



Case Study

From Distribution Giant to Digital Leader:

Reimagining IT Infrastructure

It's hard to be one of North America's top food and beverage distributors when your legacy infrastructure stops you from, well, delivering food. For AHEAD's client, a \$60 billion industry giant, every minute of system downtime meant potential delays in food delivery to thousands of restaurants, hospitals, and schools across America. Slow system rollouts, inconsistent configurations, and a lack of visibility into asset management were also hindering the company's ability to scale efficiently in a time of rapid growth.

AHEAD partnered with the client to transform their infrastructure and deliver the operational efficiency needed to keep up with the scale of business at 150 locations and counting.



Lifecycle Management

The Hatch Factor

Hatch® is AHEAD's proprietary IT infrastructure lifecycle management platform, created to simplify our clients' IT operations. Hatch provides complete asset-to-site visibility, transforming the way IT teams manage multi-site infrastructures. By leveraging the data needed to support their infrastructure today, our clients are enabled to scale it efficiently for the future, and we are with them *every step of the way*.

Top 3 Takeaways

IT infrastructure standardization and optimization for a **\$60B industry** giant netted immediate operational efficiency:

Simplified implementation and dramatic reduction in maintenance overhead through t-shirt sizing configuration standardization

3X faster site deployments:
Days vs. Weeks

Real-time asset tracking, program visibility, and precise budgeting and forecasting through streamlined asset management in the AHEAD Hatch® IT Infrastructure LCM Platform.

3X FASTER DEPLOYMENTS

72 HOURS
vs. **WEEKS**

The Breaking Point

With a challenge of this size, the client's Vice President of IT put it best: "For a \$60 billion company, we needed a solution that could match our scale and ambition."

And the food giant's ambition was bogged down by:

Slow Deployment & Refresh Cycles: Their IT team was spending weeks manually configuring new locations, creating a massive bottleneck in their expansion plans.

Lack of Standardization: With over 150 distribution centers, having five different system configurations created a web of complexity that led to inefficient operations and reliability.

Inadequate Asset Management: Without proper asset tracking, millions of dollars in IT equipment were difficult to monitor and manage effectively.

What they needed was a solution that would streamline deployment times, standardize configurations, improve asset management, and allow the IT team to focus on strategic business priorities. The Michelin Star of IT infrastructure, if you will.

Fortunately, AHEAD cooks infrastructure to order.

The Transformation

To address the client's IT challenges, AHEAD designed a solution that didn't just patch problems – it reimagined the infrastructure approach.

AHEAD outlined an incremental build starting at 28 of the client's distribution centers. Throughout the transformation, AHEAD implemented:

Nutanix Infrastructure: AHEAD built and pre-configured Nutanix clusters across 28 OPCO locations, reducing the time required for installation and ensured uniformity across all sites.

Legacy System Replacement: AHEAD replaced the existing IT infrastructure with modern Nutanix and Dell servers, enhancing performance, scalability, and ease of management.

Smart Standardization: AHEAD streamlined the client's systems from five disparate configurations to two cohesive and powerful setups. By adopting a "cookie-cutter" approach, the client can efficiently apply updates and patches across all sites, ensuring quick and reliable delivery of food and beverage products while maintaining top-notch service.

LAN and Wireless Transformation via Cisco: AHEAD standardized the network infrastructure using Cisco/Meraki solutions. Previously, the network relied on multiple vendors and varied deployment architectures, resulting in a complex and challenging support model. The new Cisco/Meraki-based wireless and LAN standards enabled the client to simplify management through a unified, cloud-based dashboard, allowing them to configure, monitor, and troubleshoot all network devices seamlessly across their locations.

Plug-and-Play Solution: By implementing Palo Alto Networks SD-Wan, AHEAD ensured no more complex configurations, just instant, reliable connections that keep the client's operations running smoothly across all locations.

Asset Migration: In addition to using Hatch for new purchases, the client is continuing to work with AHEAD to improve their asset management. By backloading existing assets from key vendors, including Cisco, Meraki, Palo Alto Networks, Rubrik, Velo, Nutanix, and Dell into Hatch – the team is set up for success.

Enhanced Asset Management: The AHEAD Hatch platform was implemented for asset tracking and lifecycle management, providing the client with complete visibility into IT assets, improving inventory management, and helping with more accurate budgeting and forecasting.



Game-Changing Results

The new infrastructure immediately delivered the operational efficiency the client was craving. Enabling faster deployment cycles allowed the client's IT team to *focus less on firefighting and more on more strategic initiatives*, such as digital transformation and business growth.

Across the pilot implementation, the business was also seeing:

3x Faster Deployment: Site deployments that once took weeks were now complete in days – a 3x acceleration that keeps the client ahead of their growth curve.

Simplified Standardization: Complex operations were simplified from five disparate configurations into two standard configurations, dramatically reducing maintenance overhead.

Streamlined Asset Management: AHEAD successfully loaded over 5,000 existing assets into Hatch – allowing for real-time tracking of IT assets, which enabled precise budgeting and forecasting. The improved asset management and “just-in-time” delivery ensured timely equipment arrival, minimizing the risk of loss.



Building for Tomorrow

With the success of the initial 28-site rollout, the client plans to continue its collaboration with AHEAD to further optimize their IT infrastructure and expand the deployment across all locations nationwide. AHEAD and the client are already future-proofing the new infrastructure by collaborating on a factory acquisition strategy that will simplify IT integration and streamline operations for newly acquired businesses. And there are also plans for an expanding integration with Cisco that will further enhance the company's IT ecosystem.

AHEAD's collaboration with the client has resulted in a truly transformative IT solution that addresses the company's most pressing challenges— slow deployments, inconsistent configurations, and inadequate asset management. Through this partnership, the client is not just solving today's challenges, they are building the foundation for tomorrow's growth, creating a technological backbone to support their ever-evolving business and maintain their place at the top of America's food distributor food chain.

Their VP of IT is looking forward to this future.

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Hatch has helped us streamline our procurement process, identify and alleviate supply chain constraints, simplify and standardize large multi-site deployments, and improve the quality and accuracy of our asset management. For a \$60 billion company, it's already brought us tremendous value, and we are still just scratching the surface of its capabilities.

Their VP of IT