Ihab Abou Letaif Shares His Outlook on What the Next Year Holds for Retail Operations

Ihab Abou Letaif, based in Venezuela, offers a grounded view on what is changing, what is misunderstood, and what will matter most in the year ahead.

Distrito Federal, Venezuela Feb 9, 2026 (Issuewire.com) - In a year shaped by inflation pressure, supply uncertainty, and tighter margins, retail operators are being forced to rethink how they work. In this personal outlook, Ihab Abou Letaif shares what individuals and operators should realistically expect in the coming year, based on hands-on experience in retail operations and consumer goods.

“Retail is entering a quieter phase,” Abou Letaif says. “Less hype. More discipline.”

What changed recently

Over the past year, volatility became normal rather than exceptional. Inventory lead times fluctuated. Costs adjusted faster than pricing. Industry estimates show operating margins in food and convenience retail remain thin, often between 2% and 5%. In several Latin American markets, logistics costs increased by an estimated 15–25% year over year. Inflation in emerging economies continues to influence purchasing behaviour, with shoppers making more frequent but smaller basket purchases.

“People noticed that demand did not disappear,” he says. “It just became more selective.”

What people are getting wrong

Many individuals still expect growth to solve structural problems. Abou Letaif disagrees. “Scale does not fix weak systems. It exposes them.” He notes that businesses with high stock levels saw cash strain when demand softened, even when sales volume stayed stable. Industry data suggests excess inventory can tie up 20–30% more working capital than planned.

Another misconception is that technology alone will solve operational issues. “Tools help, but only if processes are clear,” he says. “Software cannot replace discipline.”

What is likely to get harder

Cash flow management will tighten. Supplier terms are becoming less flexible. Forecasting accuracy remains a challenge, with demand variability estimated to be up to 40% higher than pre-volatile periods in some categories. Labour efficiency will also matter more as wage pressures rise faster than productivity in many markets.

“What gets harder is hiding mistakes,” Abou Letaif explains. “There is less margin for error.”

What will work

According to Abou Letaif, the fundamentals will outperform trends. Clear stock rotation. Smaller, more frequent orders. Reliable suppliers over cheaper ones. He points out that retailers focusing on inventory turnover improvements of even 10–15% saw meaningful cash relief.

“Stability is the new advantage,” he says. “Consistency beats speed.”

Other practices likely to work include basic demand tracking, weekly operational reviews, and keeping decision-making close to real data. “If you cannot explain your numbers simply, you probably do not understand them,” he adds.

Three scenarios for the year ahead

Optimistic scenario
Conditions stabilise modestly. Inflation slows. Supply reliability improves.

Best individual actions: tighten systems, reinvest in training, and improve supplier relationships.

Realistic scenario
Volatility continues at manageable levels. Costs fluctuate. Demand remains cautious.
Best individual actions: protect cash, reduce complexity, and focus on core products.

Cautious scenario
Costs rise faster than pricing power. Supply disruptions return.
Best individual actions: reduce inventory risk, renegotiate terms early, and prioritise liquidity.

“Planning for more than one outcome is no longer optional,” Abou Letaif says. “It is basic risk management.”

Looking ahead

Across all scenarios, Abou Letaif believes individuals who focus on execution will be better positioned. “The next year will reward people who do fewer things, but do them well,” he says. “Retail is not about prediction. It is about preparation.”

He encourages readers to be honest about their situation. “Choose the scenario that fits your reality,” he says. “Then act accordingly. Waiting is also a decision.”

Call to action
Readers are encouraged to choose the scenario that best reflects their environment—optimistic, realistic, or cautious—and follow the recommended actions consistently over the next year. Discipline today will matter more than optimism tomorrow.

About Ihab Abou Letaif

Ihab Abou Letaif is a retail operations professional based in Venezuela. His experience spans consumer goods, inventory management, supply coordination, and financial discipline in high-volatility environments. His work focuses on practical systems, operational clarity, and sustainable execution in emerging markets.

Media Contact

Ihab Abou Letaif

*********@ihababouletaif.com

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