



The Powell Company is a janitorial and sanitation (JanSan) distributor handling chemicals, paper, liners, and facility supplies. Its sister brand, Rightway Food Service (a DBA of Powell), covers the foodservice side of the house. For years, the two sides of the business ran on different price books, different ordering tools, and a very old, custom-built Mac-based ERP ("32-bit encryption old," as Contract & Pricing Director Diana Sunderland puts it).

#### KEY OUTCOMES

Single platform for food

Every new JanSan customer



## Problem

JanSan business was behind the digital curve and stuck on dying systems.

Powell and Rightway were servicing roughly **4,000 customers**, but the digital experience didn't reflect that scale.

- Two separate systems: one for Rightway, one for Powell

### Schedule a Demo

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

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- Third-party tools that either didn't fit both businesses or created more work for admins
- Some reps functioning mostly as order takers, writing orders on paper pads or keying them into clunky systems
- Customers mostly phoning in orders, with little visibility into the broader catalog

Diana's mandate was simple and brutal: *Find something that works for both food and JanSan... before the old system collapses.*

At the same time, she saw a strategic opportunity: if a cafeteria can buy food from Rightway, why *can't* they buy their own liners and chemicals from Powell in the same experience?

## Solution

### One mobile storefront, two businesses: Pepper for food *and* JanSan

Rightway first connected with Pepper through industry networks. Diana quickly realized the opportunity was to unify the whole business under one digital roof.

What Powell & Rightway did with Pepper:

number conventions (4 digits vs. 8 digits) and the ERP handle routing behind the scenes.

- **Extended Pepper from food into JanSan**

Pepper started as the Rightway solution, but was soon offered to Powell's Shopfront customers—initially as a mobile app they never had, then as the primary ordering channel.

- **Turned contract pricing into digital order guides**

For JanSan's contract-heavy model, Diana loads pricing into ERP and Pepper so those locked-in prices effectively become each customer's order guide.

- **Equipped reps with DSR tooling**

JanSan reps like **Angie McKinneg** now manage pricing, build deals, and assemble customer order guides in Pepper instead of spreadsheets and hand-written notes.

- **Leaned into mobile-first onboarding**

At their combined food & JanSan trade show, Powell set up big TVs and live demos. Diana sat with customers, tablet in hand, and walked them through Pepper using their own order guides.

"Once I sat down and showed them, I didn't have anyone say, 'No, I don't want to use this.' The pushback isn't from customers, it's just reps getting used to a new way of working."

## Turning Resistance Into a Roadmap

blueprint for training, product fixes, and ultimately, full adoption.

- Many reps are veterans who are used to paper order guides and the old system.
- Diana had them **write down every reason they thought Pepper wouldn't work** compared to their legacy tools.
- For each objection, she showed them where Pepper already handled it, or flagged it for product improvements (like complex routing or every-other-week deliveries).

Where they landed:

- A hard cutover: As of early 2026, the old ordering system is being shut off for both Powell and Rightway. Pepper becomes the only option.
- No other option for new accounts: Every new JanSan customer is now onboarded directly to Pepper. Shopfront is no longer offered to new customers.
- Hybrid phase: Some reps are still entering orders on behalf of customers in Pepper, but importantly, those same customers *can* self-serve when they're ready.

"Our veterans will use the old system as long as it's open. **So we're closing it.** When they don't have the option anymore, that's when the real behavior change happens."

# Proving that JanSan customers *want* to order online

Even before the full cutover, Powell is already seeing signals that JanSan customers are hungry for self-service.

## 1. Customers say it “feels like Amazon”

When Diana demos Pepper, she leads with what customers care about:

- Built-in order guides tailored to *their* products
- Searchable catalog beneath those guides
- Reordering and recurring order options
- Mobile access from anywhere

Customers routinely describe it as “like shopping on Amazon”—and crucially, no one who saw the demo opted out.

## 2. Real appetite for discovery beyond the order guide

By bringing the full Powell and Rightway catalog into one app, customers are finally seeing products they never knew existed.

Pepper’s data shows 8–12% of orders now include items not on static order guides, proving that online ordering isn’t just “taking the same order digitally”—it’s

### 3. A JanSan rep leading the digital charge

One of Powell's most successful Pepper power users is a JanSan rep, Angie:

- Angie has moved almost all of her customers onto Pepper.
- Her customers can see both JanSan and Rightway items in the same experience.
- Angie uses Pepper for pricing, order guides, and bidding—then locks those price structures into ERP for consistency.

She's living proof that JanSan reps can thrive in a digital-first workflow.

### 4. Ordering moves out of the rep's inbox

Diana's phone tells the story: 8 pm Sunday nights can be a rush hour for self-service orders. Now, customers place their own orders after hours, and:

- Reps aren't fielding as many "hey, can you put this in for me?" texts.
- Questions that do pop up are handled via Pepper's in-app chat.
- Over time, this shifts reps away from order entry and toward consultative work.

"I told the reps, 'You realize your customers can do this, right? Take your evenings and weekends back.' Once

## 5. Even the ERP vendor is taking notice

Powell runs AS400 for ERP. Their ERP provider has now asked Diana to speak with *other* distributors about how they integrated Pepper.

After two years of trial-and-error with tools that couldn't handle both food and JanSan, Powell is now the reference customer showing others what "good" looks like.

### What This Says About JanSan

There's a perception in distribution that JanSan customers are OK with the current ordering process, including not wanting to order online, or that self-service will erode the sales rep's value. Powell's experience shows the opposite:

- When given a modern, mobile ordering experience that feels like how they shop at home, JanSan customers adopt it gladly.
- Reps are still crucial, but their value shifts from "a person who takes orders" to a specialist who designs programs, solves problems, and grows the account.
- A unified digital experience across food and JanSan doesn't confuse customers, it *simplifies* their life and expands share-of-wallet.

As they roll out Pepper's payments product (including support for complex bill-to / ship-to setups for hospitals and

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