

2022 GenNext honorees at Meijer share what excites them about the future

In the 2022 Class of Progressive Grocer's GenNext honorees, Meijer had eight honorees – all under the age of 40. Progressive Grocer selected these emerging leaders for showing their deep commitment to serving shoppers and their communities.

“While no one can predict the future, we know that this next generation of innovators has the power to design a post-pandemic future that is more customer-centric, more inclusive, more sustainable and more profitable. These leaders are committed to making a difference in an essential industry,” [Progressive Grocer](#) wrote of this year's honorees.

We also asked our honorees to give us some insight into what excites them about the future of retail.



Jordan Clark – Director of Compensation and HRIS

Jordan oversees the team responsible for ensuring that the Meijer compensation programs are competitive to market and compliant with applicable laws and regulations. He designs and manages programs that include hourly and salary plans, annual bonus plans, and long-term incentive plans for our team members. A key project that he designed and implemented was a shift to performance pay in lieu of an hourly wage in certain distribution buildings. At Meijer, Jordan is seen as a role model by many, specifically for his ability to self-develop through leadership experiences, charting a path, openly receiving developmental feedback, and building a network of resources.

Jordan's vision of the future of retail: *“While it is true that everyone needs to eat and shop for food, the dynamics of what people eat and how they shop for it are changing. It is that change and digitization of retail that excites me about the industry. My goal in Human Resources is to continue enabling our teams and leaders to succeed during these industry changes.”*



Ben Hamlin – Director of Own Brands

Proving himself to be a leader in the Meijer own-brand space, Ben has developed and executed best practices for our private label business planning while also aligning and executing guidelines for each individual brand. He specifically had a big influence on our recent Frederik's brand launch by identifying new products and fully following through with their execution. Ben's focus on data helped create a new way of thinking on the team by relying on customer insights to inform our products rather than comparing our products to others.

Ben's vision of the future of retail: *“It's invigorating to work in an industry that is constantly changing and taking on the challenge of adapting to meet our customers' needs as their behavior evolves.”*

Michael Klomp – Senior Manager of Store Planning, Energy & Engineering



Michael's leadership helped drive transparency and alignment in developing the new [Meijer Grocery](#) store concept. He led our supercenter prototype ideation project and also implemented a robust new store prototype management program, both of which have modernized our planning process. Michael embodies a focus on continuous improvement by incorporating feedback from both internal and external teams to ensure the best possible design outcomes.

Michael's vision of the future of retail: *"The most exciting thing for me and my team right now is the merging of game-changing sustainability commitments with omnichannel customer engagement and experience improvements. Everything we are working on is directly or indirectly related to achieving those commitments and reinventing our customers' experience. I am excited to support those efforts and continue the incredible evolution of our organization while working with our great team!"*

Jess Murray – North Chicago Market Director



Through her work as a Market Director, Jess improved customer pickup times by 32 percent, achieved the second-best customer wait time for digital pickups in Meijer year to date, improved 25 percent in customer metrics, and achieved No. 1 in our company for both on-shelf availability and mCulture, which is our internal culture survey. She is also an advocate for her team and has worked to identify talent; provide team members with education, training and mentorship; and promote team members into leadership roles. Jess serves as Chair of the Western Region Women at Meijer team member resource group, through which she works to develop the next generation of female leaders.

Jess's vision of the future of retail: *"Retail is evolving daily; and each day presents a new opportunity in this role! I enjoy the challenge of leading our retail teams during unprecedented times, collaborating with our community and corporate partners, and delivering our customers a positive and consistent shopping experience. I will continue to be curious and challenge the status quo on behalf of our customers and employees. I am excited and optimistic about the future of retail and enjoy thinking about how we will engage with our communities while creatively growing market share within our competitive landscape."*

Courtnie Sanchez – Store Director – Rochester Hills, Mich.



After starting as a part-time team member 14 years ago, Courtnie held various positions, including Line Leader, Fresh Specialist, and Market Asset Protection Manager. As a solutions-oriented leader, she identified ways to partner and innovate to reduce food waste and further support the communities that her store serves. Courtnie's leadership within one of our team member resource groups provided her with opportunities to identify and develop future talent. Team members say that she provides authentic space for them to share their various cultures and placed a world map in her store office, highlighting the more than 20 languages spoken by team members at the location.

Courtnie's vision of the future of retail: *"I often joke, I don't know what I want to be when I grow up. In my 14 years with Meijer, I've been on an unconventional journey to explore our company and myself as a leader through various positions throughout the organization, allowing me the opportunity for continuous growth for myself and those in my span of care. I'm excited for the future as it holds unlimited possibilities."*

Paul Thompson – Director of International Logistics



Paul and his logistics teams and merchants have helped build stronger relationships and open lines of communication with vendors to directly address out-of-stocks and accompanying sales impacts. He provides our organization with a weekly snapshot of what's taking place in the transportation industry and its impact on Meijer, and thanks to his quick actions, in-stocks have improved greatly due to products arriving on time. Colleagues consider Paul a fierce and passionate competitor who loves to drive change that leads to company growth.

Paul's vision of the future of retail: *"At Meijer, our supply chain is constantly evolving, and I am excited to see our teams step up by finding innovative ways to serve our customers and communities. Technology and data continue to play a larger role in our day-to-day*

work. The opportunities around green technology and automation continue to support our growth and make us fierce competitors. It's exciting to be part of a company that is growing and evolving with resources to support."

Jimmie Vargas – Store Director – Holland, Mich.



Starting as a Store Director in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Jimmie knew that investing in people and building a team that felt like a family would be key to his success. He built a sense of belonging among his team members through special recognitions and celebrations, as well as urging them to engage with the community to expand their impact. Jimmie improved his internal culture survey score by more than 58 percent, making his location one of the top three most-improved stores throughout the company. His store also saw the highest Shop & Scan usage in Q1 and increased on-shelf availability

Jimmie's vision of the future of retail: *"What excites me about my future in retail is being part of leadership as we invest in digital. We are building teams of leaders adopting new*

processes and technologies while using fundamental retail methods. Connecting the two allows us to assist our team members by driving efficiency and to assist our customers by providing more service options and better product availability."

Lara Werner – Director of Supply Chain Network Planning



Lara led the creation of our digital fulfillment team, which didn't exist in February 2020, and spent just three months planning and considering risks, priorities and capabilities. She collaborated with Meijer leadership to identify and understand what was needed, aligned responsibilities for her new team, defined the metrics she would use, and hired and empowered her new talent. Lara's efforts resulted in an 89 percent increase in the number of Meijer stores with pickup capabilities, and her team has since reduced the average customer wait time significantly to under 5 minutes.

Lara's vision of the future of retail: *"Retail is a space that is ever changing and never stops moving, which is so exciting! What I look forward to most in the future of our*

industry is the use of automation and digital technology to enhance our daily tasks. Whether stocking product, picking a digital order, or shipping cases to stores, technology will play a role in how we can serve our customers and communities best. Coupling digital innovation with exceptional customer service and key product offerings will be what creates a unique, differentiated retail experience."