

As the U.S. retail industry continues to grapple with the challenge posed by Amazon to bricks-and-mortar stores, the country's largest supermarket chain is joining forces with internet technology behemoth Google in a bid to access more consumers online.



In an announcement this morning, Walmart U.S. eCommerce president and CEO Marc Lore announced the new "exciting partnership" would allow customers to make orders through Google's voice feature starting later next month.

"Starting in late September, we'll be working with Google to offer hundreds of thousands of items for voice shopping via Google Assistant - the largest number of items currently offered by a retailer through the platform," Lore said.

"One of the primary use cases for voice shopping will be the ability to build a basket of previously purchased everyday essentials. That's why we decided to deeply integrate our Easy Reorder feature into Google Express.

"This will enable us to deliver highly personalized shopping recommendations based on customers' previous purchases, including those made in Walmart stores and on Walmart.com."

He said to use this feature customers only needed to link their Walmart account to Google Express.

"And, this is just the beginning. Next year, we will also leverage our 4,700 U.S. stores and our fulfillment network to create customer experiences that don't currently exist within voice shopping anywhere else, including choosing to pick up an order in store (often for a discount) or using voice shopping to purchase fresh groceries across the country," Lore said.

"When it comes to voice shopping, we want to make it as easy as possible for our customers.

That's why it makes sense for us to team up with Google.

"They've made significant investments in natural language processing and artificial intelligence to deliver a powerful voice shopping experience."

In a blog post today, Google senior vice president of ads & commerce, Sridhar Ramaswamy, said Google Assistant would also include other retailers.

"Wouldn't it be nice if you could get what you want, however you want, from the stores where you already shop?" Ramaswamy asked.

"We launched Google Express and shopping on the Google Assistant to do just that: make it faster and easier for you to shop your stores like Costco, Target and now Walmart," he said.

Lore emphasized Walmart recognized the initiative meant being side-by-side with other retailers, and "that's the way it should be".

"An open and transparent shopping universe is good for customers," Lore said.

"Our new voice shopping capability, coupled with our core value proposition, including free two-day shipping and the Pickup Discount, will give our customers a compelling new way to get what they need at low prices.

"We will continue to focus on creating new opportunities to simplify people's lives and help them shop in ways they've not yet imagined."

Ramaswamy said the team at Google was thrilled to partner with a company like Walmart.

"If you're an existing Walmart customer, you can choose to link your Walmart account to Google and receive personalized shopping results based on your online and in-store Walmart purchases," he said.

"For example, if you order Tide PODS or Gatorade, your Google Assistant will let you know which size and type you previously ordered from Walmart, making it easy for you to buy the right product again.

"We're thrilled to partner with one of the most popular stores in America to help make your shopping faster and easier. Walmart will be launching on Google Express in late-September and if you want to be notified when they join, let us know."



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