

Pizza Joe's Deploys Cloud-Based Aptean Food & Beverage ERP for Impressive Operational Improvements



Industry

Food & Beverage

Challenges

- » Outdated system lacked essential functionality and delivered a poor user experience
- » Limited visibility into financial data impacted decision-making
- » Inaccurate inventory counts required a costly reconciliation process

Benefits

- » Fully modernized solution helping to ensure robust ROI
- » High degree of data accessibility facilitates more informed purchasing
- » Comprehensive inventory management features boost precision

In 1980, when Joe “Pizza Joe” Seminara opened the first Pizza Joe’s in New Castle, Pennsylvania, he had a vision for what was to come—a successful chain with many locations, all serving delicious pies and other Italian-inspired favorites. Within a few years, he’d opened additional locations in the local area and gained the support of the community. The first independently owned franchise opened in March 1985 in nearby Ellwood City, and many more followed.

Today a subsidiary of Classi-Co Foods, Pizza Joe’s has 39 locations in western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio. The business repacks various frozen, cool and dry ingredients at their corporate facility in New Castle and sells those to franchises. The company also manufactures frozen dough at that facility for sale to approximately 20 of the locations.

Jerry Dugan, controller for Pizza Joe’s, was brought on three years ago and immediately became involved in the search for a new enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution to replace the outdated system that was in place. That marked the beginning of a fruitful digital transformation journey powered by Aptean.





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Researching Food ERP Options and Finding the Right Fit

Leaders at Pizza Joe's recognized the need for a modern, cloud-based system to streamline operations and improve inventory control. They also wanted to get a better handle on their costing—specifically of the frozen dough manufactured at the main site—to promote a balance of profitability and affordability for the franchises that purchase it.

“We wanted something cloud-based that would make it quicker to read reports and manage inventory tracking,” Dugan said. “We also really wanted to track down what the frozen dough actually costs to make—that way we can make sure it works for us financially but we can also offer a competitive price to our customers.”

After six months of research, the internal project team settled on **Aptean Food & Beverage ERP**, which proved to be an ideal fit thanks to the flexible cloud deployment option and robust set of industry-specific features. The ease of use and intuitive interface also promised greater visibility into stock, sales and financial data.

“Aptean Food & Beverage ERP was the best solution we saw,” said Dugan. “And that's very evident now that we're using it on a daily basis.”

Collaborating for a Successful Implementation

The roll-out process proved to be a positive experience for Dugan and the rest of the team at Pizza Joe's in large part due to the collaborative approach used by Aptean's implementation and support specialists. They provided guidance every step of the way and helped to simplify the more complex aspects of the system by describing them in a way that was easy to grasp.

"The implementation experience was great," Dugan said. "The Aptean team members were extremely helpful in explaining things at a level that I would understand. My expertise is in accounting, not software, so it was difficult to understand sometimes—but they made it very simple to stay on top of it."

What's more, timing the go-live to coincide with the beginning of the 2023 calendar year allowed for a fresh start without the need to input previous year's financial data. On-site support from an Aptean team member also helped to ensure that the business would be able to hit the ground running once the solution was fully deployed.

"That was super helpful because there are certain things that some of our workers had questions about, and the Aptean team members were able to answer those questions quickly," said Dugan. "And I was able to take notes to understand how to do certain tasks in the future."



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Slice into Success with Food ERP >>

Reaping the Benefits of an Optimized, Cloud-Based Food ERP

With Aptean Food & Beverage ERP in place, Pizza Joe's has been able to unlock several key benefits that have transformed operations and processes for the better. For starters, the system has allowed the business to track product movement more effectively, which has led to more informed purchasing decisions.

"It's very nice to be able to easily track and see what products are moving and what products aren't moving," Dugan said. "As far as purchasing it helps us make sure that we're purchasing the correct amount—not too much, and not too little."

Accuracy of inventory has also improved significantly, facilitating better financial visibility and also eliminating the expense of hiring outside auditors to reconcile stock levels at year-end. Key metrics and reports can be easily found via the software's user-friendly dashboards.

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Additionally, Aptean's food ERP simplified profit margin management by allowing for greater flexibility in setting markup percentages for various items. This has not only saved valuable time for Pizza Joe's employees but also helped to ensure that customers' price is exactly what it should be.

"Now I can just go in and set a markup—before, that required a lot of busy work," Dugan said. "With this new functionality, we can be sure we're charging the proper amount, and that's been great."

The system has also increased precision in dough manufacturing, eliminating guesswork and optimizing freezer storage. What before was an imperfect process that could result in shortages or excesses can now be handled with the specialized features that it requires.

"As far as dough ball production, Aptean Food & Beverage ERP has been very helpful because we're able to give our team exact quantities and sizes for production," said Dugan. "Before, it was just random—sometimes you ended up with too much, sometimes you ended up with too little."

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"Now we can be exact, and that helps with freezer storage—we don't want to have to load up a freezer if we don't have to, and now we don't have to because we don't end up with excess," he concluded.

"I've heard from a few of our team members that their work is *so much easier than it used to be*, and that's just great to hear. Sometimes change can be terrifying, but if you do it for the right reasons, there's usually a good result."

Jerry Dugan, Controller, Pizza Joe's

Plus, the cloud-based nature of Aptean's food ERP software provides better system stability, enhanced data protection, stronger cybersecurity and remote accessibility, the last of which has empowered employees to work from anywhere with an internet connection. Meanwhile, Aptean support specialists are always ready to assist with quick responses and resolutions.

"Having our software hosted in the cloud is super helpful—you can access the system from home, which is huge, since before I wasn't able to work remotely," Dugan said. "Also, having Aptean's support staff on call is great. Every ticket I've put in so far has been addressed very quickly."

In the future, Pizza Joe's plans to implement the inventory scanning features of Aptean's food ERP software at time of receipt for real-time updates. Dugan is confident that the business is and will continue to get its money's worth out of the solution.

"As far as return on the investment, the system is going to pay for itself," said Dugan. "It saves our staff time on simple tasks that we no longer need to complete manually. And as far as growth, we're better able to see how our stores are doing based on their orders. I really do think it was the right move to make."

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Sharing Advice on Digital Transformation

Reflecting on Pizza Joe's digital transformation journey, Dugan offers valuable words of wisdom for other decision-makers considering a new enterprise system or upgrade of existing software. Above all, effective communication—both during the initial exploratory stages and onward through implementation, is crucial for success.

"Communication is key—that's a very simple concept and still very, very true," Dugan said. "You have to let employees know what their day-to-day is going to look like once the solution is in place. That was a big deal for us, and it also helps all employees feel included and important in the decision—because they are."

"We need their feedback and we're always open to the possibility that there are better ways of doing things," he concluded.

A positive attitude toward change is also vital, as technology will remain central to how businesses operate and likely only grow in importance over time as it becomes more powerful. There is comfort in what is known, but by pushing the boundaries and considering new ways of thinking, even better outcomes can be achieved.

"It's key to not be afraid of change," said Dugan. "The world's constantly changing, and businesses are constantly changing. Just because it's been done one way for a long time doesn't mean there isn't a better way of doing it."

"I've heard from a few of our team members that their work is so much easier than it used to be and that's just great to hear. Sometimes change can be terrifying, but if you do it for the right reasons, there's usually a good result," he concluded.



“It’s good to look back on it now and think about all the good things that have come from it. There’s a lot of smaller businesses that might be afraid to make a jump like this, but our journey is proof that it’s worth it.”

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Growing with Aptean

The operational improvements that Pizza Joe’s has realized through the implementation of the cloud-based Aptean Food & Beverage ERP stand as a testament to the power of modernization and the deployment of purpose-built software. While the process can seem daunting—especially for companies with limited resources—it nearly always produces positive impacts across all functional areas.

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