7Cs of Retail Consumables

Consolidate

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Simplify to Strengthen Your Retail Consumables

Consolidate is the fourth pillar in the 7 Cs of Retail Consumables and supports by simplifying the consumables ecosystem, not by removing choice indiscriminately, but by bringing together suppliers, products and purchasing activity in a more structured, strategic way.

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Introduction

Retail consumables rarely start out complex. Complexity builds gradually, as retail estates grow, formats diversify and teams make local decisions to keep operations moving.

Over time, what was once manageable becomes fragmented: multiple suppliers providing similar products, overlapping ranges, inconsistent pricing and limited visibility of total demand. Even Retailers with strong control, clarity and centralisation can find themselves managing unnecessary duplication. This is where Consolidate becomes critical.

What happens when your consumables aren’t Consolidated?

A lack of consolidation often goes unnoticed because its impact is spread across many small decisions.

Common challenges include:

- Multiple suppliers providing near-identical products
- Inconsistent pricing for the same consumables across locations
- Reduced ability to aggregate demand
- Increased administrative effort managing supplier relationships
- Limited leverage when negotiating terms

Fragmentation also increases operational risk. When suppliers, products and processes vary by site or region, consistency becomes harder to maintain and disruption more likely.

Research by McKinsey [1] has consistently highlighted that operational fragmentation increases cost and complexity, while consolidated models improve efficiency and resilience, particularly in indirect and operational spend categories.

What 'Consolidate' really means in retail

Consolidation is often misunderstood as simply "cutting suppliers" or "reducing choice". In reality, effective consolidation is more nuanced.

In a retail consumables context, consolidation means:

- Rationalising suppliers where duplication exists
- Aggregating demand to improve buying power
- Reducing overlapping or redundant products
- Simplifying processes and supplier management
- Creating consistency without compromising operational needs

What consolidation is not:

- A blanket reduction exercise
- A one-size-fits-all approach
- Removing flexibility where it genuinely adds value

> Done well, consolidation strengthens the supply base, improves consistency and makes consumables easier to manage across complex retail estates.

The hidden cost of fragmentation

Operating without consolidation creates hidden costs that are rarely captured:

Operational Impact

- Increased effort managing multiple suppliers
- Inconsistent product availability
- Higher risk of disruption when suppliers fail

Financial Impact

- Missed economies of scale
- Limited negotiating leverage
- Difficulty understanding total cost of ownership

Sustainability Impact

- Increased transport and packaging emissions
- Overlapping product ranges leading to waste
- Reduced visibility into supplier practices

The UK Government's Resources and Waste Strategy for England [2] highlights the importance of efficiency, simplification and transparency in reducing waste across supply chains. Fragmented supplier and product landscapes make these goals significantly harder to achieve.

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How single source procurement supports Consolidation

Consolidation often leads retailers to reconsider how consumables are sourced and supplied across their organisation. When purchasing is fragmented across multiple suppliers, systems and processes, it becomes difficult to manage products, pricing and supply relationships in a coordinated way.

A single source approach offers an alternative. By working with a dedicated consumables partner such as Acopia, retailers can simplify the way operational consumables are sourced while maintaining the flexibility required to support diverse store environments.

Rather than managing numerous suppliers independently, a single source model brings purchasing together through one coordinated supply structure. This makes it easier to standardise products, consolidate demand and ensure greater consistency across the retail estate.

A recent report by Inverto Retail in Transition [3] reported that consolidating suppliers could achieve up to 12% in cost savings through scale effects alone. With the ever increasing pressures on margins and resources, a potential saving of this nature could be transformative.

Importantly, a single source model does not limit choice. Instead, it provides a structured way to curate and manage consumables, ensuring the right products are available while avoiding unnecessary duplication and complexity.

By supporting supplier consolidation and coordinated purchasing, Acopia enables retailers to move away from fragmented supply arrangements and towards a more streamlined and resilient consumables strategy.

> **We had our branches ordering from different suppliers, at different prices with different qualities of products. Now with Acopia, everything is all in one place, quality control is at its highest at all times.**

Rob O'Shea
TLC Electrical

Consolidate

Who benefits from Consolidation?

Consolidation benefits every function of the business by simplifying operations, strengthening purchasing power, improving financial visibility and enabling more consistent, sustainable decision-making across the organisation.

Retail Operations

- Fewer suppliers to manage
- More consistent product availability
- Reduced operational complexity

Procurement

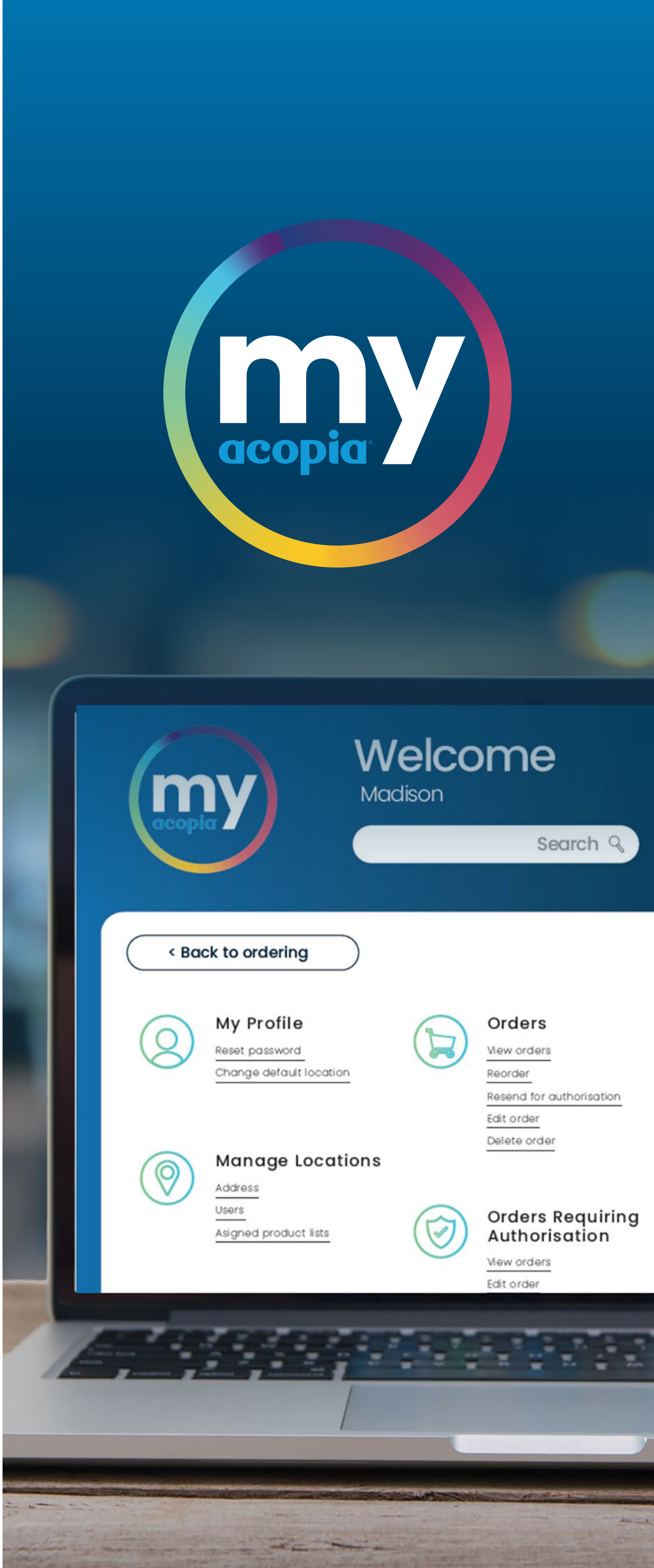
- Stronger negotiating position
- Clearer supplier strategies
- Simplified contract and relationship management

Finance

- Improved cost control
- Better visibility of total spend
- Reduced administrative overhead

Sustainability Teams

- Fewer suppliers to assess and monitor
- Reduced duplication and waste
- Clearer data to support reporting and compliance



Consolidation ensures all teams benefit from a simpler, more structured consumables environment.

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7Cs of Retail Consumables

Consolidate

The fourth step in the 7 Cs journey

Consolidation builds on **Control**, **Clarity** and **Centralisation**.

Once Retailers understand what is being purchased, have visibility of usage and have brought consumables activity into one place, consolidation becomes achievable at scale.

Without **Consolidation**, it's impossible to:

- Unlock sustainable **Cost Savings** through aggregated demand
- Support more **Conscious** consumption by simplifying ranges and reducing waste
- Deliver a truly **Complete**, scalable consumables strategy

Without consolidation, complexity inevitably creeps back in, eroding the gains made through earlier improvements.

The case for Consolidation

Consolidation simplifies the consumables landscape, but its impact goes further than operational efficiency. By reducing supplier fragmentation and aligning purchasing across locations, retailers begin to unlock the commercial advantages of scale.

Working in partnership with a trusted supplier, Retailers can Consolidate intelligently, ensuring consumables support rather than complicate.

This shift creates the foundation for the next stage of the 7 Cs framework: **Cost Savings**. When demand is consolidated and purchasing is coordinated, retailers are able to reduce waste and protect margins right across the retail estate.

References used within this document

1. McKinsey & Company
   Operations Insights on Simplification and Efficiency
2. UK Government
   Resources and Waste Strategy for England
3. Inverto
   Retail in Transition

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Global Point, Steyning Way, Bognor Regis PO22 9SB
033 033 300 21

acopia.co.uk

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