



INDUSTRY

Retail

PROBLEM

Instacart expanded the number of North American markets it serves from 30 to over 190, and added many key retail partnerships in the past year. These ambitious goals created more work for its data engineering team, and required Instacart to move faster in order to power their platform.

SOLUTION

Using Nexla's Data Operations platform, Instacart was able to dramatically improve the partner roadmap, and get to market faster. With Nexla, Instacart is able to ensure that product and pricing information in the app is correct to provide a better experience for customers and retailers.

RESULTS

- Improved partner roadmap
- Reduced launch time by one to two months
- Data abnormalities detected much faster



"Nexla makes sharing data between companies, in any format, really easy." Brandon Leonardo, Co-Founder, Instacart

Instacart is a technology-driven, nationwide on-demand grocery delivery service that connects customers with shoppers who hand-pick and deliver the items in their virtual cart, often in as little as an hour. By combining a personal touch with cutting-edge technology, Instacart offers customers a simple solution to save time and buy groceries and everyday essentials directly from the retailers they trust. Instacart partners with over 170 retailers and aims to serve 80% of US households by the end of 2018. To achieve its ambitious goals, Instacart uses Nexla to help streamline data operations so they can get to market faster.

So Many Formats, So Little Time

"Nexla's expertise in data transformation frees my teams to focus on building the best possible catalog of grocery products."

James McNalley, Director of Catalog Engineering, Instacart

Founded in 2012, Instacart is quickly growing its grocery delivery service. In the past year, it expanded the number of North American markets it serves from 30 to over 190 and added many key retail partnerships. This growth created more work for its data engineering team, while its ambitious goals required Instacart to move faster. To power its platform, Instacart integrates with retailer APIs, FTP servers, and all manner of data files and formats. In order to integrate with retail partners, Instacart adapts to the retailer's data reality—sometimes standard, sometimes niche, always changing.

Instacart has robust internal systems to interface with retailers and creates tailored solutions to meet the unique needs of each retail partner. With a steady stream of new retailers coming onboard quickly, the complexity of requirements increased and created more work for the engineering team. As Instacart's growth accelerated, the company decided to partner with Nexla to help automate some of the processes and complement existing internal systems while allowing the engineering team to focus on high priority projects.

The Need for Speed

"We're a fast-growing company," said Elliot Shmukler, vice president of product at Instacart. "There's always more work than the people available to do it, so prioritizing one-off or custom work is always a challenge." Since every retailer's data is different, such custom integration became a bottleneck. With Nexla's innovative technology, Instacart complements its existing systems to support additional data sources and formats. "Nexla helps us make the integration process generic and scalable."

Nexla's Data Operations (DataOps) platform can connect to almost any data source and learn the data models, enabling users to easily automate the process of transforming data and delivering it to almost any destination, such as a database, data warehouse, or file. New data formats are no longer gatekeepers for going to market. "For partners with unique or unusual requirements, Nexla has helped reduce our launch time by one to two months," continued Shmukler. Engineers are happier too, as they can focus on the projects that provide the most leverage.

Getting to Yes

Nexla has helped dramatically improve the partner roadmap. Retailers, engineers, and the partner teams are happier, and Instacart gets to market faster. Instacart continues to find new ways to leverage the Nexla DataOps platform and support. "Our engineers often ask, 'Isn't this something Nexla can do now?'" reported Shmukler.

The support from the Nexla team has been instrumental to the success of the partnership. "With the shared Slack channel, it feels like Nexla is part of the team," commented Lauren Romaniuk, senior manager, data catalog at Instacart. Enterprise grade support ensures that questions are answered quickly. One of the key benefits Nexla provides is data monitoring. With Nexla, Instacart is notified as soon as an abnormality is detected. For example, if a retailer API goes down for some period of time. This helps ensure that the product and pricing information in the app is correct, providing a better experience for customers and retailers alike.

Winning in the Competitive Retail Landscape

Now that Instacart is automating some of its data operations with Nexla, it can focus on continuing to scale in the competitive retail space. The engineering team can focus on the projects with the highest leverage, while still supporting partners with niche requirements. The partnerships team can onboard retailers faster to meet demand. As the need for retail delivery grows, Nexla will continue to help Instacart scale.

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ELLIOT SHMUKLER
VP PRODUCT
