



LOADING THE RETAIL SHELVES WITH AUTOMATION

Abstract

Stockouts are terrible for anyone in the retail business, as Jonathan Robieux, Head of Merchandising at one of Europe's largest electronics retailers, knew well. But his teams, heavily dependent on manual processes and fragmented data, were unable to make stocks consistently available across the company's hundreds of physical stores and digital channels. This case details how Jonathan brought in Infosys BPM as a strategic transformation partner to eventually gain over 90% in store stock availability that yielded a 5% increase in sales YoY, among other significant outcomes.



Plagued by stockouts

Jonathan Robieux is the Head of Merchandising operations at one of Europe's largest electronics retailers. Jonathan's teams closely coordinate across merchandisers, warehouse teams, store operations, and external partners to stock products for customers across hundreds of retail locations and digital channels.

For Jonathan, forecasting accuracy is critical to success, especially during peak retail seasons. Even small inefficiencies in driving stock availability across stores can result in poor space utilization and significant loss in sales. However, with the department's forecasting accuracy languishing at a low 82-84%, and

resultingly, stock availability at a poor 86%, stores continued turning away disappointed customers.

Because the company's operations across its physical and digital channels had grown more complex over the years, Jonathan realized that things needed to radically change. Yet, it would not be easy. Most of the merchandising and replenishment activities were still being done manually using excel sheets, and his staff needed to align with multiple teams having differing priorities which often made matters even more difficult. Thus, reporting was time-consuming and reactive rather than insight-led, and his teams lacked timely

visibility into stock and forward orders.

Clearly the problems ran deep, and Jonathan decided to bring in a strategic transformation partner. After a global RFP and due diligence, in 2021 he brought Infosys BPM on board to co-create a more standardized, automated, and collaborative operating model. The initial scope of the long-term managed-services relationship included category management pricing, product onboarding, merchandising-range planning, assortment/enterprise planning, supplier management, forecasting, replenishment, allocation support, and merchandising operations.

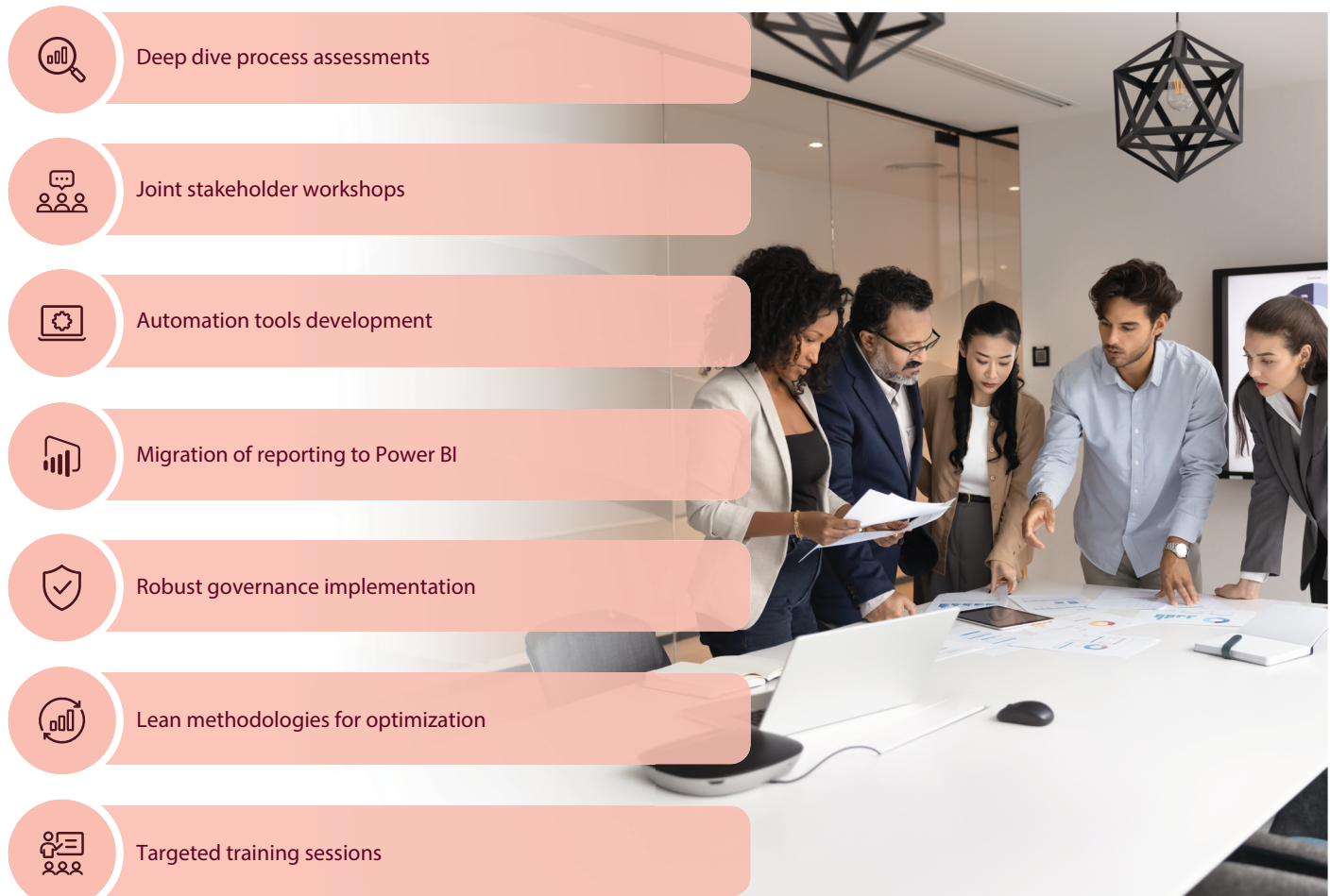
Inoculating with efficiency

Kanishka Majumdar, a veteran process transformation expert, headed up the Infosys BPM team. After Jonathan

comprehensively briefed her on the extant challenges, she first set her team to assess

the existing processes, tools, and skill gaps in-depth.

Approach Summary



When the team returned, they reported the serious lack of automation in forecasting, replenishment, and allocation processes. They had also gauged the heavy dependence on manual tasks, which were leading to delays, errors, and inconsistent outcomes. Then they briefed her on the retail stores' inconsistent adherence to company processes thereby creating performance variability across stores. Finally, they presented how diverse teams across the company were working in knowledge silos due to insufficient cross-training, which had reduced their agility, cross-functional understanding, and collaboration capabilities. Thus, they summed up that with limited end-to-end inventory visibility, proactive

decision-making had become extremely difficult.

To tackle these problems head on, Kanishka organized joint workshops with buyers, merchandisers, store teams, and supply chain stakeholders, to align on shared KPIs and success metrics. Then, with a firm grasp of the deep-seated problems, Kanishka tasked her team with developing six automation tools to cover allocations, bookings, access, and order management. To further reduce manual effort and drive faster decision making, the team migrated critical Excel reports to Power BI, enabling real-time insights. For governance, she instituted weekly client connect calls for alignment and transparency. Soon, all

these efforts bore fruit, and the SLA metrics stabilized.

Kanishka and her team then shifted focus from delivery to value creation, adopting lean methodologies to simplify processes and proactively identify issues. Next, to build collaborative capabilities, Kanishka organized targeted training sessions for close to 23 personnel across the company. She and her team also spent time creating FAQs, process guides, and refresher materials, with interactive learning sessions encouraging two-way knowledge exchanges. Thus, throughout the transformation, Kanishka and her team worked hand-in-glove with Jonathan's and other teams across the organization.

Early on, Kanishka had realized that her transformation initiatives would flounder if there was any misalignment between the company's and Infosys BPM's offshore delivery teams. Over-automation without

business context, new process adoption fatigue, and potential data inconsistencies during report migration were other factors that could derail the transformation process. However, she navigated around

these risks with her strong governance model, weekly operational and leadership connects, shared trackers and KPIs, regular on-ground visits, and cultural integration activities.

Stocked shelves and ringing registers

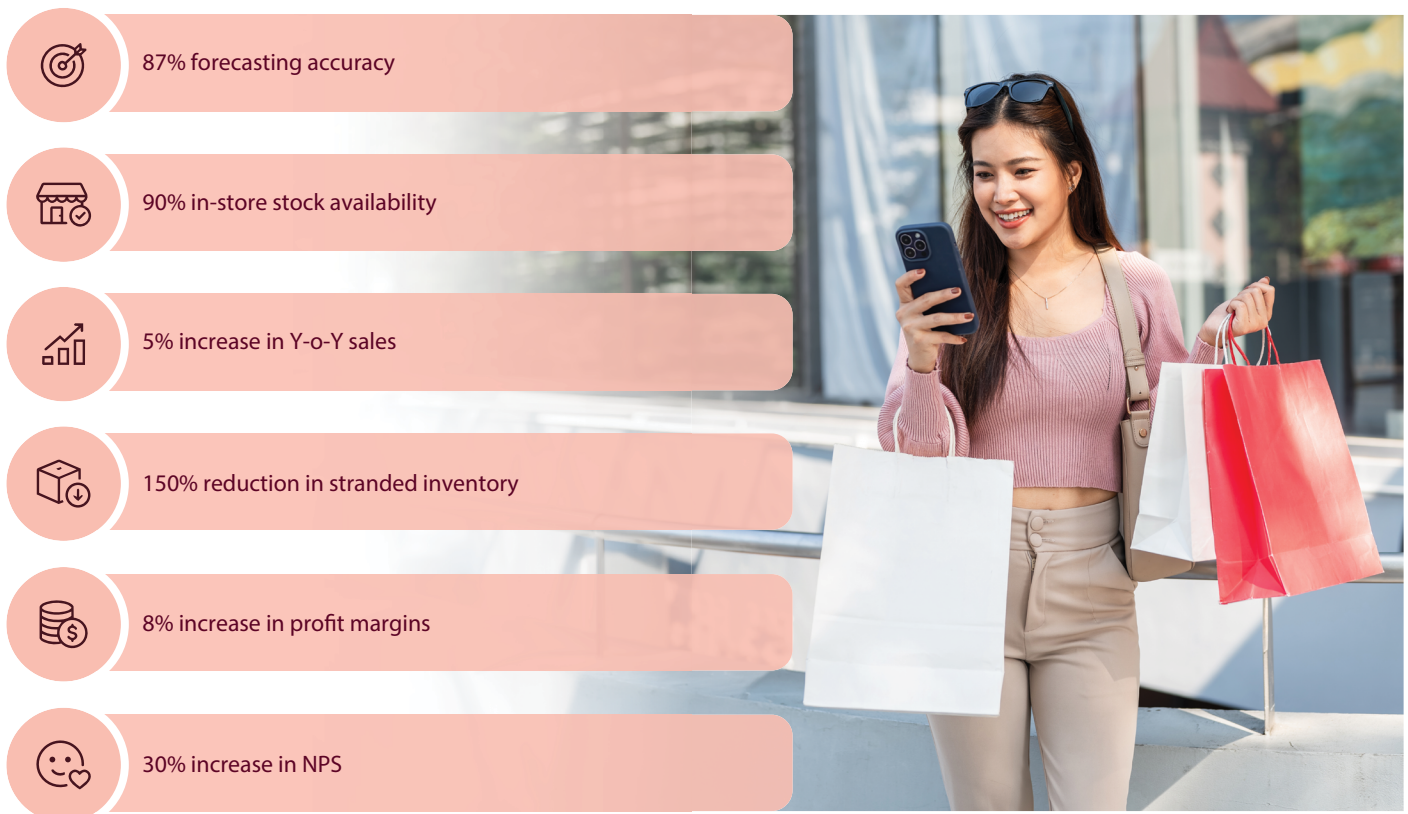
After Jonathan rolled out Kanishka and her team's solutions, he initially faced some degree of change resistance from store and merchandising teams who were used to the earlier processes. Their scepticism was primarily around automation replacing manual judgment. Other stakeholders were

concerned that the transition could affect operations during peak retail periods, with low trust in the data accuracy of the new reporting tools.

However, working closely with Jonathan, Kanishka managed these challenges

through incremental rollouts, transparent communication, joint problem-solving forums, hands-on training, and continuous feedback loops. And soon, the cumulative impact of the process changes was felt across the company's retail outlets.

Key benefits



During peak season, the forecast accuracy stood at an all-time high of 87% leading to over 90% availability of products in store, which was sustained for over 18 weeks. This was a 3–5% YoY improvement, yielding a 5% increase in sales YoY. Further, with a massive 150% reduction in stranded inventory, the

company witnessed not just an 8% increase in profit margins but also a huge 30% uplift in customer satisfaction scores.

On the qualitative benefits, Jonathan saw that his team was now able to make faster, and more data-driven decisions, powered

by stronger cross-functional collaboration. No wonder, with the huge impact of his initiative, well-deserved appreciation from the company's leadership for driving measurable business impact was soon flowing in.

Today, both he and Kanishka continue to be actively involved in continuous improvement, automation, analytics, and

planning discussions. With Kanishka's teams operating as an extension of his merchandising organization, the

relationship continues to evolve from operational support to joint ownership of outcomes.

**Names have been altered to preserve the identities of the people involved.*

For more information, contact infosysbpm@infosys.com



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