources

## **S: Shopper Insight Application**

### **Leverage deep understanding of project motivations to drive relevance**

- Create project journey maps that identify key decision points
- Develop segment-specific approaches for different DIY confidence levels
- Implement seasonal planning based on project timing patterns
- Build personalization engines that suggest relevant project components
- Establish measurement systems for complete project success

## **The Key Distinction: Shopper Vs. Consumer Understanding**

A foundational element of the **Route to Shopper®** approach is the critical distinction between shopper and consumer dynamics in the home improvement space:

**Shopper:** The individual making the purchase decision and selection

- May be homeowner, contractor, designer, property manager, or renter
- Focused on confidence, clarity, and project success assurance
- Making decisions across complex purchase journeys spanning multiple touchpoints
- Often experiencing stress, uncertainty, and fear of project failure

**Consumer:** The ultimate user of the home improvement products

- May or may not be the same as the shopper
- Focused on the end result, aesthetics, and functionality

- Experiencing the day-to-day impact of the improvement
- Often sharing decision influence but not always present at purchase

Understanding this distinction is crucial because:

1. **Complex Decision Journeys:** Home improvement purchase processes often involve multiple decision-makers, influencers, and extended research periods.
2. **Knowledge Gaps:** Many shoppers lack technical expertise, requiring different support than professional consumers.
3. **Confidence Barriers:** First-time project undertakers face significant psychological barriers requiring specific confidence-building approaches.
4. **Project vs. Product Focus:** Shoppers think in terms of complete projects, not individual products or categories.
5. **Multi-Stakeholder Evaluation:** Purchase decisions often require consensus among household members with different priorities.

**Route to Shopper®** enables organizations to develop capabilities that address both shopper and consumer needs throughout the project lifecycle.

## **Route to Shopper® in Action: Strategic Applications (Hypothetical)**

### **Example 1: Bathroom Fittings Manufacturer Strategy**

**Challenge:** A leading bathroom fittings manufacturer (producing faucets, showerheads, shower systems, and bath accessories) faces difficulty differentiating their products in a crowded market and expanding beyond single-item purchases.

#### **GUIDE Strategy Implementation:**

- **Grow the Shopper Base (G)** by creating "Complete Bathroom Fixtures Collections" that coordinate faucets, showerheads, towel bars, and accessories in matching design families with installation guides specifically targeting DIY-curious homeowners intimidated by plumbing projects.
- **Unlock Bigger Baskets (U)** through complementary fixture bundling and bathroom style guides that help shoppers create cohesive bathroom designs, encouraging multiple fixture purchases rather than single-item replacements.

## **PATHS Strategy Implementation:**

- **Presentation Excellence (P)** through manufacturer-designed bathroom vignettes in retail spaces showcasing complete fixture collections with working displays where shoppers can test water flow and features.
- **Team Engagement (T)** by implementing manufacturer-led training programs that educate retail associates on fixture installation techniques, water-saving benefits, and coordinated design principles.

## **Expected Outcomes:**

- Increased average items per transaction from 1.2 to 3+ bathroom fixtures
- Higher market share among first-time homeowners and bathroom renovators
- Stronger brand recognition as a complete bathroom solutions provider
- Reduced price sensitivity through design-led, collection-based purchasing

## **Example 2: Kitchen Cabinetry & Countertop Category**

**Challenge:** Kitchen remodelling projects often stall due to complexity of cabinetry selection, countertop coordination, and installation challenges.

## **GUIDE Strategy Implementation:**

- **Unlock Bigger Baskets (U)** by developing modular kitchen solution bundles that coordinate cabinets, countertops, handles, and backsplashes at different price tiers with clear style families and functional options.
- **Drive Sustainable Profits (D)** through premium cabinet packages offering advanced storage solutions, soft-close mechanisms, integrated lighting, and smart kitchen technology integration options.

## **PATHS Strategy Implementation:**

- **Assortment Optimization (A)** via complete kitchen cabinetry collections with clear good-better-best options, coordinated countertop materials, and appropriate installation/financing packages.
- **Holistic Supplier Integration (H)** by creating cross-brand kitchen solution packages that coordinate cabinets, appliances, fixtures, and lighting with simplified measurement and installation scheduling.

## **Expected Outcomes:**

- Higher conversion from kitchen planning to cabinetry purchase
- Increased average transaction value on kitchen packages

- Reduced kitchen project abandonment rates
- Stronger attachment rates for complementary categories (flooring, appliances, fixtures)

### **Example 3: Paint & Coatings Manufacturer Strategy**

**Challenge:** A leading paint and coatings manufacturer struggles with seasonality, faces commoditization pressure, and needs to drive more frequent repurchase beyond one-time projects.

#### **GUIDE Strategy Implementation:**

- **Increase Purchase Cycles (I)** by creating a comprehensive "Home Protection System" that links different paint and coating products to specific seasonal maintenance needs, including customized regional weather-based application calendars for exterior paint, stains, sealants, and protective coatings.
- **Enable Cross-functional Excellence (E)** by aligning R&D, marketing, and commercial teams around a unified exterior protection system, developing products and literature that work together rather than as isolated solutions.

#### **PATHS Strategy Implementation:**

- **Shopper Insight Application (S)** through manufacturer-provided predictive maintenance tools and regional weather-triggered messaging that retailers can integrate into their customer communications, alerting homeowners to optimal exterior painting conditions.
- **Presentation Excellence (P)** via manufacturer-designed seasonal merchandising programs that retailers can implement, featuring different exterior paint products, primers, prep materials, and application tools organized around maintenance cycles rather than product categories.

#### **Expected Outcomes:**

- 30% reduction in seasonal sales volatility for the manufacturer
- Increase in annual exterior paint and coating purchases per household from 1.2 to 2.3
- 40% growth in complementary product attachment rate (prep materials, tools, protective coatings)
- Strengthened manufacturer-retailer partnerships through shared maintenance-based selling approach
- Enhanced brand positioning as the exterior protection authority rather than just a paint supplier

## Example 4: Electrical & Lighting Category

**Challenge:** Growing interest in smart home electrical upgrades without clear pathways, technical confidence, or compelling value propositions.

### GUIDE Strategy Implementation:

- **Drive Sustainable Profits (D)** through premium-positioned smart electrical products (switches, outlets, lighting controls) with clear energy efficiency metrics and lifestyle enhancement benefits.
- **Grow the Shopper Base (G)** by targeting tech-enthusiast homeowners with room-by-room smart electrical upgrade packages that offer graduated complexity and expandability.

### PATHS Strategy Implementation:

- **Holistic Supplier Integration (H)** by creating a cross-brand smart home certification program that ensures compatibility between lighting, electrical, security, and entertainment systems with coordinated controls and interfaces.
- **Assortment Optimization (A)** through dedicated smart electrical departments with live demonstrations, clear compatibility guides, and good-better-best options ranging from simple plug-in solutions to whole-home integrated systems.

### Expected Outcomes:

- Access to growing segment of technology-focused home improvers
- Premium price positioning for electrical products with strong value perception
- Differentiated market positioning in commoditized electrical category
- Increased repeat purchases as consumers expand their smart home ecosystems

## Measuring Success: The Route to Shopper® Impact

Organizations implementing the **Route to Shopper®** Framework can expect significant improvements across key performance indicators:

## Financial Performance Metrics

Metric	Typical Improvement Range	Primary Driver
Basket Size Growth	15-25%	Solution vs. item selling
Margin Enhancement	2-5 points	Value-based vs. price-based positioning
Category Penetration	10-20%	New project initiators
Repeat Purchase Rate	35-50%	Project journey continuity
Cross-Category Attachment	30-40%	Integrated project solutions

## Shopper Experience Metrics

Metric	Typical Improvement Range	Primary Driver
Project Completion Confidence	40-60%	Education and support systems
First-Time Project Success	30-45%	Simplified solution packages
Purchase Decision Speed	20-35%	Reduced complexity and clearer choices
Digital-to-Physical Conversion	25-40%	Integrated omnichannel journey
Net Promoter Score	15-25 points	Successful project outcomes

## Operational Excellence Metrics

Metric	Typical Improvement Range	Primary Driver
Inventory Productivity	10-20%	Project-based vs. item-based planning
Promotional Effectiveness	25-40%	Mission-aligned vs. product-focused activation
Staff Productivity	15-30%	Project solution vs. item selling
Supplier Collaboration Rating	30-50%	Joint business planning effectiveness
Digital Content Engagement	40-60%	Project-focused vs. product-focused content

## AI & Digital Enablement in Home Improvement

The **Route to Shopper®** Framework provides the strategic foundation for effective digital transformation in home improvement by ensuring technology serves shopper needs rather than driving for technology's sake.

### Key Digital Capability Opportunities

#### Project Visualization & Planning Tools

- AR/VR applications that allow shoppers to preview completed projects in their own homes
- AI-powered room scanning tools that automatically measure spaces and suggest materials
- Project planning engines that provide step-by-step guidance, material calculations, and skill-level assessment

## Personalized Project Recommendation Engines

- Machine learning systems that analyse past purchases, browsing behaviour, and home characteristics
- Style preference engines that curate aesthetically compatible project elements
- Difficulty-appropriate project suggestions based on past completions and skill development

## Predictive Analytics for Commercial Planning

- Seasonal demand forecasting based on historical patterns, weather predictions, and economic indicators
- Cross-purchase pattern identification to optimize merchandising and promotions
- Early trend detection through social media monitoring and search behaviour analysis

## Omnichannel Journey Orchestration

- Seamless cart and project plan transfer between devices and channels
- Location-based services that enhance in-store navigation to project components
- Integrated content delivery that adapts to shopper journey stage and expertise level

## Digital Decision Support Systems

- Guided selling tools that simplify complex product comparisons
- Interactive product selectors based on project requirements and constraints
- Expert consultation platforms connecting shoppers with specialists for advice

## The Commercial Excellence Academy: Your Implementation Partner

The Commercial Excellence Academy offers a proven approach to building **Route to Shopper®** capabilities within your organization:

### Comprehensive Capability Development Programs

- **Diagnostic Assessment:** Evaluate your current capabilities against best-in-class standards

- **Strategic Roadmap Development:** Create a customized implementation plan aligned with your business priorities
- **Cross-functional Alignment:** Build shared understanding and commitment across departments
- **Implementation Support:** Provide hands-on guidance throughout your transformation journey
- **Performance Measurement:** Track progress and refine approach based on results

## Specialized Home Improvement Expertise

- Deep category understanding across the home improvement ecosystem
- Project-based shopper journey mapping methodologies
- DIY and DIFM strategy development frameworks
- Omnichannel excellence capability building
- Cross-functional collaboration models

## Call to Action: Building Your Route to Shopper® Advantage

The time to transform your commercial approach is now. Forward-thinking home improvement leaders are invited to:

1. **Rethink Your Shopper Understanding:** Move beyond demographic analysis to deep project journey mapping that reveals critical decision points and pain points.
2. **Transform Your Commercial Organization:** Develop capabilities that align cross-functional teams around shared shopper missions rather than operating in product or channel silos.
3. **Reimagine Your Retail Activation:** Create immersive, project-based experiences that build confidence and drive complete solution purchases.
4. **Revolutionize Your Digital Strategy:** Ensure technology investments directly address shopper needs throughout the project journey.
5. **Revitalize Your Supplier Relationships:** Build collaborative partnerships focused on mutual growth through shopper-centric innovation.

## Next Steps

Contact the Commercial Excellence Academy to arrange a confidential discussion about how the **Route to Shopper®** Framework can transform your organization's performance.

## Contact

To begin a strategic dialogue on implementing the **Route to Shopper®** Framework in your organization, please contact:

Strategic Partnerships Team

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