



Decision Logic

PEPPERJAX
GRILL

HOW PEPPERJAX GRILL

USES DATA TO MAXIMIZE PROFIT MARGINS
AND GUIDE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE



The combination of real-time and historic data made possible by Decision Logic has propelled the fast-growing fast casual chain to record success while spurring innovative customer service models.

Executive Summary

- Decision Logic inventory management and waste variance brought an immediate 2% food cost reduction concept-wide, with additional savings every year since
- Streamlined inventory and scheduling gives general managers more time to focus on guest experience and has improved the employee experience as well.
- During a transition to Toast POS, Decision Logic advised on the process and got all restaurants up and running within 90 days.
- Concept-wide data visibility enables PepperJax to test the effectiveness of new service models and menu items, adjusting as needed for maximum profit and guest experience.

“We’ve had to find ways to be leaner and meaner, do more with less, so that there’s less back-of-house demand on our staff and they can stay focused on the front-of-house guests. And that’s where Decision Logic came in.”

— ERIN PALLADINO, VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING & OPS SERVICES, PEPPERJAX GRILL

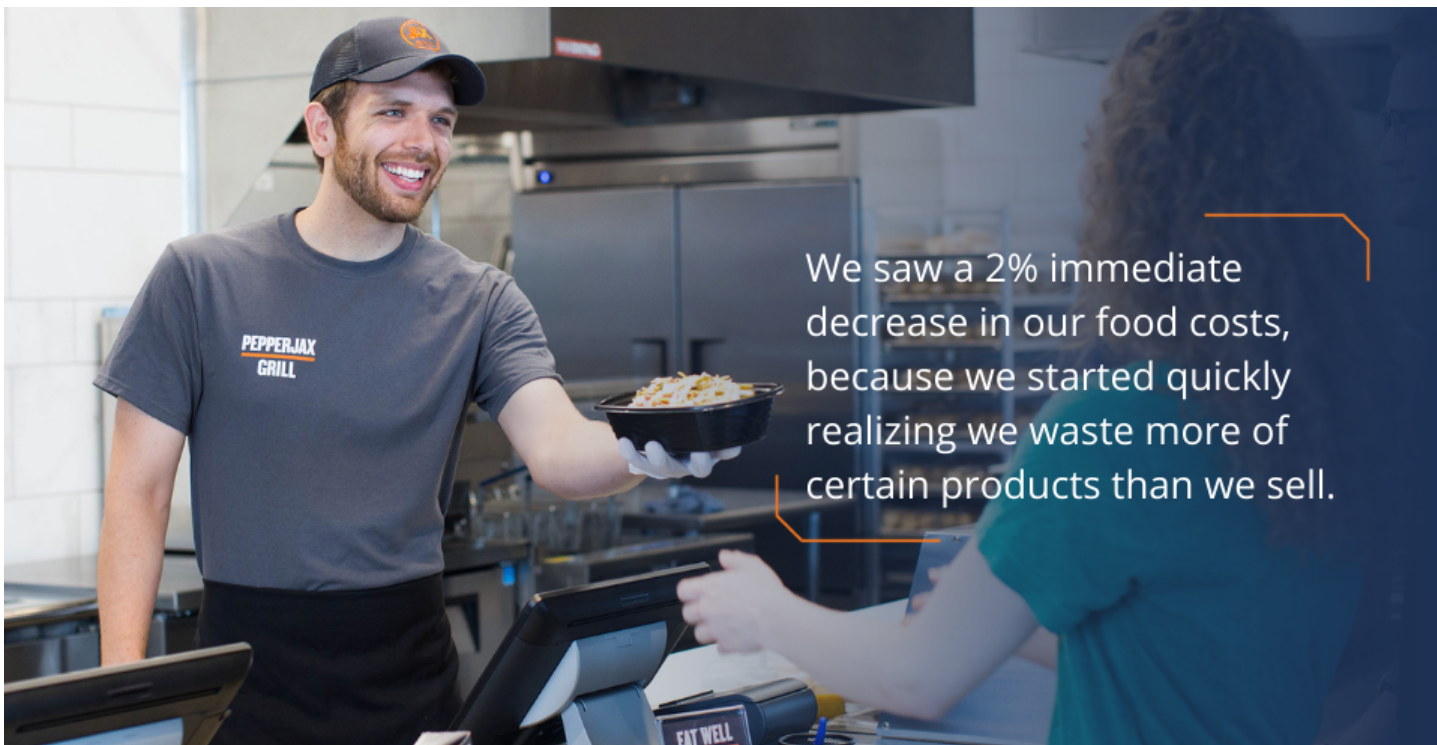
As fast-casual chain PepperJax Grill expanded into multiple states from their initial storefront in Omaha, Nebraska, executives knew they were missing key pieces of data, and what data they did have was taking far too long to come in.

While guests continued to enjoy the concept’s signature Philly cheesesteaks, burrito bowls, salads, and more, general managers were getting bogged down in manual data entry. Monitoring inventory, tracking profits, and minimizing waste was taking up an inordinate amount of time, and the overall results weren’t where each store should have been given the high customer demand.

Combined with a manual labor scheduling process, general managers were unable to spend as much time on the floor as they would have liked, so they were limited in their ability to work with the kitchen to get orders out the door and ensure guests received the premium experience PepperJax was known for.

Knowing something had to be done, Erin Palladino, Vice President of Marketing & Ops Services, and the rest of the executive team brought in Decision Logic to streamline the inventory process. Since the initial rollout in 2013, Decision Logic has been an integral part of PepperJax operations, even as the concept has expanded and tested out new concepts to evolve alongside the marketplace.

In this case study, we’ll examine how Decision Logic’s back-office restaurant management software has helped PepperJax decrease food costs, reduce waste, improve the GM and employee experience, and even grow and thrive throughout the pandemic and beyond.



TAKING STOCK OF INVENTORY

Erin Palladino makes it a point to note that Decision Logic and PepperJax have grown together over the years. As PepperJax Grill has expanded to over 30 locations across six states, so too has Decision Logic expanded its capabilities for restaurateurs. This has been an important keystone for the concept, as it's enabled PepperJax to bring a data-backed approach to menu expansion and waste variance.

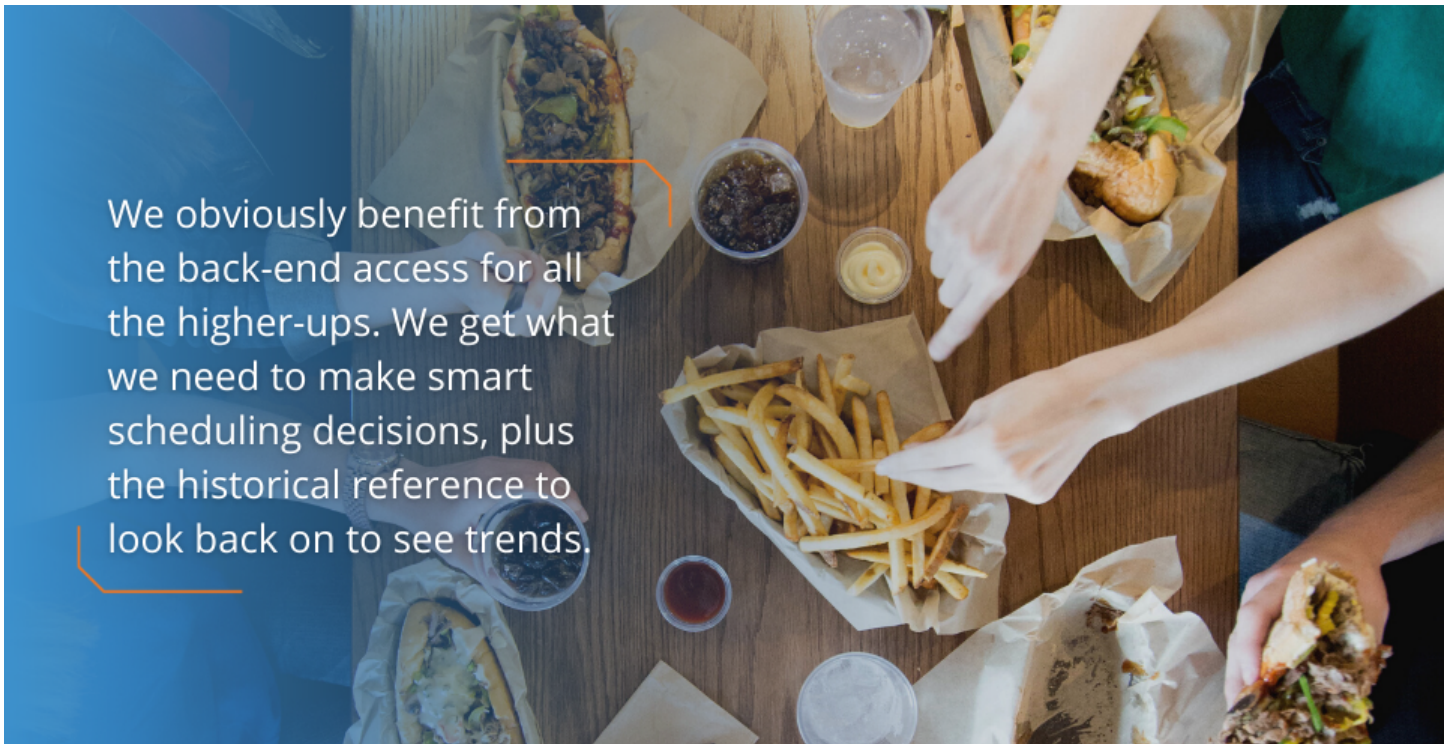
"It's been nice to have, not just the data at the time, but the historical data to look back on and compare," said Erin. "We live and learn what the customers didn't like or those menu and inventory items where the cost exceeded the benefit. We can see the usage and the true cost as we go, versus waiting an entire period to notice that, for example, we have a theft problem or we're not moving a product, all of those fun things you need to pay attention to as a concept. Decision Logic has been a big piece of addressing those food costs and our COGS management."

The ability to track the ingredients ordered, as well as what ultimately gets put on the plate versus what winds up in the trash, has been essential to increasing profit margins per location.

"We keep variance management really tight," said Erin. "We're big believers in portion consistency and waste reviews. When we started with Decision Logic, we saw a 2% immediate decrease in our food costs, because we started quickly realizing we waste more of certain products than we sell. That's been the really big piece for us that's made a world of difference."

Erin also points out the value that simple, fast customization has brought to the concept. General managers and executives alike appreciate the responsiveness of Decision Logic and the ability to see certain data streams on the fly, thanks to sales dashboards that intuitively display pertinent details for the user.

"We had a roll-up report built for one of our top operators," said Erin. "He was familiar with Decision Logic and wanted a custom report that showed sales, productivity, and percentages of certain data. We reached out to Decision Logic to have that built for us, and he can now see the details he feels he needs to successfully operate his locations."



SCHEDULING IN A SNAP

It's not just inventory and waste variance where Decision Logic has made an impact. PepperJax has also improved the employee and management experience by unifying processes via the Labor Scheduler tool, which works in unison with the Employee Central app to quickly assign employees to given shifts.

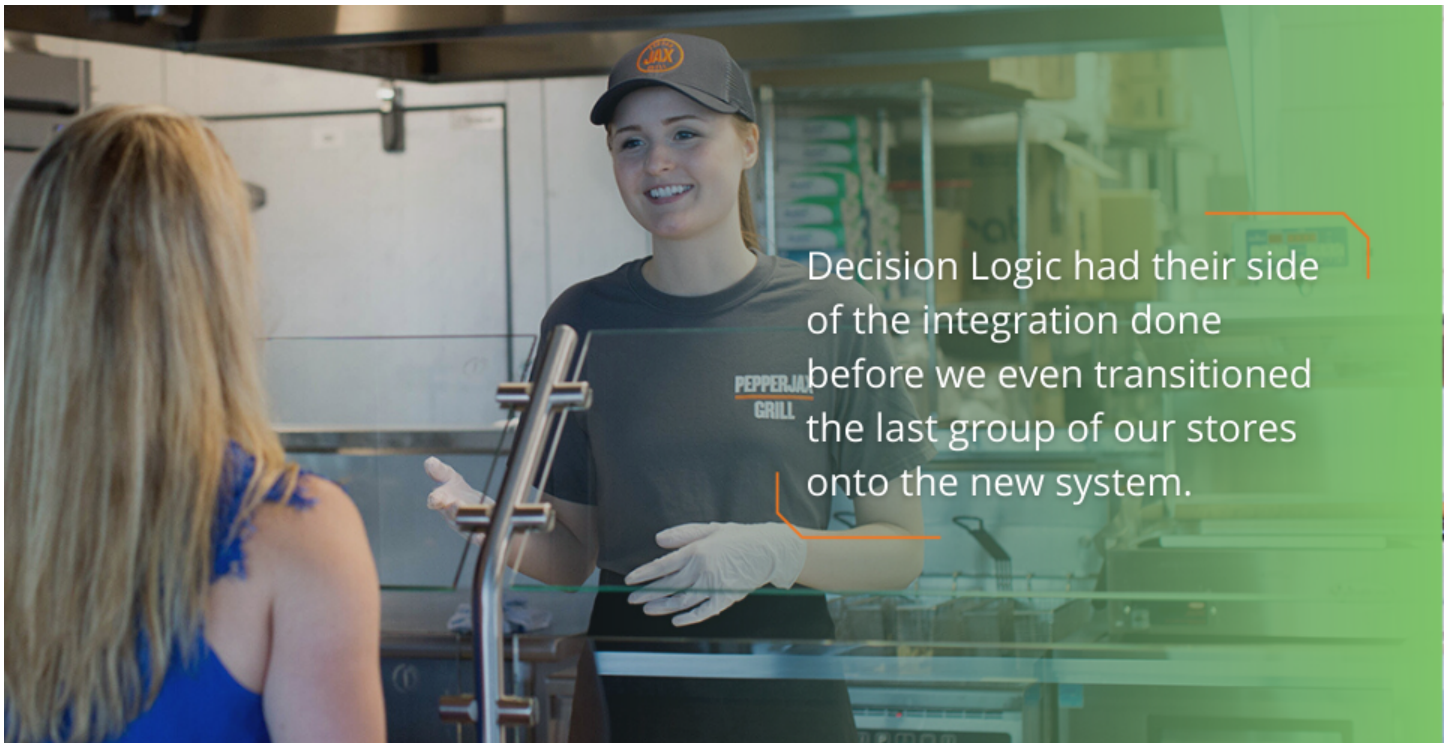
"Before Decision Logic, we were basically creating line schedules as an individual download per location," said Erin. "The GM would be responsible for inputting the sales to determine where additional shifts were needed and adjusting for anomalies all on their own. And we had no way to get that schedule back at headquarters unless they physically scanned and then emailed us a copy of it. There were no outside integrations."

"It just wasn't a friendly way to operate. For our GMs, if they didn't really take the time to do all that data entry, their schedule wasn't a strong playbook for the next week."

"When we got Decision Logic's Labor Scheduler, we finally had that integrated data. The two prime costs our general managers are responsible for our food costs and labor. And that's really where Decision Logic is harnessed the most for us. We've done a lot of focusing and training to get people comfortable with it. It's really friendly for staff to always have access to that information, and then **we obviously benefit from the back-end access for all the higher-ups. We get what we need to make smart scheduling decisions, plus the historical reference to look back on to see trends.**"

The application hasn't just given general managers more time on the floor and less time poring over physical schedules. It's also improved the experience for team members.

"Shift trading, the ability to leave comments, and the chance to communicate availability right in the app has been a big help," said Erin. "It's a lot more friendly for a team member to use their device rather than having to get a clipboard schedule and write down their entire shift for the week, which is where we were at before Decision Logic."



INTEGRATION MADE EASY

For as useful as these tools are, Erin points out they'd only be half the battle if they didn't work seamlessly with their Point-of-Sale software and other applications PepperJax uses in the course of business. Thankfully, that's been one of the biggest differentiators with the Decision Logic software: the ability to integrate quickly and effortlessly with various other tools.


"The one big overhaul we took during COVID, especially to get online ordering set up, was we switched out our POS to Toast," said Erin. "That's who we have today, and it's cloud-based."

"The integration between Decision Logic and **Toast** has been great. We are a very lean and mean company and like to keep resources in the field versus at the top. To take on a whole new POS structure was left to basically just two of us and the team of area directors. I relied on Decision Logic to take the lead and help do whatever was needed to make that transition as smooth as possible."

"Decision Logic let me connect each store with Toast and took over the rest behind the scenes. That was a huge save and a massive stress bucket that got eliminated, because that would have been my work otherwise. **It was nice to truly have experts do their expert thing and let us do the piece that we needed to do with our people.**"

“During the transition, we could still operate off of the two POS systems and trust that all the necessary data was still flowing into Decision Logic. They even helped advise us on best practices. For instance, our account manager noticed the Profit & Loss applications at Toast were the same ones we were using on the previous POS, so they helped us save a step by keeping those in place. We didn’t have to go back and remap menu maintenance and all that stuff.”

“Decision Logic had their side of the integration done before we even transitioned the last group of our stores onto the new system. I think our entire project was wrapped in 90 days.”

A chef wearing a blue cap and a grey t-shirt is working in a kitchen. He is wearing white gloves and is focused on preparing food on a grill. The background shows kitchen equipment and a clean environment. A purple overlay on the left side of the image contains white text.

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NEW CONCEPTS, SAME RELIABLE SERVICE

As PepperJax grows, Erin and her peers continue to think up new and innovative ways to serve customers. They recognized the transformative nature of 2020, with its focus on delivery and carryout orders, and have been willing to test out new concepts and order fulfillment methods in order to meet the demands of 2021 and beyond.

“PepperJax was predominantly a dine-in only establishment,” said Erin. “I think we were 80% dine-in and 20% takeout. We had no drive-thrus, we did not do online ordering, we had no app.”

“COVID really accelerated our growth plan. We rolled out online ordering across all our locations within a 90-day period. And now we’re experimenting with what our new model is going to be.

Grilling to order is always what we're about, but we have been testing the waters with a couple closed kitchens where we don't cook in front of you. It's the same process, but you can order through a cashier *or* a kiosk."

"We're about to open a new location where we're testing more of a pick-up window versus a drive-thru, so customers can conveniently roll around our building as we hand their food out the window. We've tested out a bar and a limited alcohol menu. We're also starting to rebrand our stores with a new modern look."

"Our challenge is: we customize and grill to order for every guest. And when you start throwing in takeout and third-party apps and online plus app ordering, it creates a unique challenge because we have one central grill and one line to funnel everything through. Closed kitchens help us with productivity and juggling all these different outlets, but do guests prefer the people interaction? We're learning and interviewing guests even as we collect this data."

Decision Logic has had an integral role to play in this process.

"Because we're trying these new concepts, we don't have an abundance of data yet, so we're using Decision Logic to track and see how much we're selling. Every single one of our locations is corporately owned, and they're all integrated on Decision Logic. We'll be monitoring over the next year or so to see, for instance, if the full bar should be a part of our future at the majority of our locations, as well as any other key insights we find along the way."

"At the end of the day, the guest experience is what it's all about. We're very much trying to understand what the guest truly wants, because that's where we're going to land. **If you do the same thing or grow without ever getting out of the box and looking for that next opportunity, I just feel like you could be missing something big.** Whereas we want to take something that's already great and make it next-level awesome."

The data-backed approach to innovation is something that separates PepperJax Grill from the competition, and as Erin notes, they will continue iterating over time to provide the exceptional experience and delicious food guests have come to expect. And Decision Logic looks forward to providing the data that will enable that growth long into the future.

Ready to incorporate Decision Logic into your own operations and use data to inform your own expansion?

Schedule a demo and learn more about Decision Logic today.



Streamline your operations across your entire concept with Decision Logic.

About Decision Logic

Decision Logic restaurant management software is more than just a back-office platform: we offer a full suite of applications that integrate seamlessly with your POS and other systems. Bring visibility and control to critical aspects of your restaurant business. Increase profit, reduce waste, and improve the employee experience.

Ready to see it in action? **Schedule a demo today** and discover for yourself how Decision Logic can make running your restaurant headache free.

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