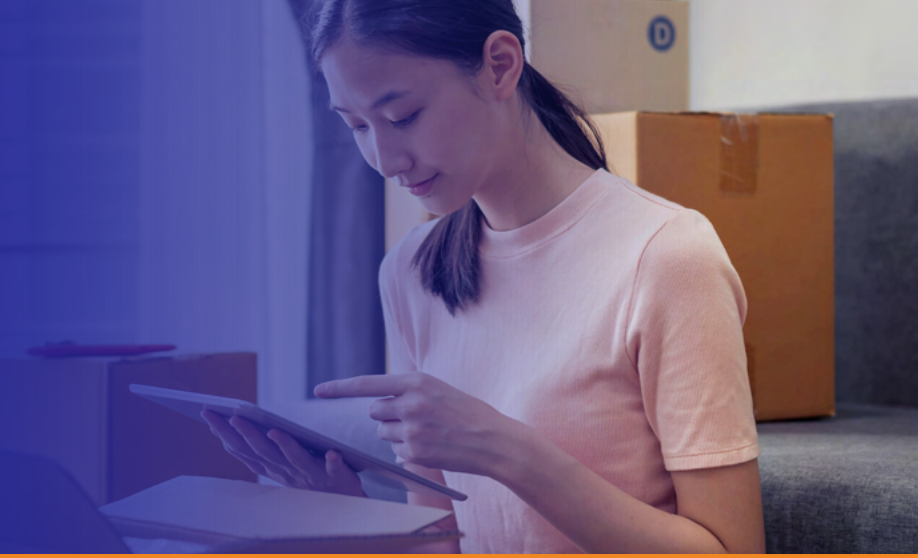


Data-Driven Digital Discovery Brings Specialty Retailers and Brands Together



AT A GLANCE



INDUSTRY

Information Services

OFFERING

MVP Development

CHALLENGE

New Hope Network aimed to bridge the gap between brands and retailers, especially for independent retailers struggling to find products meeting their specific criteria due to the challenges of crowded expos and limited distribution, by creating a digital platform facilitating year-round connections and powered by comprehensive data integration.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ Beacon Discovery™, a collaboration between New Hope Network and 3Pillar Global, revolutionizes product discovery in the natural products sector through data-driven insights.
- ▶ Beacon Discovery™ debuted at Natural Products Expo West, streamlining product navigation for buyers and fostering connections between retailers and brands.
- ▶ The platform not only enhances expo experiences but also generates new revenue streams for New Hope Network, with plans for expansion to other events and industries.

Products in the natural sector, including food, beverages, and household products account for a healthy share of the overall consumer packaged goods (CPG) industry's \$5 trillion in annual sales, with steady growth driven in large part by consumer demand for healthier, more sustainable products. To get the latest and greatest products that consumers want onto store shelves, retailers first need to discover the companies that make and sell these brands.

To discover the latest sought-after products, retailers depend on two cornerstone events: Natural Products Expo West and the newly launched Newtopia Now, set to debut in August 2024. Hosted by New Hope Network, a subsidiary of Informa Markets, Expo West—the world's largest gathering of buyers and sellers of natural, organic, and healthy products—takes place in March, boasting around 3,000 exhibitor brands and 70,000 attendees. With Newtopia Now joining the lineup as the second show, industry leaders gain another avenue to connect, innovate, and forge meaningful partnerships.

Because of their relationships with key industry brands and retailers, New Hope Network has provided the primary venues for retailers to discover new products that support their standards and values — from plant-based proteins and probiotics to tree-free toilet paper and turmeric tea.

Informa is constantly focused on innovating and evolving the event experience, providing insights to buyers and sellers where and when they're needed the most. They brought in 3Pillar Global to help them reimagine how they stay connected with natural product retailers and brands — both on and off the show floor.

CHALLENGE:

Enabling Brands and Retailers to Connect on the Expo Floor and Beyond

With thousands of exhibitors competing for attention on a crowded, sprawling show floor, it's challenging for independent retailers to find products with the specific attributes they're looking for. For example, it's difficult to understand the environmental impact that different products might have or whether they contain specific ingredients. And as one independent grocery retailer attending Expo West noted, it can be hard to know which products are actually distributed to his rural area.

It's also hard for a small, independent retailer to stand out from large, global corporations. And for many smaller brands and retailers, it can be challenging to attend in-person events.

New Hope Network envisioned a digital product that would expand the opportunities retailers and brands have to connect with each other — and make it more of a year-round experience. Bringing the vision to life

meant bringing together the data to match the mission and vision of brands with the mission and vision of retailers.

This type of discovery may sound simple, but it requires an extraordinary level of data integration. When our initial research together demonstrated a clear appetite for the kind of digital product New Hope envisioned, both companies went all in on delivering a robust experience powered by real-world data that would meet the market's demand.

“The people in this industry are very passionate, they care about where each ingredient comes from and what the farming practices are.”

▶ Alexandra Newman
3PILLAR GLOBAL SENIOR PRODUCT MANAGER



SOLUTION:

Conceiving and Delivering a Product That Enables Year-Round Data-Driven Discovery

After working with the New Hope Network digital products team to understand their vision, prioritize features and functionality, and define the technical requirements, we conducted interviews with end users to understand their needs, wants, and concerns.

“The people in this industry are very passionate,” says Alexandra Newman, a 3Pillar Senior Product Manager who led the work with New Hope. “They care about where each ingredient comes from and what the farming practices are.”

At the same time, Alexandra says, “Natural products brands want retailers to know how cool they are and what makes them unique. And tiny companies can't always afford to do that.”

The team took only four months to build a combined proof of concept (POC) and prototype to validate technical feasibility, end-user desirability, and stakeholder buy-in. With support in place, the team delivered a beta launch five months after the POC and delivered a key iteration six months after the POC, in time for the 2023 Natural Products Expo West. These early milestones put us on track to successfully build and launch the full minimum viable product (MVP) in time for Expo West in March 2024. We focused on minimizing time to value, prioritizing ruthlessly to focus on the essentials based on the user feedback. The most important ingredient? Integrated data that's easy to digest.

HOW DID WE GET THERE?

The 3Pillar team shared an initial prototype with small focus groups in the fall of 2022, incorporating their feedback to deliver beta launches the next spring that included:

- Data from five retail partners and 100 brands as well as data from two key partners: SPINS, a leading wellness-focused data company, and HowGood, the world's largest food sustainability database.
- Powerful filtering features based on about 100 attributes, such as women-owned business, certified non-GMO, made in the USA, certified organic, and more.
- Ingredient templates that retailers can use to search for brands that align most closely with their store's standards and filter by ingredients they want — and those they don't.
- Robust product details with high-resolution imagery to learn about:
 - Ingredients, allergens, certifications, and nutrition data
 - Sustainability and environmental impact
 - Distribution information
 - Packaging dimensions and materials
 - Brand details, including contact information, headquarters location, parent company, history, mission, etc.

OUTCOME:

Enhancing and Extending the Expo Experience

New Hope Network introduced the Beacon Discovery™ platform with a beta launch at Natural Products Expo West in March 2023, where attendees gave it a warm reception. Buyers say Beacon Discovery allows them to navigate the show floor even before the event and zero in on the specific products their customers crave. Naturally, this also benefits the brands that are hoping to stand out among thousands of exhibitors and meet the buyers who share their mission.

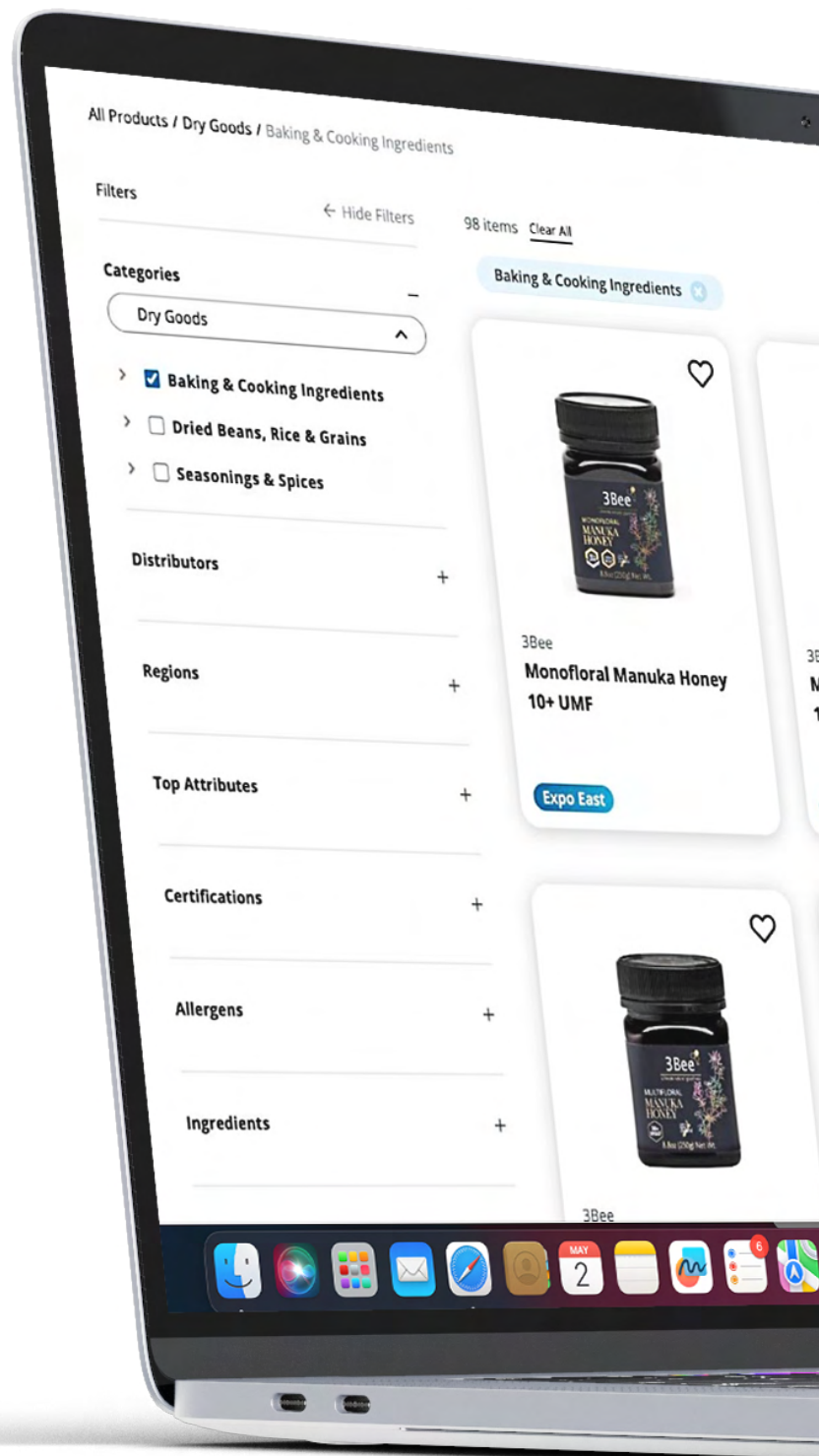
“When you hear people say, ‘Oh my gosh, this is phenomenal. This is really different. This is going to change things. That feels amazing,” says Shelley Sapsin, New Hope Network VP, Market Integrity, in the company’s case study video.

New Hope Network is already generating revenue from the new product, with new features already in the works. “It is so important for Informa and New Hope Network to innovate,” says Carlotta Mast, New Hope Network SVP, Market Leader. “It’s this innovation that will make our events more valuable and effective for our exhibitors and for our attendees, and that is really going to ensure a very healthy future for our events business.”

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▶ Carlotta Mast

NEW HOPE NETWORK SVP, MARKET LEADER





NEW OPPORTUNITY

Driving New Revenue Through Digital Innovation

All eyes are now on Beacon Discovery, as the new version rolls out with enhanced product discovery and navigation tools for the show floor. In the future, all retailers and buyers will have access to Beacon Discovery as a part of their participation in both the Natural Products Expo West and Newtopia Now, making it easier than ever to discover the latest and greatest products with the greatest transparency.

Meanwhile, even more innovation is in the works, as Informa explores whether a similar product discovery experience can help drive digital innovation – and new revenue – in other industries where they connect buyers and sellers.

“We are excited to build on the success we’ve had to date and further scale Beacon Discovery to help power future initiatives like AI backed matchmaking and event planning. We will continue to prioritize customer feedback to drive product enhancements and feel confident that 3Pillar is the right partner to help us achieve these ambitious goals”

▶ Emily Chereck
VICE PRESIDENT, PRODUCT MANAGEMENT AND INNOVATION,
INFORMA MARKETS.



Want to
know more?

3Pillar Global is here to help you build strategy, shift your cultural mindset, and build modern data products for an evolving market.

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