Automating Inbound Orders

"With something like this, it either works or it doesn't. And Pepper's order automation just works." --Daniel Neely, COO Brown Foodservice

Problem

Too Many Touchpoints, Too Little Time

Brown Foodservice is a regional foodservice distributor serving the Central Appalachian and surrounding markets, known for its extensive product selection and dedication to efficient order fulfillment.

For years, the sales team and customer success team at **Brown Foodservice** managed a flood of calls, texts, emails, and voicemails across their entire customer base that needed to be manually entered into the ERP. Reps were spending hours each day on routine order entry instead of customer relationships.

As COO **Daniel Neeley** put it, *"Appalachian is not quite English."* Voice orders were often unclear, texted orders were inconsistent, and the team had to

Schedule a Demo

Come see why hundreds of independent food distributors have chosen Pepper to power their eCommerce needs.

Schedule Demo

growth.

Neeley and his leadership team wanted a solution that could:

- Interpret natural language and local accents.
- Handle orders from every channel: text, voicemail, email, and photos.
- Give time back to sales reps without risking ERP data integrity.

"We knew that Pepper had all these tools that could help us grow our business" says Daniel, "but the team was spending too much time just inputting orders to use the tools we were giving them".

Solution

Pepper Order Automation and a Deliberate Rollout Approach

When Pepper launched **Order Automation**, Brown didn't hesitate.

"We bought it the second it came out," Neeley recalls.

But for many teams, onboarding new AI workflows and tooling can be intimidating, leading to slow adoption. Brown's success wasn't just about technology – it was about **intentional adoption**.

The COO and sales leaders seeded test groups with a mix of high, average, and

transition smooth.

The key to pushing adoption was creating cross-functional groups of sales reps that had a high mix of technology fluency. "*You have to know your people.* The leadership team here knows their sales reps because we know how to motivate them. That's the difference between a national broadliner and an independent - we know our people" – Daniel Neeley

To raise initial adoption and win over skeptics, the Brown rollout followed a deliberate process:

- Starting small: five orders per week per rep
- Raise the number weekly until automation became habit
- Pair each rep with a **Customer Success partner** for live support and order reviews
- Layer on small incentives, *"just enough to curb behavior,"* of $1–2 per order to reinforce adoption

"When you buy something like this, you always have the fear that people won't use it," Neeley said. "That's actually an opportunity - it is on you as an executive to figure out."

Within weeks, both high-performing and average reps were freeing up 45 minutes to 2 hours a day. That reclaimed time flowed into higher-value work - customer follow-ups, new product exploration, and deeper engagement with AI tools like Pepper Copilot and Items of Interest.

Results

Reps Gained 1–2 Hours a Day

Less typing, more selling. Automation eliminated repetitive data entry, allowing reps to focus on growing accounts instead of rekeying orders.

High Accuracy across the Customer Base

Pepper's AI recognized and transcribed Appalachian dialects with precision, turning what had once been a liability into an advantage.

Seamless Collaboration Across Teams

Sales reps and Customer Success now work in the same platform. Orders are captured, verified, and synced **without anyone touching the ERP**.

A Source of Truth for Tribal Knowledge

New reps adapted quickly to Brown's vast catalog of 6,000–8,000 SKUs. Pepper's built-in product suggestions and order insights help them learn faster, build confidence, and deliver better service.

"Letting Pepper pick items for called in orders lets new reps understand our products faster and saves them from having to 'figure out' which kind of a tomato a customer is ordering — it gives

Looking Ahead

For Brown Foodservice, Pepper has become more than an automation tool, it's a productivity engine. The time saved each day isn't just about efficiency; it's about enabling better conversations, faster onboarding, and stronger customer relationships.

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Order Agent

Sales Hub

Marketing Hub

Finance Hub

Suppliers

Suppliers Overview

Seafood

Meat

JanSan

C-Store

Coffee

Alcohol

Ice Cream

Customer Stories

Pricing

ERP Integration

Implementation

Security

Careers

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