Delivering Efficiency:

A Realistic Guide to Artificial Intelligence Use in Foodservice Distribution

IFDA
international **foodservice**
distributors association

Contents

Introduction

The foodservice distribution industry is increasingly aware that artificial intelligence will have important impacts on its businesses. Leaders are recognizing the possible short- and long-term risks of not exploring AI's opportunities — ranging from slower growth to competitive disadvantage.

However, industry leaders are trying to figure out how best to make progress on their AI journeys. They are seeking answers to questions to help respond to this emerging technology. These questions include: Which AI applications are most important to pursue? How can these be applied in foodservice distribution? How should companies go about identifying the most relevant AI solution providers and preparing their own teams to use these technologies?

The focus is increasingly on identifying realistic benefits and meaningful returns from AI. This perspective mirrors the growing interest in practical AI solutions across the business world, which follows a period of heightened buzz about the potential for this technology.

IFDA presents this report, *A Realistic Guide to Artificial Intelligence Use in Foodservice Distribution*, to help the industry better understand the current landscape. The report spotlights what this industry's professionals need to know about using AI, focusing on practical applications and specific use cases in various parts of the business.

## AMONG THE REPORT'S ELEMENTS THAT WILL HELP DRIVE PROGRESS:

- **Priorities:** Identification of the biggest AI priorities for foodservice distributors, based on an IFDA survey.

- **Perspectives:** Opinions from leaders in this industry about AI opportunities, challenges and strategies, based on
interviews conducted for the report.

- **Examples:** Case studies spotlighting examples of successful AI solution adoption by foodservice distributors.

- **Education:** Insights on how foodservice distribution organizations can choose the most relevant AI solutions based on needs and potential benefits.

- **Profiles:** Mini profiles of a sampling of AI technology providers and their solutions. These profiles cover a wide range of needs across business functions in this industry, with identification of benefits, ROI, and prerequisite action steps needed. The information was collected from IFDA allied members and IFDA Solutions Conference exhibitors.

This report follows on a 2024 IFDA report about emerging technology called *The Innovation Imperative*.[1] That piece spotlighted the importance of embracing technology innovation. This latest piece focuses specifically on AI and how the industry can drive successful strategies to benefit from practical solutions.
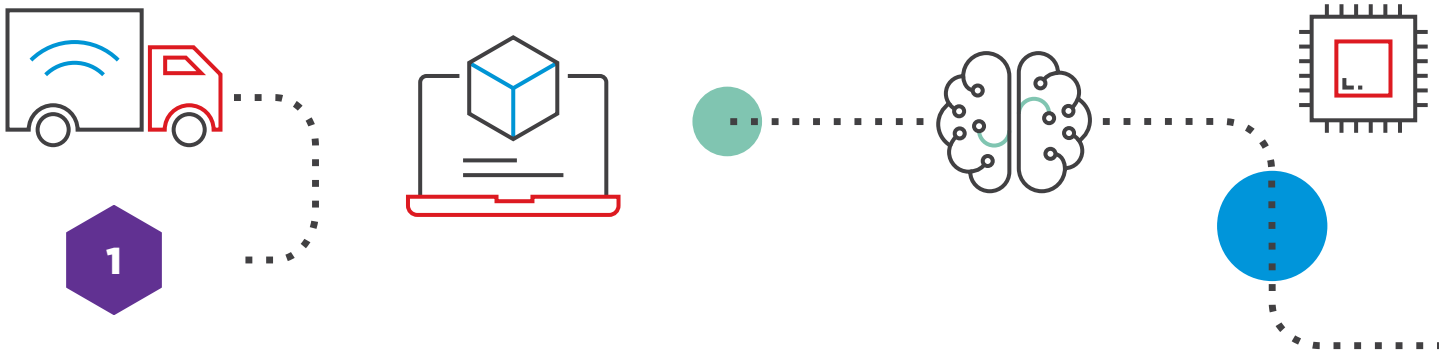
Biggest AI Priorities in Foodservice Distribution

SALES AND ECOMMERCE LEAD AI PRIORITY AREAS
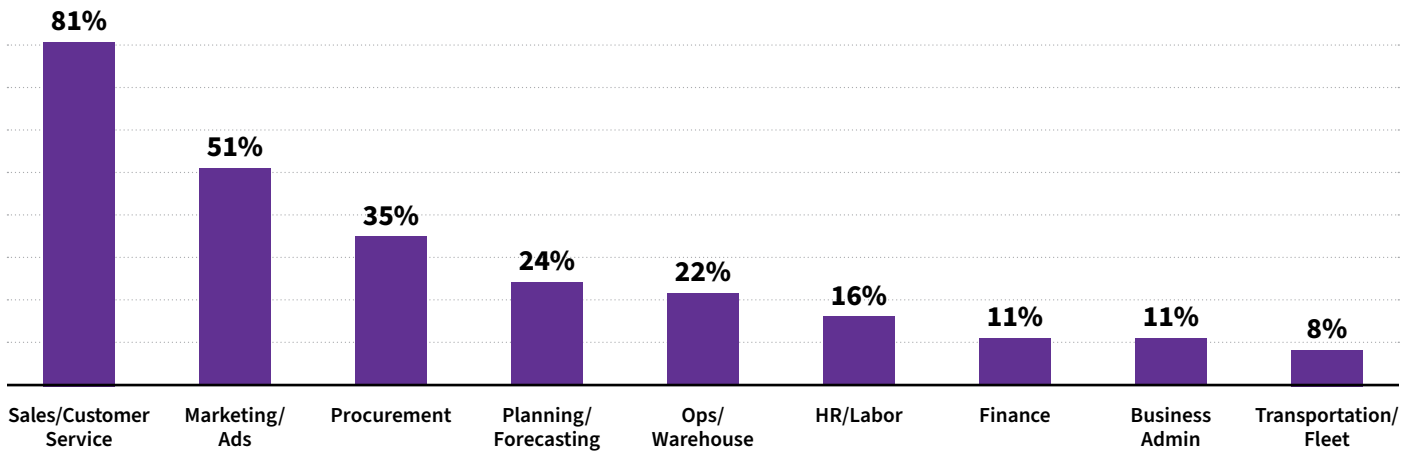
Source: IFDA member survey 2024

AI solutions are high on the radar of foodservice distributors, which have a wide range of priorities to solve pain points for their businesses, based on the results of an IFDA distributor member poll conducted in September 2024. The survey, which received responses from 54 distributors, examined perspectives on various functional areas and use cases along with ROI expectations.

More than four in five survey respondents point to sales/ecommerce/customer service as the top functional area for finding potential AI solutions. The next biggest priority cited is marketing/advertising/communications, mentioned by roughly half of respondents.

These top two priorities are most likely to involve generative AI, which is increasingly high profile in the business world today.

The third biggest priority is procurement, at about one-third of respondents citing that as a top area where AI

might be helpful. As an example, one industry executive interviewed said that AI trained properly can help guide companies on when and where to buy fresh items like produce to get the freshest product over time, and it can take into account consumer purchase trends to account for what is most likely to be purchased.

Other distributor priorities include strategic planning/forecasting (24%), operations/warehouse (22%), and human resources/labor management (16%).

In addition, slightly over half of survey respondents said pricing strategies represent the most desired use case when it comes to specific AI solution priorities/wish lists for their businesses. This was followed by creative marketing/advertising and product data management at roughly two in five respondents saying that's at the top of the task list where AI might help, and sales predictions/forecasting cited at about one-third.

Slightly lesser priorities include inventory management, business productivity, employee training, market intelligence, and food safety/traceability. In the case of traceability, AI may be able to help prepare the industry for the new record-keeping requirements under the FDA's FSMA 204 Rule on Traceability, said one executive.
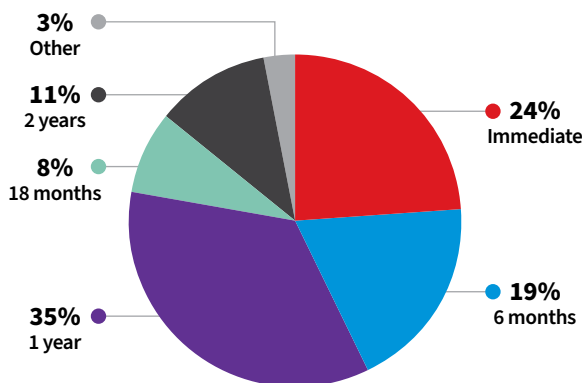
The feedback provides a window into the biggest use case needs that distributors are hoping AI can solve. While the question didn't address it, respondents will also need to consider the investments or internal work required to succeed with these types of solutions, such as achieving strong data management capabilities needed for leveraging many AI solutions

ROI expectations is one of the most important factors influencing new technology decisions in this industry, as IFDA found in a survey for its *2023 Foodservice Distribution Industry Technology Report*.[2]

In the IFDA AI survey for this report, respondents were asked about their general expectations for financial ROI of AI-based solutions, software and tools. About one-third of respondents expect an ROI of 1 year. This was followed by about one-quarter that expect an immediate ROI, one in five expecting ROI in six months, and smaller proportions citing longer ROI periods.

The wide ROI ranges reflect the many types of solutions and forms of AI being leveraged, and possibly the realization that it often takes time to prepare organizations to effectively use solutions. ROIs are different not just by AI solution, but often for various features within solutions, a point emphasized during industry interviews.

DISTRIBUTORS EYE A RANGE OF ROI EXPECTATIONS

- 3% Other
- 11% 2 years
- 8% 18 months
- 35% 1 year
- 24% Immediate
- 19% 6 months

Source: IFDA member survey 2024

PRICING STRATEGIES ARE AT TOP OF AI USE-CASE WISH LISTS

Use Case	%
Pricing Strategies	51%
Marketing/Creative	41%
Product Data Management	38%
Sales Forecasting	32%
Inventory Management	30%
Business Productivity	30%
Employee Training	27%
Market Intelligence	27%
Food Safety	24%
Slotting/Picking	16%
Routing	16%
Customer Service	14%
Labor Management	14%
Safety	11%
Invoice Management	11%
Equipment Management	8%
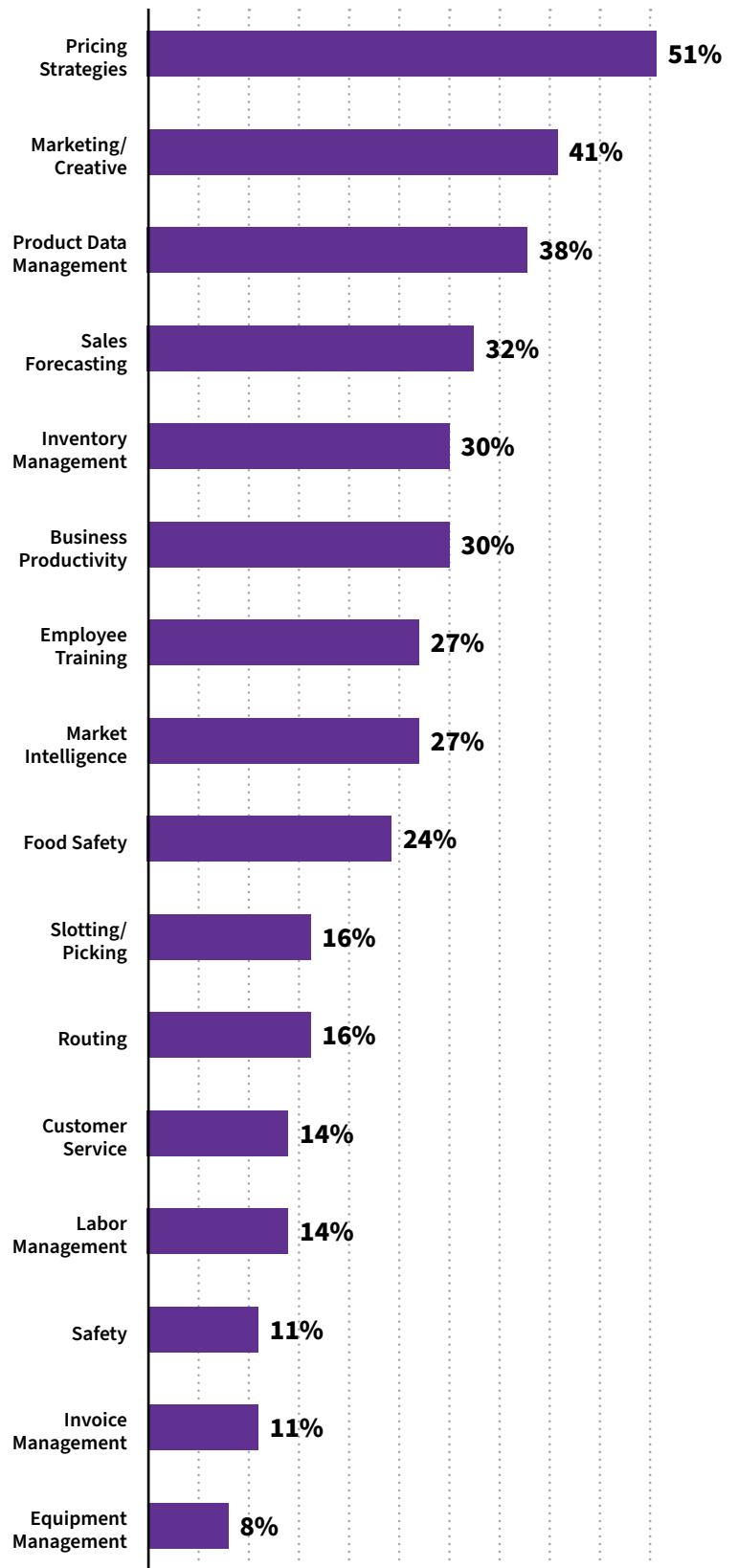
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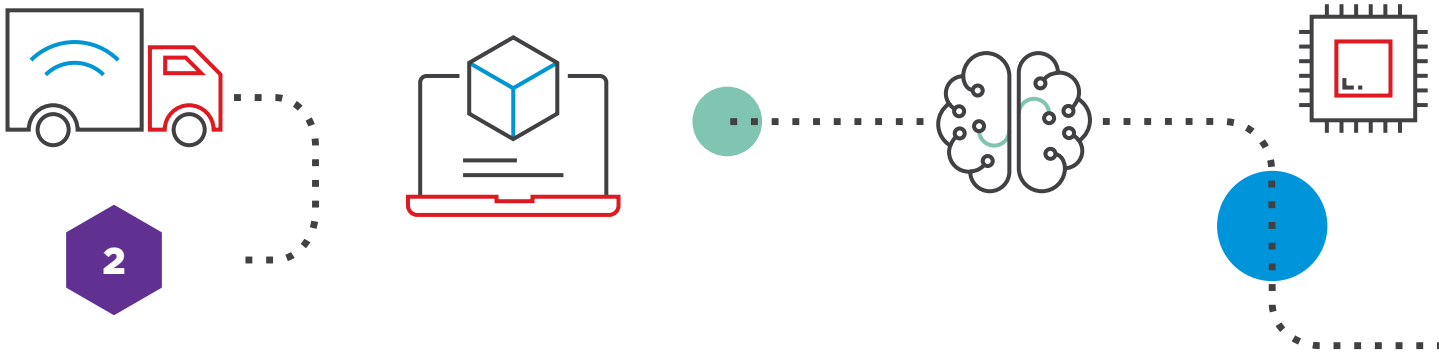
Executive Perspectives on AI Opportunities, Challenges & Strategies

AI OPPORTUNITIES TOUCH MANY ASPECTS OF FOODSERVICE DISTRIBUTION

AI is alluring to foodservice distributors for multiple reasons. Executives interviewed for this report said the biggest opportunities range from handling tasks faster — akin to having a robot that serves as an assistant — to achieving results not possible before. Here are a few examples of opportunities discussed by distributors during interviews.

IMPROVING ACCURACY AND SPEED

Distributors said they can benefit from improved accuracy and speed related to ordering.

"AI can help distributors get accurate orders correct the first time around based on its knowledge of customers' inventory," said Jim Hoss, senior vice president of Transportation and Operations, Cash-Wa Distributing. "After some training, the AI can learn the customer order history based on seasonality and other factors, and then create orders based on that information."

GAINING ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS

Distributors hope to leverage AI for its ability to improve actionable insights.

"We are always looking for ways to make our operational reporting better and easier to use," said Sarah Bippen, Business Systems analyst, Kuna Foodservice. "This would be useful as it relates to sales data, purchasing data, and other areas. We want to identify deeper insights."

FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS

AI can help foster data-sharing partnerships that drive mutual business success.

"This might involve leveraging data from a customer to help supply that customer in new ways," said Hoss of Cash-Wa Distributing. He cited the example of using customer data to help supply that customer in new ways, such as by quickly identifying its needs in a new market. He said AI could even foster unique partnerships between distributors to share data and customers. "In all of these scenarios it would be important to overcome reluctance to sharing data," he added.

GROWING CUSTOMER BASES

One of the case studies presented in this report shows how AI capabilities can enable a distributor's sales team to proactively discover local operators with menus that match their existing inventory. The distributor profiled is Southwest Traders, which leveraged an AI solution from Cut+Dry.

"We carry some unique specialty SKUS, and now with this solution, we can go into a market and quickly identify which items from our inventory are being used by local operators," said Brad Smith, senior vice president of Sales and Procurement, Southwest Traders."

TRUSTING THE TECHNOLOGY

What happens when AI provides a recommendation, but your team wants to know the why behind the suggestion?

This is the "explainability" challenge cited by Drew Saur, chief information officer, The Palmer Family of Companies, which includes G&C Foods and Palmer Food Services. "We used AI to help predict beef pricing, but our experts wanted to know why the AI was making these suggestions," he said. "They didn't want to run blind."

This topic points to a questioning of AI information by some, at least at first, said Jason Gunn, head of Marketing at technology company Pepper. "A team member might think, 'I don't need a robot to tell me what I know,'" he said. "But when it comes to big analytics, while you need to show caution, the AI is probably smarter than you are, whether about category management, customer acquisition or many other topics."

TRAINING HUMANS AND AI

AI involves learning components and feedback loops, said Brad Smith, of Southwest Traders.

"You can't just say to your team, 'here's the new tool, good luck,'" he explained. "We walk through the entire training process." In fact, given that AI needs to be trained, the company typically guides both the team and the AI at the same time, he added

THE DATA IMPERATIVE

Technology providers typically emphasize to distributors the need for good data to drive AI solutions.

Said one provider, "We make sure the distributors have clean data." In the case of an ordering system solution, distributors also need good product information, including images, nutritional information and other aspects.

IFDA's 2024 report called *The Innovation Imperative* emphasizes the importance of avoiding a siloed approach to data in organizations. It points out that having a robust data lake or data pool is foundational for a great AI strategy.[1]

IFDA's 2023 report called *A Foodservice Distributor's Guide to Cybersecurity*[3] outlines the dangers and best practice solutions involving this major challenge. The report addresses cybersecurity basics, lessons learned from navigating crises, and key elements for AI policies and cybersecurity plans.

CYBERSECURITY CONCERNS

Cyber safety worries have the potential to slow adoption of AI solutions.

"My company is holding back on adoption because of cybersecurity concerns," said Hoss of Cash-Wa Distributing. "I know there are other companies with similar reservations, which could lead to less rapid AI adoption in this industry." However, later adoption could be beneficial because trailblazing companies can identify challenges that others can learn from, he added. "One important safety step is for companies to seek security certifications when purchasing systems."

JOB REPLACEMENT WORRIES

Workforces have long been concerned about how emerging technologies could affect their jobs, and the scenario with AI is no different. This factor can lead to delayed AI adoption.

"Employees may worry about being replaced rather than understanding that AI can be a helpful tool and resource for their roles," said Bippen of Kuna Foodservice, who added that her company's leadership wants to embrace AI. "Use of AI enables people to use higher skill sets. Without it, you can fall behind as an organization." She cited the example of sales employees, who can leverage AI to spend less time manually inputting orders so they can become consultants for clients. "They can show new products for menus, sample items and help out with menu costing," she explained.

Clarifying the Types of AI

It's important to distinguish between Gen AI and non-Gen AI — sometimes referred to as "traditional AI" — when discussing this topic, said Drew Saur of The Palmer Family of Companies. "There are too many unfocused conversations about AI," he explained. "AI has been on the scene for a long time. Gen AI came on the radar about two years ago when OpenAI brought it to forefront. Gen AI is informed by training a computer. The use cases are different between Gen AI and other types of AI."

In this report's solution provider profiles section, each solution specifies the type of AI used, whether traditional, generative or both.

IMPORTANCE OF "PLAYING" WITH GEN AI

Is it okay to play at work? The answer is yes, if that play involves experimenting with Gen AI, according to Drew Saur of The Palmer Family of Companies.

"We encourage our employees to play and interact with Gen AI," he said. Saur said that his organization uses Gen AI tools for needs such as taking notes, summarizing information and having a better search engine. "You need to experience it. If you aren't playing with it, you can't know how it can become more useful. But it's sometimes a challenge to get people to do this."

ENCOURAGE SUPPLIERS TO KEEP IMPROVING SOLUTIONS

Distributors benefit from solution provider AI tools, and they can further benefit by pressing suppliers to keep raising their games. That is the perspective of Southwest Traders' Brad Smith.

"So many of these providers are integrating smart technology into solutions now," he said. "We need these suppliers to keep improving solutions. My operator customers don't let me slide on providing perfect service to them, so I need my suppliers to have the vision to keep improving their solutions."

CONSIDER NEEDS OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS

The decision-making on AI solution adoption needs to consider how tools will impact a company, its customers and all other stakeholders, said Jim Hoss of Cash-Wa Distributing. Among the questions he ponders:

- What efficiencies will it bring to the organization?
- What benefits will it bring to my customers?
- How will it help my employees?
- What employee training will be needed?

TAKE PRACTICAL APPROACHES

While many distributors support AI experimentation, they are placing increased focus on practicality and ROI, according to interview feedback. This outlook has been gaining in the industry.

IFDA's 2024 report *The Innovation Imperative*[1] relayed that it's important for companies to avoid getting caught in technology hype by staying focused on what is meaningful for each business. The trend to practical AI approaches is evident across different industries. As just one example, Walmart recently unveiled a forecast that underscores this point.[4]

COMMIT TO PREREQUISITES FOR AI SUCCESS

Distributors adopting AI solutions have discovered the process often requires preparatory steps to enable success.

"If you aren't going to follow the necessary processes for success with AI tools, you are going to fail," said Smith of Southwest Traders. As a case in point, his organization conducted four months of cleaning up data to prepare for an AI solution. His advice is to "take a good look at your organization and go into it with eyes wide open."

In this report's solution provider profiles, each profile specifies the action steps and prerequisites needed to drive success. Depending on the solution, this might include activities such as running a proof of concept, cleaning data, participating in user training, and training AI models.
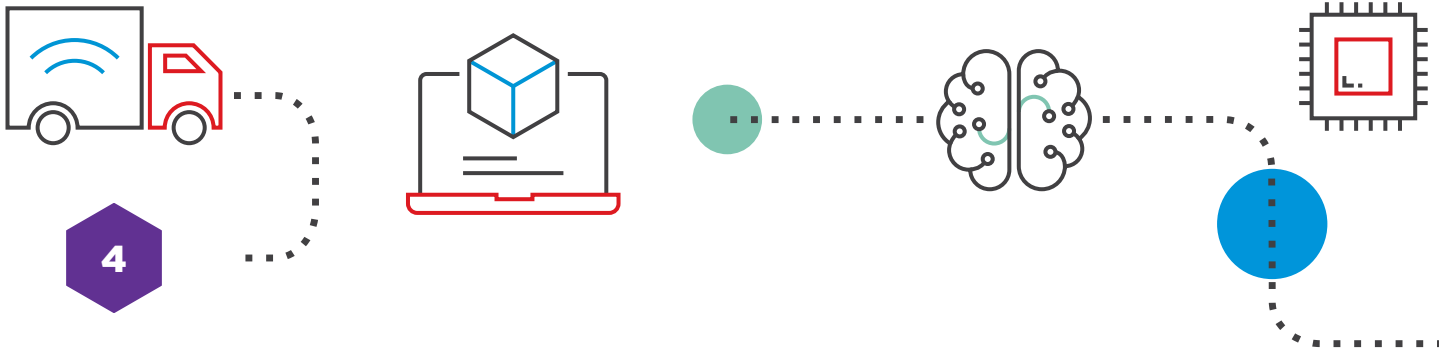
Case Studies on Successful AI Solution Efforts

AI-powered solutions are solving important real-world challenges for foodservice distributors. Following are a few case studies involving AI solutions, based on interviews with distributors and their solution providers and related information provided. These case studies relay the background and goals of each partnership, the distributor challenges and technology company solutions, how the partnerships began and proceeded, and key results to date. More information on each of the solution providers can be found in the profiles section in this report's appendix.

SWT SOUTHWEST TRADERS	Advances Sales and Prospecting
Ginsberg's	Improves Driver Safety
KUNA	Enhances Customer Ordering Experience

Advances Sales and Prospecting

BACKGROUND AND GOALS

Southwest Traders is a large, privately held specialty distributor based in Temecula, Calif., that services customers in California, Nevada and Arizona. In 2020, it decided to partner with **Cut+Dry**, which offers AI-powered e-commerce solutions, to address several business challenges. Southwest Traders aimed to boost its street business, reduce administrative overhead, and increase online ordering adoption — which was under 50%. The distributor wanted to free up time for its sales reps to focus on enhancing customer experience and driving volume. The Cut+Dry e-commerce platform, which integrates both traditional and generative AI technologies, delivers highly personalized SKU recommendations and actionable insights that drive sales with less effort, explained Tatiana Chermayeff, Cut+Dry chief of staff, and Jonathan Syu, the company's Demand Generation marketing manager.

ACTIONS TAKEN

Southwest Traders implemented the Cut+Dry digital ordering and payments platform, with suggestive selling and recommendation as a core feature. The platform utilizes advanced machine learning to analyze product data and transaction histories, providing personalized, data-driven suggestions that drive sales. Additional tools adopted include Cut+Dry's AI-driven prospecting tool Yes Chef!, and an AI-driven voice and text recognition module to receive orders across voice, SMS, email, and fax. The system automates order categorization and product matching, eliminating manual order-taking and streamlining the entire process.

RESULTS

- **Suggesting Selling and Recommendations:** From January 2023 to December 2024, Southwest Traders experienced a 49% increase in revenue driven by the platform's suggestive selling and recommendations capabilities.

- **AI-Driven Prospecting:** By utilizing the distributor's extensive set of transaction data alongside generative AI integrations, Cut+Dry's premier prospecting tool, Yes, Chef!, enabled the distributor's sales team to proactively discover local operators with menus that matched their existing inventory. The tool enabled the team to double its productivity by automating lead generation and proposal creation in a single platform. On average, the sales team saved 62% of the time spent on prospecting and achieved a 72% close rate.

- **Improving Order-Taking Abilities:** Cut+Dry's order desk module enabled Southwest Traders to receive orders across voice, SMS, email, and fax, with automated categorization and product matching to eliminate the need for manual order-taking.

> "
> **The solution has increased online ordering usage to 91% of our customers from less than 50% previously. This blew our expectations out of the water. It has saved our reps 9.5 hours per week on average.**
>
> **Brad Smith**
> Senior Vice President of Sales and Procurement, Southwest Traders

Improves Driver Safety

BACKGROUND AND GOALS

Ginsberg's Food Service is a large, family-owned broadline foodservice distributor based in New York State. It serves New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania. It began working with **Netradyne** in late 2019 to enhance fleet safety and reduce injuries and accidents. It was seeking robust technology that would enable useful analytics and real-time feedback for drivers to improve their safety behaviors, in order to reduce risk. Netradyne is a company known for its AI-powered solutions that have been enhanced over the course of its relationship with Ginsberg's. Netradyne's Driver•i video telematics platform utilizes vision-based AI to recognize and analyze objects such as speed limit signs, said Kristin Tedesco, the technology company's associate director, Corporate Marketing. AI is also used in its algorithm to help determine event type and cause. With this information, the system can alert drivers instantly to help reduce accidents. The system also helps managers understand the severity of the behavior to suggest coaching points. It uses generative AI in the form of a safety assistant on its manager portal, to which questions can be posed, which quickly returns actionable insights.

ACTIONS TAKEN

After launching the program with Netradyne in 2019, Ginsberg's added cameras in its power equipment and started using Netradyne's GreenZone Score to coach its driver team with the goal of reducing at-risk behaviors and accidents. Drivers began to gain more understanding of how they could improve safety, and Netradyne's tools provided positive reinforcement. Managers received alerts if drivers engaged in at-risk behaviors — such as distracted driving and near collisions — enabling immediate outreach to drivers about how to eliminate these negative behaviors. Driver incentives were established for good safety scores.

RESULTS

Ginsberg's safety culture has evolved in highly positive ways due to the partnership with Netradyne, said Card and Kyle Ellis, Ginsberg's Transportation Supervisor.

- Accidents have been dramatically reduced and in 2024 represented only about 15% of the 2021 level.

- At-risk behaviors by drivers have declined by 75%.

- Some of the biggest benefits have included automated alerts; root-cause analysis; driver self-coaching features; and the ability to protect drivers and the company from false accusations.

"

The solution has continued to become more accurate and valuable over time. It protects drivers and our organization.

Mike Card
Director of Transportation, Ginsberg's

Enhances Customer Ordering Experience

KUNA

BACKGROUND AND GOALS

Kuna Foodservice is a family-owned distributor based in Dupo, Ill., a St. Louis suburb, which serves foodservice businesses across the Midwest. It chose to work with technology provider **Pepper** and leveraged its solution Pepper AI to enhance online ordering capabilities with the goal of improving customer experience and sales. Pepper AI's tools enable distributors to increase order sizes and revenue through AI-powered cross-sell/upsell alerts, said Jason Gunn, head of Marketing at Pepper, and Nick Ziech-Lopez, director of Product Marketing for the company.

ACTIONS TAKEN

Kuna began working with Pepper in August 2023, leveraging the technology provider's support team to incorporate its unique product data and images into the platform and prepare to use the solution. After the rollout, the distributor and its operator customers were pleased by the enhanced customer experiences. Since that time, Kuna and its sales team have added additional features that have been successful, including Prospect Finder and Order Guide Generator. Prospect Finder is a map-based prospecting tool that helps on-the-go reps locate prospects and customers within a set geographical area while out on the road. Order Guide Generator is an AI-powered DSR tool that generates sample order guides for prospects by combining their online restaurant menu (or a picture of a menu) with reps' item catalog.

RESULTS

- **Order Increases:** Operators on the Pepper platform have increased their dollar spending by 10.5% and the number of cases purchased per order by 11.25%.
- **Customer Experience:** The ordering system drove a much-improved customer experience, in aspects ranging from ease of navigation to inclusion of enhanced images and product-rich information.
- **Ad Campaigns:** Kuna Foodservice has made limited used so far of the Pepper app's brand marketing/ad campaign features. To date it has experienced 11-times growth in sales for promoted items during campaigns and three-times growth in sales for those same items in the period immediately after a promotion ended.
- **Time Savings:** Kuna Foodservice's sales team has been saving time and becoming more consultative by using the AI-powered features, including an AI chatbot that quickly locates relevant information about customers.
- **Additional Features:** Kuna Foodservice continues to drive adoption of the Pepper solutions and is considering using additional features, including an "Intelligent inbox" that builds orders from customers who prefer to communicate their needs through email, text and voice.

"

We needed a more updated ordering solution that would appeal to customers and encourage them to purchase more. Pepper's solution successfully addressed our needs and helped put us on the same technology playing field as larger competitors.

Sarah Bippen
Business Systems Analyst, Kuna Foodservice
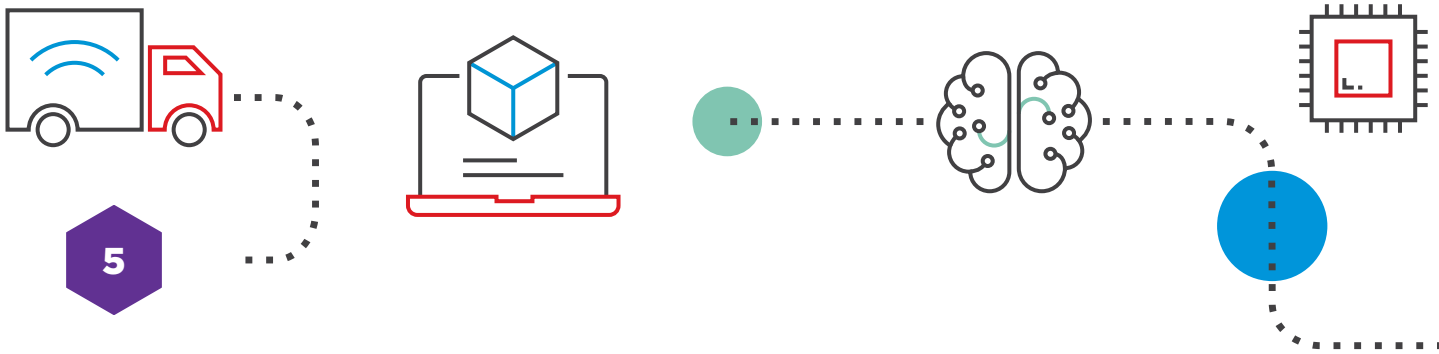
Guide to Choosing AI Solutions Based on Needs and Benefits

STRATEGIES FOR EXPLORING SOLUTIONS

In the appendix of this report, you will find profiles of AI solutions for this industry. The information was gathered from IFDA allied members and IFDA Solutions Conference exhibitors. Before examining the profiles, it's helpful to consider how to best explore these solutions.

IDENTIFYING NEEDS

A good place for distributors to start is to determine which functional areas of their businesses need solutions.

Here are functional areas covered:

Transportation/fleet management

Sales/ecommerce/customer service

Operations/warehouse

Strategic planning/forecasting

Marketing

Final-mile delivery/optimization

EXAMPLES OF AI SOLUTION BENEFITS

IFDA's survey asked technology providers to explain the key business problem each solution addresses and the top benefits offered. Here are a few examples of how this is relayed by the solution providers.

- **Order Management:** In the functional area of sales/ecommerce/customer service, one of the solutions is called **Choco AI**. It "solves the challenge of processing and managing complex orders from multiple channels," according to the solution provider Choco. "Choco AI not only streamlines order capture, "but also enhances accuracy with its powerful AI-driven system." By learning from historical order data, "it recognizes patterns and makes intelligent predictions." The major benefits cited are significant time savings, reduced errors and improved customer experience.

- **Transportation Safety and Productivity:** In the area of transportation/fleet management, one of the solutions is called **Motive Integrated Operations Platform**. The solution provider **Motive Technologies** explains, "Motive's AI-powered technologies help foodservice distributors significantly improve the safety and efficiency of their physical operations, from fleet management to route optimization, to simplifying reefer temperature monitoring." It lists key benefits as safety, productivity and profitability.

- **Operations Monitoring:** For operations/warehouse, the solution **OneTrack.AI**, from the company of the same name, "uses AI cameras on MHE and around warehouses to monitor operations and bring real-time alerts and video visibility into people, process, and product exceptions within warehouses." Key benefits include fewer safety events, improved productivity, and reduction in damaged product and shipment errors."

- **Sales Forecasting:** For strategic planning/forecasting, the solution **AI-Powered Demand Forecasting** from **OrderGrid** "delivers precise daily sales forecasts. Custom statistical models allow users to analyze multiple factors such as historical sales data, weather, events, product pricing and promotions." Benefits include maximizing product availability, boosting customer satisfaction, and improving cost control and waste reduction.

UNDERSTANDING PREREQUISITES FOR USING AI SOLUTIONS

IFDA asked AI solution providers to relay the action steps and prerequisites distributors need to take to engage with the solutions. The input ranged from high-level to more granular. The feedback helps users understand what early commitments are expected from their teams and organizations.

" Define service goals and profitability targets.

" Assess the quality of planning-related data and cleanse as needed.

" Be prepared to provide two years of sales history.

" Train DSR teams on app functionality.

" Actively engage/ incentivize operators to adopt the app.

**"** Participate in training/ onboarding.

" Review initial results to adjust AI based on your company's unique operations.

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK AI SOLUTION PROVIDERS

You don't need to be a tech wizard to ask smart questions about AI solutions. Here are a few questions suggested by industry executives interviewed.

- What are you projecting as the ROI?
- What are the key metrics? For example, is it about how much money will I make? Or about expense reduction?
- How successful have your other customers been with the solution?
- What are your security qualifications?
- What kind of employee training will be needed to use the system?
- Do I need to hire people, such as AI specialists?
- What are the protections for the customer data being used in the solutions?
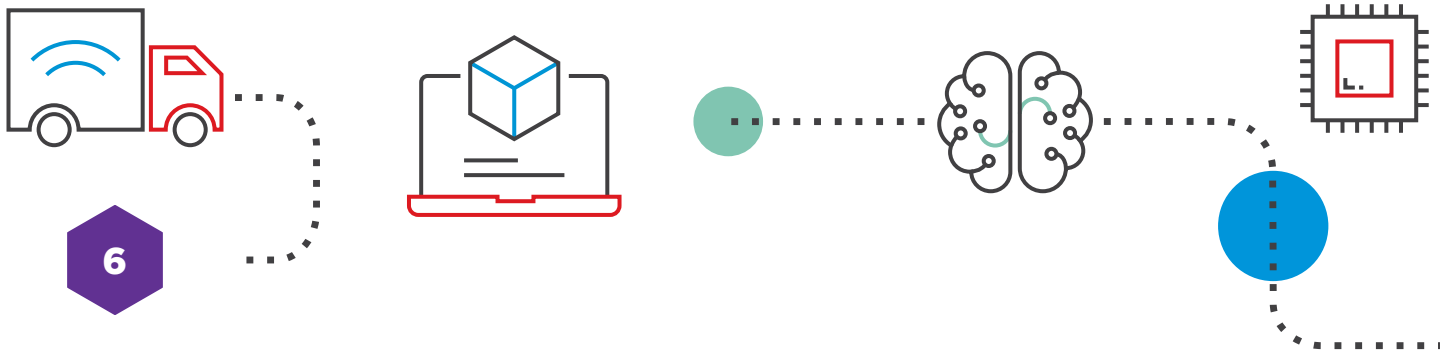
Closing Thoughts: Making Progress with Solutions

AI ISN'T JUST FOR THE GIANTS

The ability to use AI technologies is no longer the sole province of large corporations with substantial budgets, a point emphasized in an article by content agency ProfileTree.[5]

"The democratization of AI tools has levelled the playing field, enabling small businesses to adopt sophisticated technologies that enhance productivity, strengthen cybersecurity, and streamline business processes," the piece emphasized.

> The key is that integrating AI is not in the distant future for smaller organizations. "It is the actionable reality for today's enterprises aiming for longevity and growth."

ORGANIZATIONS NEED TO EXPERIMENT AND CUSTOMIZE

Until organizations experiment with AI solutions, it's hard for teams to understand the benefits, said Sarah Bippen of Kuna Foodservice. Companies can become early adopters and find partners to help tailor the AI and the data in ways that benefit the organization, she added.

GO AT YOUR OWN SPEED

Each company is highly unique, so the rate of AI solutions adoption across this industry won't be one-size-fits-all. Some organizations will move quickly. Others may find a slower approach with more gradual investments is a wise decision, as outlined in IFDA's *The Innovation Imperative report*.[1] The benefits of a gradual approach can include an opportunity to run more trials and having more time to gain buy-in from internal leaders.

MAKE SURE TO ENABLE FEATURES

Users often need to enable settings and features to get the full benefits from solutions. This underscores the need to stay on top of functionality. Kyle Ellis, Transportation supervisor, Ginsberg's, said that when his team adopted an AI driver safety solution, it learned how to adjust settings to activate features and ensure the right people were receiving notifications — an ongoing need as new features are added. "You won't be able to take advantage of the benefits if you're not using it the right way," he said.

EMPOWER BOTH TECHNOLOGY AND EMPLOYEES

The rise of AI automation in the workforce presents an opportunity for businesses to enhance operations and empower employees by augmenting their capabilities, not replacing them, according to a technology article in a regional business publication.[6]

"As AI continues to integrate into business processes, it offers a pathway to a more resilient and adaptable workforce – one that embraces continuous learning and innovation, ensuring that both technology and people thrive together in the evolving landscape of work," the article said.
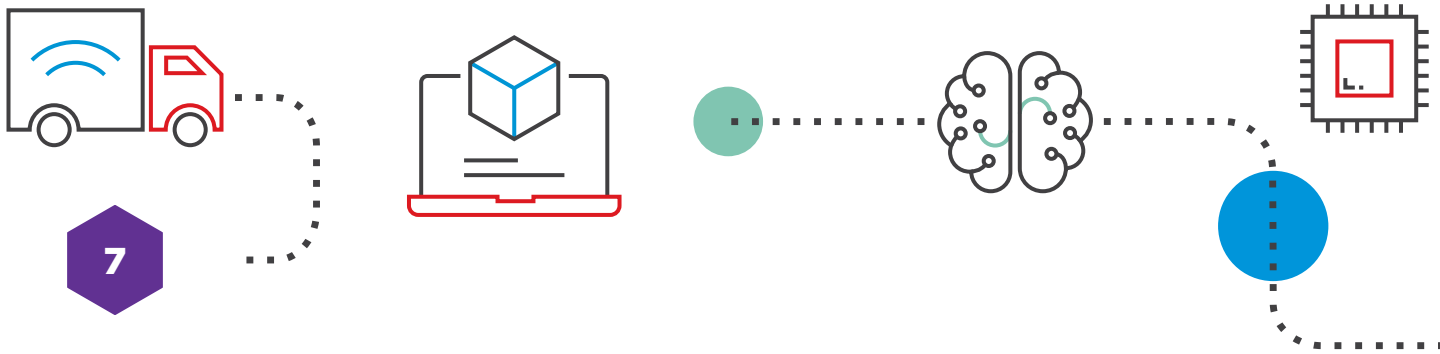
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6   The Business News, *AI in the Workforce* — Finding the Right Balance, 2024

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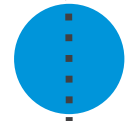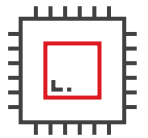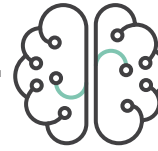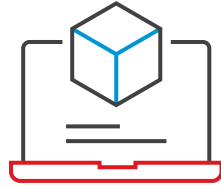
APPENDIX:
Profiles of AI Solution Providers

In this section are mini-profiles of just a few solution providers and their AI-powered solutions for foodservice distributors. Each profile focuses on one solution example, though these providers may offer additional AI-driven solutions as well.

The information for these profiles was collected from IFDA allied members and IFDA Solutions Conference exhibitors. This list is not intended as recommendations of specific solutions or providers, and distributors should view it as a sampling rather than an exhaustive list.

PLEASE NOTE: The information was submitted by each solution provider and only edited for style and length. Therefore, IFDA cannot guarantee accuracy of details or claims. Distributors are encouraged to contact the provider directly for additional information.

INFORMATION IN EACH PROFILE INCLUDES:

- Company name
- Solution name
- Type of AI employed
- What the solution does
- Functional area
- Business problem addressed
- Top three benefits
- ROI timeline
- Prerequisites/action steps for distributors
- Other AI solutions offered by provider

LIST OF TECH COMPANIES PROFILED (AND THEIR SOLUTIONS)

Listed According to Functional Area
Each solution is described in detail in the profiles in this section.

Transportation/Fleet Management
BizStride (BizStrideoi)
EROAD (EROAD CoreTemp™)
FleetPulse (FleetPulse)
Loadsmart (FreightIntel AI)
Motive Technologies (Motive Integrated Operations Platform)
Netradyne (Driver•i®)
OptimoRoute (OptimoRoute AI Route Optimization Engine)
ThermoKing (TracKing® Pro telematics)

Sales/Ecommerce/Customer Service
Choco (Choco AI)
Kimelo / Cheetah Technologies Inc. (Kimelo)
Pepper (PepperAI)
SKYSHEEP (priceflo™)
Tastewise (Tastewise)

Operations/Warehouse
GridMarket (The GridMarket Project Platform)
Net At Work (Prime Foodservice Solution)
OneTrack.AI (OneTrack.AI)

Strategic Planning/Forecasting
Infor (Infor Augmented Intelligence Service)
New Horizon Soft, LLC (New Horizon Supply Chain Planning Suite)
OrderGrid (AI-Powered Demand Forecasting)

Marketing
Cut+Dry (Yes, Chef)

Final Mile Delivery/Optimization
ORTEC Supply Chain Planning Americas (ORTEC Foodservice Distribution Optimization Solution)

BizStride

Company Website: bizstride.com

Product/Service Name: BizStride

Type of AI: Both traditional and generative

What It Does: BizStride leverages AI to aggregate and analyze data from multiple sources on service, profitability, and costs, empowering distributors to optimize service levels and schedules for maximum customer satisfaction and profitability.

Functional Area: Transportation/fleet management

Business Problem Addressed: BizStride solves the problem of helping distributors find the ideal balance between service levels and profitability by using AI-driven data analysis to optimize customer satisfaction and financial outcomes.

Benefit #1: Profit

Benefit #2: Customer Satisfaction

Benefit #3: Reduced Transportation Costs

ROI Timeline: 6 months

Action Steps/Prerequisites:

1. Integrate relevant data sources (e.g., service metrics, cost structures, and profitability data) to enable comprehensive analysis.
2. Define service goals and profitability targets to tailor the AI insights toward their specific operational and customer satisfaction objectives.
3. Implement and monitor AI-driven recommendations to adjust service levels, routes, and schedules, ensuring continuous optimization and measurable impact on customer satisfaction and profits.

Other AI Solutions: Strategic planning, daily optimization.

Choco

Company Website: www.choco.com

Product/Service Name: Choco AI

Type of AI: Both traditional and generative

What It Does: Choco AI solves the challenge of processing and managing complex orders from multiple channels. Choco AI not only streamlines order capture but also enhances accuracy with its powerful AI-driven system. By learning from historical order data, it recognizes patterns and makes intelligent predictions, ensuring that even when orders are complex or unclear, they are processed correctly. Choco AI also offers advanced features like product matching, helping distributors manage stock efficiently and reduce waste. With 24/7 live processing, Choco AI guarantees that orders are captured and processed in real-time, allowing businesses to operate smoothly around the clock without the need for additional staff. Ultimately, Choco AI empowers distributors to scale their operations, boost productivity, and enhance customer satisfaction.

Benefit #1: Significant Time Savings: Choco AI automates the entire order processing workflow, eliminating the need for manual entry from emails, texts, and voicemails. This frees up your sales and customer success teams to focus on high-value tasks, such as building customer relationships and driving growth.

Benefit #2: Reduced Errors: Choco AI minimizes costly errors by accurately capturing and digitizing orders from multiple channels.

Benefit #3: Improved Customer Experience: Choco AI ensures seamless communication with customers by providing real-time updates on order status, delivery tracking, and product availability. This transparency enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty, while the system's ability to offer alternative product suggestions when items are out of stock helps distributors maintain strong, reliable relationships with their clients.

ROI Timeline: 1 month

Action Steps/Prerequisites:

1. Business scoping call to understand your company priorities, structure and needs (usually with the owner(s), sales, customer success and IT teams.

2. Technical scoping call to identify which type of ERP integration is needed (Choco AI integrates with all ERPs under 30 days).

3. Pre-training of the model based on full catalog and sales history from the last 6-12 months (catalog prices are not mandatory and Choco AI can be trained without pricing data). This is done by the Choco team.

4. Team training (on-site or virtually) to ensure your sales and customer success teams are fully equipped to work with Choco AI (1 day).

5. Test and go-live with all your customers, or progressively depending on your preferences.

Other AI Solutions: We offer the Choco DSR App with built-in AI functionality. This app empowers Distributor Sales Representatives (DSRs) by providing real-time insights into customer behavior, predicting the next order date, and highlighting customers at risk of churn. With AI-driven recommendations, DSRs can prioritize outreach, upsell specific products, and enhance customer retention. The app also features a menu scanning tool that allows DSRs to build order guides based on a customer's menu, streamlining the ordering process and ensuring accuracy. Additionally, DSRs can place orders on behalf of customers, making it a comprehensive tool for driving sales and improving customer relationships.

Cut+Dry

Company Website: www.cutanddry.com

Product/Service Name: Yes, Chef

Type of AI: Both traditional and generative

What It Does: Cut+Dry's Yes, Chef AI solution helps foodservice distributors prospect and attract new customers, recommend the right products, track costs, and understand sales trends.; these tools make it easier for sales teams to grow sales and reach more customers.

Functional Area: Marketing

Business Problem Addressed: Yes, Chef solves the challenge of scaling distributor sales efforts by automating lead generation, optimizing product recommendations, and providing actionable insights to reps on the ground, helping them engage restaurant operators more effectively and efficiently.

Benefit #1: Prospect new customers.

Benefit #2: Track sales and SKU trends.

Benefit #3: Market effectively to move more product.

ROI Timeline: 6 months

Action Steps/Prerequisites: To engage with Yes, Chef, distributors first become a Cut+Dry partner, allow Cut+Dry to structure their SKU and catalog data, and train the AI model with specific sales data and trends. Each distributor has a dedicated, private AI, ensuring all data remains fully confidential.

EROAD

Company Website: https://www.eroad.com/

Product/Service Name: EROAD CoreTemp(TM) technology

Type of AI: Traditional

What It Does: EROAD CoreTemp(TM) technology ingests real time environmental data to create continuous AI-enhanced product temperature predictions that eliminate uncertainty in assessing food safety, and improves storage and route efficiency at vehicle, route, facility and national levels of aggregation across multiple service providers on one secure shared tenancy platform.

Functional Area: Transportation/fleet management

Business Problem Addressed: EROAD CoreTemp(TM) technology leverages artificial intelligence, advanced algorithms, and IoT sensors to precisely predict core product temperatures. It delivers actionable insights such as compartment-specific, multi-layered temperature alerts, real-time route analysis, and performance scores, ensuring proactive and efficient fleet management.

CoreTemp solves several critical business problems for foodservice distributors and companies managing temperature-sensitive goods, including compliance with food safety regulations, reduced spoilage and product loss, improved operational efficiency, and streamlined auditing and reporting. These features collectively address key operational inefficiencies and reduce risk, making it easier for businesses to maintain product integrity and regulatory compliance while cutting costs.

Benefit #1: Reduction in spoilage and waste — early, customizable, multi-layered temperature warnings and alerts per compartment identify issues before they become problems. By preventing temperature breaches and spoilage of perishable goods, companies can see immediate cost savings in product preservation.

Benefit #2: Compliance control tower — enables and tracks the FSMA obligations of both shipper and carrier in one application. All relevant documentation for all time is on demand, ensuring users are audit-ready instantly. CI and FSQA teams can then create national standards and practices to maintain brand assurance and facilitate product innovation without risk to compliance goals.

Benefit #3: Efficiency — automating temperature monitoring reduces the need for manual checks, cutting labor costs and freeing up resources for other tasks. The back office benefits from user-friendly dashboards showcasing performance scores and rankings across divisions to improve operations, route performance, compartment compliance and regulatory needs. By using real-time insights and predictive analytics, companies can optimize routing, improve fuel efficiency, and reduce vehicle downtime – a crucial step towards sustainability.

ROI Timeline: 6 months

Action Steps/Prerequisites: Have a goal to improve and showcase commitment to product and brand assurance. Have an intent to standardize and index product temperature compliance initiatives. Be prepared to onboard continuous temperature monitoring to a fleet via telematics or data logger. Determine a few keystone products to create predictive models that index frozen and refrigerated zone risk. Understand product temperature excursion thresholds.

Other AI Solutions:

- Predictive Maintenance for Reefer Trailers – highlights equipment at risk of operational fault in the next 7 days.
- CoreTemp Product Optimizer – Machine Learning (ML) allows continuous improvement of product prediction models.
- Clarity Edge AI dash cam – Its sophisticated AI algorithms continuously analyze driving behaviors, road conditions, and potential risks in real-time.

FleetPulse

Company Website: FleetPulse.com

Product/Service Name: FleetPulse

Type of AI: Generative

What It Does: FleetPulse offers trailer OEM and aftermarket telematics through custom sensor innovation for safety and uptime solutions.

Functional Area: Transportation/fleet management

Business Problem Addressed: FleetPulse monitors trailer location; door opening alerts; safety features like tires, lights, and brakes; and provides data insights all in real-time. FleetPulse products can vary from simple asset tracking, to complete smart reefer trailer capabilities, to interior cargo camera technology.

Benefit #1: Safety — detecting a component failure that could lead to failed roadside inspection or highway accident.

Benefit #2: Security — preventing trailer theft or stolen cargo.

Benefit #3: Uptime — easily knowing current and future vehicle health with proactive and predictive maintenance analytics.

ROI Timeline: 1 year

Action Steps/Prerequisites:

1. If a distributor has had a lost or stolen asset, or stolen cargo from a trailer.
2. If a distributor experiences vehicle enforcement violations or CSA penalties.
3. If a distributor has customer interest or requirements to monitor asset location and cargo status at any time.

Other AI Solutions: FleetPulse, FleetPulsePRO, FleetPulseGO Solar, FleetPulseGO Track, FleetPulseGO CargoView, and FleetPulse Reefer Integration

GridMarket

Company Website: www.gridmarket.com

Product/Service Name: The GridMarket Project Platform

Type of AI: Traditional

What It Does: The GridMarket Platform uses AI to identify opportunities for clean energy solutions for facilities and fleets, predict savings and carbon impact, scope optimized projects, and source high-value bids from a dynamic vendor marketplace.

Functional Area: Operations/warehouse

Business Problem Addressed: The GridMarket platform de-risks and optimizes clean energy procurement and fleet electrification.

Benefit #1: Informed energy and electrification planning and decision making.

Benefit #2: Significant resource savings (time, financial, staff).

Benefit #3: Reducing the risks associated with energy transitions.

ROI Timeline: Project-specific

Action Steps/Prerequisites:

The GridMarket platform can operate with increasing levels of accuracy when distributors are able to provide energy, utility, and building data for analysis. Distributors can have specific goals ready for input so that the platform can optimize solution recommendations based on operational or financial targets. Distributors should have a decision-maker or makers prepared to review output as the process is much faster than traditional analysis.

Other AI Solutions: Our AI-driven platform has customizable applications for different uses when planning, scoping, and implementing energy solutions at a site or portfolio. We can often tailor a solution to support a distributor's energy and electrification planning needs that leverages our platform's automation capabilities.

Infor

Company Website: www.infor.com

Product/Service Name: Infor Augmented Intelligence Service

Type of AI: Both traditional and generative

What It Does: Infor Augmented Intelligence Service (AIS) blends human creativity with the prowess of artificial intelligence and machine learning (GenAI/ML).

Functional Area: Strategic planning/forecasting

Business Problem Addressed: Infor AIS enables organizations to tap into data-driven insights for balanced and effective decision-making. Enables organizations to be powered with GenAI/ML capabilities. Automates routine tasks, uses data to improve processes, and enhances the speed of operations.

Benefit #1: Strategic decision making

Benefit #2: Enhancing operational efficiencies

Benefit #3: Increased revenue per transaction

ROI Timeline: 6 months

Action Steps/Prerequisites: Customer can complete a readiness assessment with Infor to identify key business challenges and potential outcomes. Other steps include determine anchor use case; determine data availability and integrity; and identify patterns/trends and testing hypotheses, and verify assumptions.

Other AI Solutions:

- Infor GenAI - embedded in Infor CloudSuite ERP solutions.
- Infor RPA - robotic process automation
- Infor Process Mining
- Infor IDP - Infor Document Processor, GenAI embedded for translations

Kimelo / Cheetah Technologies Inc.

Company Website: www.kimelo.com

Product/Service Name: Kimelo

Type of AI: Both traditional and generative

What It Does: AI-powered order transcription: Automate order entry from calls, texts, and emails, eliminating manual data entry, errors, and freeing up time.

Functional Area: Sales/ecommerce/customer service

Business Problem Addressed:

1. Ditch manual data entry and free up time for your team.

2. Fewer errors—our AI spots and fixes order mistakes.

3. Gets smarter about your customers' preferences for spot-on accuracy.

ROI Timeline: Immediate

Action Steps/Prerequisites:

1. Business Process Discovery (how do they take orders today, what internal systems do they have etc.)

2. Integrate with their ERP or set up a CSV file exchange schema.

3. Training for key users.

Other AI Solutions: Catalog Set Up (product taxonomy, geo specific tax codes, item descriptions, photo generation)

Loadsmart

Company Website: Loadsmart.com

Product/Service Name: FreightIntel AI

Type of AI: Generative

What It Does: FreightIntel AI instantly analyzes shipment data you upload from your TMS, ERP, or other sources, delivering observations, insights, and actions to enhance logistics, reduce costs, and boost customer service.

Functional Area: Transportation/fleet management

Business Problem Addressed: FreightIntel AI provides high-quality intel from your own logistics data, market data, and industry trends.

Benefit #1: Significant savings on analyst time and resources

Benefit #2: Reduce freight costs.

Benefit #3: Improve customer service and operations.

ROI Timeline: Immediate

Action Steps/Prerequisites:

1. Provide historical freight data in template provided.

2. Review initial results to adjust AI based on your company's unique operations.

3. After initial review, you will have access to upload your data and receive analysis yourself through the platform.

Other AI Solutions: CoPilot for ShipperGuide TMS: feature enables real-time data analysis and valuable industry insights within the ShipperGuide TMS platform, by harnessing the power of large language models.

Motive Technologies

Company Website: gomotive.com

Product/Service Name: Motive Integrated Operations Platform

Type of AI: Both traditional and generative

What It Does: Motive's AI-powered technologies help foodservice distributors significantly improve the safety and efficiency of their physical operations — from fleet management to route optimization, to simplifying reefer temperature monitoring. Motive helps these businesses increase profitability and achieve more.

Functional Area: Transportation/fleet management

Business Problem Addressed: Motive helps foodservice distributors significantly improve safety, mitigate risk, and boost productivity for their employees who operate vehicles and other heavy equipment. Delivered from a single platform, Motive's technologies are designed to help save lives and provide complete visibility and control over a company's physical operations. To illustrate, companies operating with Motive's AI Dashcams have experienced up to a 57% reduction in accidents and 30% reduction in accident-related costs, in addition to achieving significant benefits from Motive's cold chain telematics that are mission critical to the foodservice distribution industry.

Benefit #1: Safety

Benefit #2: Productivity

Benefit #3: Profitability

ROI Timeline: Immediate

Action Steps/Prerequisites:

1. Motive customers can use the full functionality of the solution out of the box. However, the Motive solution also allows for system configurations and customizations without vendor involvement. The Motive platform enables users to tailor the solution to their specific business needs.

2. Installation of the Motive solution can be as quick as 30 minutes per vehicle.

3. Motive works with customers on a project plan based on vehicle availability and the availability of customer resources to complete the implementation project in the timeframe the customer desires.

Other AI Solutions:

- Dual-Facing AI Dashcam
- Road-Facing AI Dashcam
- AI Omnicam (AI-enabled camera provides 360° view of vehicle and cargo)
- Motive Driver Identification (with Dual-Facing AI Dashcam)
- Motive Card (fleet card with AI-enabled fraud alerts)

Net At Work

Company website: primefoodsoftware.com

Product/Service Name: Prime FoodService Solution

Type of AI: Both traditional and generative

What It Does: Prime FoodService Artificial Intelligence helps to automate complex processes, identify future trends based on historical data and provide an objective interpretation of performance.

Functional Area: Operations/warehouse

Business Problem Addressed: Prime FoodService accounting reads/translates invoices; automates workflows; sets and manages alerts when crucial supplies run low; tracks price changes among suppliers; identifies the lowest cost supplier, even among shifting prices; gathers journal entries for audits; evaluates transactions for data patterns; and automates monthly closing.

Benefit #1: Saves time and money by automating routine processes and tasks.

Benefit #2: Increases productivity and operational efficiencies.

Benefit #3: Helps to make faster business decisions based on outputs from cognitive technologies.

ROI Timeline: Immediate

Other AI Solutions: Acumatica ERP

Netradyne

Company Website: www.Netradyne.com

Product/Service Name: Driver•i®

Type of AI: Both traditional and generative

What It Does: Our Driver•i camera platform utilizes vision-based AI to "read" and recognize objects such as speed limit signs. AI is also used in our algorithm to help determine event type and cause; and then we use generative AI in the form of a Safety Assistant on our manager portal, to which questions can be posed, akin to Chat GPT.

Functional Area: Transportation/fleet management

Business Problem Addressed: Driver•i improves safety, reduces driving risk, and takes the guesswork out of managing driver safety and performance.

Benefit #1: Saves staff time through automated driver self-coaching.

Benefit #2: Better driver satisfaction due to positive recognition and fair scoring.

Benefit #3: Saves lives and improves safety through automated alerts and customized coaching.

ROI Timeline: 1 year

Action Steps/Prerequisites:

1. Discovery call
2. Demo of manager portal
3. Optional camera trial with a few vehicles.
4. Determine terms of sale
5. Schedule installation and training

New Horizon Soft, LLC

Company Website: www.newhorizon.ai

Product/Service Name: New Horizon Supply Chain Planning Suite

Type of AI: Traditional

What It Does: New Horizon Supply Chain Planning Suite provides an end-to-end demand and supply planning software solution in which AI is used to increase forecast accuracy, automatically create procurement plans, set more accurate safety stock levels, maximize truck load utilization, automate the detection of erroneous data, and perform root cause analysis of supply chain issues.

Functional Area: Strategic planning/forecasting

Business Problem Addressed: New Horizon Supply Chain Planning Suite eliminates the need for an expert to select the best forecasting model and parameters or to manually modify orders to conform with vendor requirements. It removes the guesswork in setting optimal safety stock levels, and minimizes the problem of low truck load utilization. In addition, automatic detection of data issues and post-mortem analysis reduce the workload on both business users and technical support.

Benefit #1: Increased customer service levels

Benefit #2: Lower inventory levels

Benefit #3: Lower transportation costs

ROI Timeline: 6 months

Action Steps/Prerequisites:

1. Assess the gaps in your current supply chain planning process and design your future supply chain planning process and KPIs.
2. Map your current IT environment and sources of key planning-related data.
3. Assess the quality of planning-related data and cleanse as needed.
4. Participate in New Horizon software user training.

Other AI Solutions:

- Demand Planning: Demand Planning provides a collaborative platform to forecast and manage customer demand using the latest AI and machine learning technologies.
- Supply Planning: Supply Planning enables companies to plan capacity, procurement, manufacturing, distribution, truck loading, and allocation so that they can profitably fulfill demand.
- Buyers Workbench: Buyers Workbench is a procurement planning solution tailored to the needs of buyers, with advanced functionality in areas such as forward buying, truck load optimization, and warehouse receiving scheduling.
- Replenishment Planning: Replenishment Planning is a comprehensive solution for planning supply down to the store level for retailers and those who serve retailers.
- Multi-Echelon Inventory Optimization: Multi-Echelon Inventory Optimization plans optimal safety stock levels across a multi-tier supply network to meet service level targets at the lowest cost possible.
- Sales and Operations Planning: Sales and Operations Planning provides a single integrated platform to align sales, marketing, finance, and operations and achieve a company's performance goals.

OneTrack.AI

Company website: www.onetrack.ai

Product/Service Name: OneTrack.AI

Type of AI: Traditional

What It Does: OneTrack uses AI cameras on MHE and around warehouses to monitor operations and bring real-time alerts and video visibility into people, process, and product exceptions within warehouses.

Functional Area: Operations/warehouse

Business Problem Addressed:

- No more lengthy safety investigations. Get video delivered straight to your inbox after an incident. Proactive safety coaching with unsafe behaviors and leading indicators.
- AI labor management suite to manage productivity based on video, not spreadsheets.
- Automatic load monitoring and shipment quality validation to get ahead of OS&D claims.

Benefit #1: 80% fewer safety events

Benefit #2: 10% improved productivity

Benefit #3: 65% reduction in damaged product and shipment errors

ROI Timeline: 6 months

Action Steps/Prerequisites:

1. We offer in-depth training resources for your team.
2. Our implementation team works with you to customize alerts and set-up for your specific site.
3. (Optional) Our team brings in data from your WMS to unlock additional productivity features.

Other AI Solutions: OneTrack is a Warehouse Operating Systems that brings visibility across safety, productivity, and shipment quality — all in a single product

OptimoRoute

Company Website: optimoroute.com

Product/Service Name: OptimoRoute AI Route Optimization Engine

Type of AI: Both traditional and generative

What It Does: OptimoRoute's AI Route Optimization Engine pulls in real-time traffic data and all business criteria - priorities, time windows, skillsets, vehicle capacities, road restrictions, etc. to create the best route optimization plan and schedule for food distribution and delivery companies - driving operational efficiency and cost savings.

Functional Area: Transportation/fleet management

Business Problem Addressed: OptimoRoute's AI Route Optimization Engine ensures that food distribution companies can maximize the number of deliveries they make, hit strict customer time windows, and reduce the number of drivers, vehicle wear and tear, and fuel costs while driving optimized business efficiency and delivering a better customer experience.

Benefit #1: Optimized business planning and efficiency.

Benefit #2: Significant time savings, cost savings and fuel savings.

Benefit #3: Better end-to-end customer experience.

ROI Timeline: Immediate

Action Steps/Prerequisites:

1. Work with OptimoRoute to automate your workflow into our platform.
2. Run a proof of concept with OptimoRoute head-to-head with your current process or platform.
3. Determine the ROI and long-term value as to what OptimoRoute's AI Route Optimization and the entire OptimoRoute platform can mean for your business.

OrderGrid

Company Website: www.ordergrid.com

Product/Service Name: AI-Powered Demand Forecasting

Type of AI: Traditional

What It Does: AI-driven demand forecasting delivers precise daily sales forecasts. Custom statistical models allow users to analyze multiple factors such as historical sales data, weather, events, product pricing and promotions—to optimize inventory levels with 99% product availability and waste levels.

Functional Area: Strategic planning/forecasting

Business Problem Addressed: OrderGrid's AI-driven demand forecasting addresses key challenges in food distribution including high labor inefficiencies, inaccurate demand predictions, high carrying costs, product spoilage from overstocking, and frequent stockouts. By improving forecasting accuracy, it reduces inventory waste, cuts operational expenses, and ensures the right products are available when needed. The solution not only minimizes labor and significantly reduces the time purchasing teams spend on forecasting, but also streamlines replenishment processes, enhancing efficiency while adapting to demand fluctuations with precision.

Benefit #1: Maximize Product Availability and Boost Customer Satisfaction - Ensure the right products are always in stock with accurate demand forecasting, reducing stockouts and boosting customer satisfaction by consistently meeting expectations and fulfilling orders on time.

Benefit #2: Cost Control and Waste Reduction - minimizes costly overstocking, prevents product spoilage, and lowers carrying costs by optimizing inventory management, leading to significant cost savings.

Benefit #3: Improved Operational Efficiency - Save significant staff time by automating demand forecasting and replenishment processes, ensuring accurate, real-time inventory adjustments without the need for manual intervention.

ROI Timeline: 6 months

Action Steps/Prerequisites:

1. Discovery Call: In-depth conversation to understand key challenges and pinpoint a single priority problem to focus on solving first.

2. Define Success Metrics: Establish a baseline metric, identifying the specific numbers we'll benchmark against to measure the on-going success of the solution.

3. Data Sharing: Distributor to provide relevant data (in raw form) such as historical sales data, promotional plans, and price change history, so the AI model can make informed, precise forecasts.

4. Commitment to Change: Successful implementation requires time and a willingness to allow the AI model to run alongside existing processes. Adapting to change is critical for long-term success.

Other AI Solutions:

- AI Space Optimization: Optimize storage, placement and quality with AI-driven prompts, real-time layout adjustments, and automated planograms for efficient space management. By optimizing storage, you can fit more SKUs into your existing space, increasing potential revenue per square foot while streamlining inventory flow for smoother operations.

- AI Chatbot Functionality: Instantly access the data you need without the hassle of pulling reports or manual searches. The AI chatbot quickly delivers any statistical data, including operations and purchasing insights, on demand

ORTEC Supply Chain Planning Americas

Company Website: ortec.com/en-us

Product/Service Name: ORTEC Foodservice Distribution Optimization Solution

Type of AI: Traditional

What It Does: The ORTEC solution for foodservice distributors leverages AI to optimize final mile delivery operations, enhance route planning, and improve fleet management, ultimately achieving operational efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

Functional Area: Final mile delivery/optimization

Business Problem Addressed: ORTEC's AI-powered solution enables distributors to better predict, prepare, monitor, improve, plan, and execute by leveraging advanced algorithms to analyze data, forecast outcomes, monitor performance, identify improvement opportunities, and optimize execution and planning processes in real time.

Benefit #1: Enhance customer service

Benefit #2: Reduce miles driven

Benefit #3: Increase efficiency

ROI Timeline: Depends on customer size and goals.

Action Steps/Prerequisites:

1. Data gathering and assessment
2. Stakeholder Engagement
3. Infrastructure Evaluation

Other AI Solutions: We service additional markets in the supply chain, including beverage distribution, manufacturing, energy distribution, and the transportation industry.

Pepper

Company Website: www.usepepper.com

Product/Service Name: Pepper AI

Type of AI: Both traditional and generative

What It Does: Pepper AI enables independent distributors to drive order sizes/revenue through AI powered cross-sell/upsell alerts, tools that save time for DSRs such as prospect finder and order guide builder, as well as operator facing features such as promoting or advertising products that are most relevant to their menu offering.

Functional Area: Sales/ecommerce/customer service

Business Problem Addressed: Operators face an uphill battle with distributors when placing orders and trying to discover new items. Similarly, DSRs struggle to prospect new customers, create order guides, and manage their daily business activities from a central place. Pepper AI takes away the manual processes that humans are inherently not good at and provides insights that ultimately raises revenue for the distributor, manufacturer, and operator.

Benefit #1: Increased revenue from existing clients with cross-sell, upsell, and promotional features.

Benefit #2: DSRs save time and become more consultative sellers with AI-powered features such as prospect finder, order guide generator, and churn alerting.

Benefit #3: Enables organizations to bring on more customers, faster, with prospect finder, order guide generator, and Pepper's AI Copilot - Casey.

ROI Timeline: 1 year

Action Steps/Prerequisites:

1. Integrate with source data systems, such as ERP or bookkeeping software.
2. Train DSR teams on all app functionality.
3. Actively engage/incentivize operators to adopt the app.

Other AI Solutions: Pepper AI is present in many of the app's native features as described above

SKYSHEEP

Company Website: www.skysheepdata.com

Product/Service Name: priceflo™

Type of AI: Traditional

What It Does: SKYHSEEP's priceflo™ solution provides an end-to-end system that leverages existing data to reveal hidden revenue and margin opportunities and deploys optimized pricing strategies to enable substantial growth while managing market fluctuations.

Functional Area: Sales/ecommerce/customer service

Business Problem Addressed: SKYHSEEP's priceflo™ solution delivers market aligned prices that enhance sales team confidence, strengthen customer relationships, expand sales volume, and drive margin growth.

Benefit #1: Increased revenue and margins

Benefit #2: Accelerated customer expansion

Benefit #3: Improved customer retention

ROI Timeline: 6 months

Action Steps/Prerequisites: Be prepared to provide two years of sales history.

Tastewise

Company Website: tastewise.io

Product/Service Name: Tastewise

Type of AI: Both traditional and generative

What It Does: Tastewise provides foodservice distributors with real-time consumer and menu insights, enabling them to offer targeted product recommendations and menu solutions that align with current trends and drive operator engagement.

Functional Area: Sales/ecommerce/customer service

Business Problem Addressed: Tastewise AI addresses inefficiencies in foodservice distribution by equipping sales teams with instant, data-driven insights on consumer preferences, menu trends, and account activity. This reduces the research burden on sales teams, enabling them to identify low-hanging fruit opportunities within existing accounts, target operators by region and segment, and proactively engage customers based on real-time changes, ultimately increasing sales and operational efficiency.

Benefit #1: Demand Forecasting — predict consumer preferences to ensure the right products are available for foodservice clients.

Benefit #2: Menu Optimization — provide insights to help clients tailor menus based on trending ingredients and dining behaviors.

Benefit #3: Sales Enablement — equip sales teams with data-driven materials and strategies to better support foodservice partners' evolving needs.

ROI Timeline: Immediate

Action Steps/Prerequisites: Participating in training on/onboarding for Tastewise's foodservice tools.

Other AI Solutions: We have a full SaaS suite of solutions for CPG marketing teams and brand management

Thermo King

Company Website: thermoking.com

Product/Service Name: TracKing® Pro telematics

Type of AI: Traditional

What It Does: TracKing® Pro telematics is a proprietary telematics offering that collects data from Thermo King transport refrigeration units (TRU) to provide actionable insights that helps fleets improve uptime and efficiency.

Functional Area: Transportation/fleet management

Business Problem Addressed: TracKing Pro telematics gives fleets the ability to help reduce their cost-per-mile by avoiding unplanned downtime and decreasing energy costs.

Benefit #1: Energy saving opportunities — insights from the energy usage dashboard can help in using less fuel to protect temperature-sensitive cargo.

Benefit #2: Increase fleet uptime — TracKing Pro telematics' cutting-edge algorithm uses machine learning to predict where failures may occur and provide alerts in advance. By proactively planning services, organizations can stay operational longer, keep on schedule, reduce load loss and avoid call-out fees and off-hour costs.

Benefit #3: Know what to do and when to do it — alarm triage insights deliver actionable information to internal fleet monitoring teams, increasing uptime by reducing the time needed to understand and respond to alarms. (More than 90% of the time, reefer failures follow these predictions if no action is taken.)

ROI Timeline: Immediate

Action Steps/Prerequisites:

1. Purchase a Thermo King large truck and/or trailer transport refrigeration unit that was manufactured on or after January 1, 2024, as these units come automatically equipped with TracKing telematics hardware and the base subscription. Older units may also have the required hardware and just need subscriptions.
2. Upgrade your TracKing® telematics subscription to a TracKing® Pro telematics subscription.
3. Participate in a telematics training dashboard with your local Thermo King dealer's Digital Champion.

Other AI Solutions: Remote Operating Center (ROC): combines 24/7 remote fleet monitoring, hands-on guided response and a cutting-edge algorithm that can predict failures before they occur.