**List of companies**

| **Company** | **Why they’re interesting** |
| --- | --- |
| **Groupe Dynamite** (Dynamite & Garage) | Big fashion retailer based in Montréal. Digital + physical stores; Gen Z / millennial audience; supply chain, inventory, staffing, online-omni challenges. |
| **SSENSE** | High-end e-commerce + physical presence; fashion + global market. Their insight on tech, UX, fulfillment, brand partnerships would be very valuable. (Though likely harder to get access.) |
| **Salesfloor Inc., Lightspeed Commerce** | These are more tech / platform providers / enablers in retail space. Interviewing them gives insight into what retailers ask for, pain in features, what is possible. |
| |  | | --- | | **Simons (La Maison Simons)** |  |  | | --- | |  | | Mid- to higher-end fashion + home decor; they also focus on experience in stores, loyalty, aesthetics, omni-channel. |
| |  | | --- | | **Lululemon** |  |  | | --- | |  | | High-performance apparel / athletic wear. Strong brand, global presence. |
| |  | | --- | | **Vessi** |  |  | | --- | |  | | Combines style + functional tech (waterproof knit); strong online first presence and expanding into physical retail. |
| |  | | --- | | **La Vie en Rose** |  |  | | --- | |  | | Lingerie, swimwear, loungewear: comfort, fit, design are critical. Lots of stores in Canada, HQ in Montréal. They also have a digital presence, outlet/concept stores, expansion outside Canada. |

**Interview Guide**

**1. Forecasting & Demand Planning**

* How do you currently forecast demand (tools, models, intuition)?
* At what granularity do you forecast (banner/country, region, store, SKU, category)?
* How often are forecasts updated (weekly, monthly, seasonally)?
* What’s the average forecast accuracy you achieve, and how do you measure it?
* What are the biggest challenges (e.g., promotions, new product launches, seasonality, supply chain delays)?
* How do you handle anomalies (outliers, black swan events, weather, holidays)?

**2. Inventory Management & Allocation**

* How do you decide **how much inventory to allocate** to each store or region?
* Do you use **rules-based allocation, manual overrides, or AI-driven tools**?
* How do you manage **replenishment from DC → stores**?
* Do you cluster stores by performance/foot traffic/region for allocation decisions?
* What are your current pain points (stockouts, overstocks, high carrying costs, markdowns)?

**3. Merchandise Financial Planning (MFP)**

* What planning horizon do you use (pre-season 12 months, in-season reforecasts)?
* At what levels do you plan (company, banner, channel, category, subclass)?
* How do you set **sales, receipts, markdowns, margins, and inventory targets**?
* Do you create multiple versions (Working Plan, Initial Plan, Forecast, Last Year)?
* Where do you face the most friction (time rollups, approvals, cross-functional alignment)?

**4. Markdowns & Promotions**

* How do you decide **when and how much to markdown**?
* Do you use a fixed cadence (e.g., end of season) or dynamic strategies (AI, elasticity models)?
* What’s your threshold for approving a markdown (GM$ lift, sell-through, aging)?
* How do you balance **eComm vs. store markdown pricing**?
* What % of products end up needing markdowns, and how deep are they on average?

**5. Technology & Tools**

* Which systems are you using today (SAP, Oracle, Aptos, Excel, custom tools)?
* What works well, and what doesn’t (integration, user interface, flexibility)?
* How much do you rely on Excel “shadow systems” outside of official tools?
* How open is your team to **AI-driven recommendations vs. human judgment**?
* What kind of dashboards/reports are most useful for decision making?

**6. Cross-Functional Alignment**

* How do **merchants, planners, allocation, supply chain, and finance** collaborate?
* Where do misalignments usually happen (sales targets vs. receipts, forecast vs. reality)?
* How are approvals managed (top-down vs. bottom-up planning)?
* Which KPIs matter most at executive vs. planner level (GM$, GM%, sales, inventory turns)?

**7. Future State / Wish List**

* If you could automate one part of planning/forecasting, what would it be?
* What would a “dream” planning or forecasting solution look like for your team?
* How would you measure the success of a new tool (fewer hours spent, higher forecast accuracy, reduced markdowns)?
* What’s holding you back from adopting more advanced solutions (budget, data quality, resistance to change)?