



UMSL | Ed G. Smith
College of Business
University of Missouri–St. Louis

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI – ST. LOUIS
2025 INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS CASE COMPETITION

*DOT FOODS: BUILDING BRAND RECOGNITION AND
TRUST ACROSS RETAIL AND MANUFACTURING PARTNERS*

Case Assignment: Create a media plan for Dot Foods that builds brand awareness, recognition and trust with key decision makers in retail and manufacturing organizations.

We gratefully acknowledge **Jeff Barry**,
Chief Innovation Officer, Dot Foods,
for sponsoring the 2025 UMSL IB Case Competition
and providing the
background and motivation for this case.

We also gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the **Ed G. Smith College of Business** and the
Consortium for Undergraduate International Business Education for enabling this competition.



**CONSORTIUM FOR UNDERGRADUATE
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EDUCATION**

I. The History of Dot Foods

After dedicating 11 years to Prairie Farms, Robert Tracy (RT) envisioned a way to provide customers with affordable food products while helping suppliers grow their sales. It was an ambitious goal—he and his wife, Dorothy, had limited financial resources and twelve young children to support.

Undeterred, the couple launched Associated Dairy Products Company—now known as Dot Foods—from the back of their family station wagon. What began as a modest venture soon reshaped the food distribution landscape.

RT's innovative business model quickly proved its value. Customers benefited from a simplified process—placing one order, receiving one delivery, and managing one invoice—all through a single company. Suppliers, in turn, gained access to new markets they had previously been unable to serve.

Although RT and Dorothy never set out to revolutionize food distribution, their vision laid the foundation for what has become the modern food redistribution industry. Today, that small family business has grown into the largest food redistributor in North America.

II. Dot Foods Today

North America

Dot Foods is North America's largest food-industry redistributor, operating a hub-and-spoke redistribution model that consolidates branded and non-branded products from many manufacturers and redistributes them in smaller, customer-friendly quantities. The company carries more than 123,000 SKUs sourced from more than 1,500 suppliers (manufacturers) around the world, which supports its ability to offer a very broad portfolio of dry, refrigerated and frozen items to distributors, foodservice operators, retailers, grocers, c-stores, and others.

The company has continually invested in warehouse and transportation capacity. Investments in 2025-2026 will bring total warehouse capacity to nearly 6 million square feet of space and a fleet of more than 3,000 custom built reefers, driven by more than 2,000 company drivers.

International

The company's international division positions Dot Foods as a global supply-chain partner: Dot states that it provides supply-chain solutions for customers in "over 55 countries around the world," enabling international distributors to access U.S. and Canadian products without requiring suppliers to make their own export investments. This offering is focused on consolidation and logistics—providing smaller, consolidated export shipments, multi-temperature handling and single-invoice simplicity for buyers abroad.

In addition to exporting food around the world, Dot also imports products from more than 50 countries for distribution in the United States. This is accomplished both as a direct importer, but also through Dot's Savor brand.

Dot's international capability is supported by a combination of domestic U.S. infrastructure and facilities located outside the U.S. In Canada, Dot Foods operates two distribution centers, one in Calgary and one in Ontario. The newest opened in September 2023, and serves as a headquarters for Canadian operations. Dot Foods also operates an internal transportation arm (Dot Transportation) to support cross-border and domestic movements.

Summary

Dot's value proposition for both domestic and international suppliers and customers is straightforward: Domestically, Dot allows customers to place one order with one item minimums, receive one delivery, and manage one invoice. Internationally, manufacturers can reach overseas markets without establishing their own export infrastructure, while international distributors gain access to a very large assortment of North American products, shipped in consolidated, customer-friendly quantities.

Internationally, Dot Foods faces the typical complexities of international redistribution: ensuring multi-temperature logistics, complying with diverse customs and country-specific regulations, managing inventory across many SKUs, and coordinating last-mile distribution in target countries. Recent investments in cold-chain capacity and the expansion of Canadian operations reflect efforts to strengthen the company's ability to manage these issues and to scale its international footprint. Today, Dot Foods combines a very large and diverse North American product portfolio with targeted investments in distribution and cold-chain infrastructure, and it operates an international division that serves customers in more than 55 countries.

III. The next phase for Dot: Expansion into US-based Retail and Manufacturing Organizations

Dot's original business model was created to best serve a traditional foodservice supply chain. In recent years, Dot has realized the value they can provide in the retail food supply chain. Dot Foods is a household name among key players at foodservice distributors (i.e. warehouse managers, buyers, executive leadership, etc.). In the retail channels however, Dot does not have any brand awareness in retail organizations or within the retail teams at manufacturing firms.

Case Competition Problem Statement: Dot Foods needs a strategic media plan to build brand awareness among key decision-makers at major US - based retail organizations (e.g. Target, Walmart, CVS) and manufacturer partners with US – based retail-facing programs. These audiences currently have limited or no awareness of who Dot Foods is or the role they play in the supply chain. The goal of this project is to create a media plan that builds brand awareness for Dot Foods with key decision makers in domestic organizations. The task of this competition is not to generate a list of people for sales calls, or to develop the actual creative assets that will be sent. Instead, the strategic media plan should accomplish two, interconnected goals:

1. **Retailer Focused Communication:** Create a media plan that is tailored to various levels of a retailer's organization. The plan should target executive level teams as well as category managers, buyer, and warehouse and logistics management.
2. **Manufacturer Focused Communication:** The media plan should also build brand recognition and trust among manufacturers involved in retail programs. The target audience for the medial plan should include executive teams focused on finance, logistics, retail sales

and external brokerage sales. Those teams have significant decision-making influence. Typically, all parties will have to greenlight Dot in order for them to "win" their business. Case Competitors should approach this problem statement as a new brand launch. Dot is not focused on product marketing, but on creating long-term brand recognition and trust throughout the US-based retail supply chain. What is the best way for Dot to reach these audiences? What channels does each role (Retailers and Manufacturers) use to access industry information and how should Dot Foods best target those channels and in what media format?

Plan

- Outline the key man/retailers
- Look for other food-industry distributors in this market
- Just U.S.
- 55 countries seems bad?
refer?

Why would big players with perfected supply chains want to start working with Dot?

~ Infiltrate POS systems

~ Dot wants to be recognized for what they do