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The Mid-Market FMCG JBP Commercial Health Checklist

Secure your margins, weaponize your data, and protect your brand before stepping into the room.

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What is a JBP - and Why Does It Matter This September?

A **Joint Business Plan (JBP)** is a formal, structured agreement between an FMCG supplier and a major retailer that sets out shared commercial objectives, promotional activity, ranging commitments, volume targets, and investment levels - typically for a 12-month period.

For mid-market brands, the JBP negotiation is the single most consequential commercial conversation of the year. Done well, it secures distribution, protects margin, and funds growth. Done poorly, it locks you into promotional mechanics that dilute returns, volume commitments you cannot supply, or terms that quietly erode profitability quarter by quarter.

Retailers arrive at these meetings with your full transactional history, weekly EPOS data, and loyalty card insights already loaded. The brands that negotiate effectively come equally prepared. **This checklist is designed to close that gap.**

Phase 1: Commercial and Margin Defence

- Calculate trailing twelve-month SKU profitability : net margin per SKU after trade spend, logistics and overhead. Every other commercial decision flows from this figure.
- Lock your walk-away point : define the minimum acceptable margin percentage and maximum promotional rate at which any deal becomes loss-making. This must be set before you enter any negotiation.
- Isolate promotional ROI by retailer : identify which mechanics drove genuine incremental volume and which simply diluted margin. Avoid re-offering activity that did not perform.
- Model three commercial scenarios : ideal, acceptable, and walk-away, across rate, volume and cost variables. This allows you to respond to counter-proposals in real time without recalculating under pressure.
- Build a gross-to-net bridge by account : map what each retailer actually contributes after all deductions and trade investment. This reveals which accounts you are effectively subsidising.
- Prepare a CPI justification : construct your cost composition from ONS PPI, energy and logistics data line by line. Buyers will challenge price increase requests. Arrive with the numbers already built.

Phase 2: Category and Shopper Insights

- Align your pitch to the retailer's stated strategy : read their latest annual results and investor communications. Frame your brand's role within their declared priorities, not your own internal narrative.
- Prove incremental shopper growth : demonstrate that your brand attracts new or lapsed shoppers rather than cannibalising their own-label or existing category volume. Incrementality is the argument.
- Match your shopper profile to their loyalty data : align your shopper characterisation to Nectar, Clubcard or Asda Rewards cohort language. Speak their data back to them.
- Quantify basket contribution : does your brand lift basket size or visit frequency? Attach a number. This gives the buyer a category P&L argument for defending your listing internally.
- Document competitor supply gaps : identify where the category leader failed on availability or innovation. This evidences the void your brand fills.
- Evidence your NPD speed : cite three recent launches with timelines and post-launch velocity data. Agility is only a claim until it is substantiated.

Phase 3: Supply Chain and Operational Resilience

- Audit your on-shelf availability (OSA) : the UK retail average is 89.7%. Know your own rate and have a remediation plan prepared. Your buyer already has this data; surface it first rather than waiting for it to be raised.
- Review fill rates and delivery accuracy : assess SLA performance per retailer over the previous 12 months. Any shortfall pattern will be used in the negotiation.
- Stress-test your NPD capacity : confirm that your co-manufacturer or co-packer can accommodate a 20–30% volume spike. A listing you cannot supply at scale is worse than no listing.
- Confirm forecasting protocols : agree in advance how weekly sales data will be shared between both parties to prevent stockout or overhang situations. This makes the JBP executable, not merely agreed in principle.
- Check HFSS compliance for every promotional mechanic : confirm legality per SKU against the October 2025 regulations before committing any promotional activity to the plan.

Phase 4: Legal and Compliance (GSCOP)

- Get all agreed terms in writing : anything informally agreed during the previous trading year must be formally documented before new negotiations open. This is a GSCOP requirement and protects you from retroactive amendment.

- Train your NAM on GSCOP : your National Account Manager must be able to recognise a Code breach in the room and understand the escalation process. Buyers' teams are trained on the Groceries Supply Code of Practice. Yours should be too.

- Escalate retroactive requests immediately : do not agree to changes in the meeting. Flag to legal first. Retroactive term changes constitute a potential GSCOP breach.

- Confirm all agreements by email the same day : before you leave the building. This removes ambiguity and creates a clear record that protects both the commercial relationship and your legal position.

- Know the GCA process : the Groceries Code Adjudicator covers 14 designated retailers including Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Morrisons, Aldi, Lidl and Ocado. Know your rights before you need them..

Phase 5: Internal Alignment

- Secure finance sign-off on your margin floor : your walk-away number must be validated internally before any external meeting takes place. It is a financial reality, not a negotiating tactic.

- Brief supply chain before you commit : demand planning must understand the targets being discussed before you agree to any volume. This prevents the availability failures that damage the following year's JBP before it begins.

- Cascade to marketing before Q1 activity commences : activation plans, NPD timelines and shopper investment must reflect what was actually agreed, not what was originally proposed.

- Diarise quarterly reviews now : build a shared performance dashboard, name the contacts responsible, and embed a governance structure into the agreement itself. JBPs that are not reviewed until the next annual negotiation rarely deliver what was planned.

A note on prioritisation:

Phase 1 (Commercial and Margin Defence) and Phase 4 (Legal and GSCOP Compliance) are non-negotiable and must be completed in full regardless of account size, relationship maturity, or negotiation timeline. The remaining phases can be scaled in depth depending on your specific retailer context, whether you are defending an existing range, pursuing new distribution, or managing a complex multi-SKU account, but none should be omitted entirely.

Work with GrowSights

GrowSights works with £5M–£50M UK FMCG brands to prepare for major retailer negotiations, from commercial modelling and promotional ROI analysis to category storytelling and JBP strategy.

If your next buyer meeting is closer than your preparation suggests, get in touch.

growsights.co.uk

"You have built a brand worth ranging. Now go into that room and make sure the terms reflect it."