
An Open Thank You Note To The Grocery Sector, Two Years Later

By Scott Moses

Two years ago, as New York City was locking down and Covid fear was gripping the world, I began what would become ten weeks of “shelter in place.” I did not leave my apartment building for ten weeks. That’s **70 days**. We were working at the time with various grocers around the country whose senior executives regularly shared the challenges, fears and exigencies related to keeping their teams and their customers safe.

I’ve often asked myself how we would have survived that period were it not for the extraordinary American grocery system that has sustained us during crisis after crisis. Seriously, how would you have fed your family? I can candidly concede I don’t know what I would have done. I’ve lived in Manhattan for 25 years; my farming, gardening and hunting skills need some work.

Fortunately, we were able to receive a steady stream of groceries from four different online grocers. Like millions of other new amateur chefs, we learned to cook a bunch of great recipes at home that we never previously considered, including pizza from scratch that was objectively spectacular. (As a New Yorker, I can opine on this with some measure of authority).

Like everyone else who has tried to become an amateur epidemiologist, I have no idea if we are close to being out of the Covid woods (e.g., Omicron is just gaining traction in Asia and who knows what variants are yet to develop). Amid the awful state of affairs in Ukraine and the severe food shortages that may develop given reduced wheat, fertilizer and other basic agricultural inputs (e.g., Russia and Ukraine comprise nearly 30% of global wheat exports), it is hard to imagine things will not get darker before the dawn.

With that clear disclaimer, while I normally use this space to review grocery operating and valuation dynamics, after two years of incalculable hardship and sacrifice in the Dante-esque inferno we have endured, with nearly 1 million loved ones lost too soon, in our country alone (including one of my favorite people in the world, my great aunt, Sylvia Scheer), it seems appropriate to remember back two years ago, and the message of hope I shared with numerous friends around the industry as life was suspended in March 2020.

Re-reading these words, I am reminded of the remarkable way our millions of indomitable, essential grocery teammates across the country have since answered the bell each day to resiliently rise above a seemingly never-ending series of unpredictable hurdles to help feed many Americans 21 meals per week (that’s billions of meals per week). I hope you take away the same flood of pride in our ability to take care of each other and particularly an appreciation of our irreplaceable American grocery family – committed to health, safety, science and common sense – which should inspire everyone to be the best version of themselves. It inspires me to remain defiantly optimistic about what we can achieve if we focus on the many things that unite us rather than those that tear us apart.

An Open Thank You Note

March 20, 2020

To My Friends Across the Grocery Sector:

Thank You – We Are With You.

As a customer and a citizen, I want to thank each of you and your teams for the heroic work you are doing to help sustain all of us and our families during this difficult time.

I often talk about supermarkets being the families who feed America's families and the important role your stores have played as pillars of thousands of American communities – for generations – not just for customers, but for the millions of teammates working in stores.

In a crisis, this is exponentially more apparent; grocers consistently are the last ones to leave and the first ones back in.

The pivotal role our sector is playing during this extraordinary time is truly inspiring. I believe the way you are rising to this challenge to serve your communities during this time is going to be remembered for a long time to come, indelibly branding the hearts of your customers with lifetime loyalty...

On a personal level, I have never been more proud to be associated with this sector.

I wish all of you and your families good health and the fortitude you will need to continue the Herculean work ahead of you.

We are all pulling for you and know you will meet the challenge, with grit and grace.

With extreme gratitude,

Scott Moses