AT A GLANCE

A $3B+ restaurant and retail company modernizes its operational backbone—achieving 16% ROI on $90M investment—while preserving the nostalgic guest experience that built the brand.

The Challenge

For nearly sixty years, this restaurant and retail company had built a loyal following around the nostalgia of days gone by. With over 600 locations and more than $3 billion in annual revenue, the brand had proven that "old-fashioned" could scale. But the business model that had made the company so successful would not work in new markets the company needed for its growth and expansion plans.

New store openings were expensive and inconsistent in their results. Operational costs were rising while margins compressed. Technology and systems were falling behind—POS systems, inventory management, labor scheduling had been added incrementally over decades without a coherent architecture. Activist investors were pressing for improved returns.

The mission was a paradox: reinvent the operational backbone without the company's loyal guests ever sensing the quality and "Old Country" feel had changed.

The Approach

We partnered with the C-suite to develop a five-year enterprise strategy centered on what the company called the "Store of the Future"—a reimagined operating model that would reduce costs, improve consistency, expand the potential list of new markets, and included technology that could trickle down to existing stores and save money across the enterprise.

The store design, operational workflows, and technology had to be treated as interconnected. Key decisions needed to be made during the design phase, not retrofitted later. Operational changes to batch sizes, cook times, and inventory protocols were tested and refined to increase efficiency without compromising quality.

Leading the enterprise program management office, we coordinated work across IT, Finance, Operations, Training, and Marketing.

And we trained the trainers: 150+ corporate and field leaders who would carry the change forward and help implement changes in existing stores along the way. Real-time KPI dashboards gave the C-suite and board visibility into performance as the new model(s) opened. We leveraged guest loyalty data, kitchen performance data, retail and restaurant sales (including waste and shrink), enabling rapid adjustments based on performance relative to new stores opening using the old model and same-store data.

The Results

The **$90 million capital investment delivered a 16% ROI**—strong performance for a transformation of this scale. But the returns showed up in multiple forms.

New store opening costs dropped by 25% while outcomes improved. Stores opened under the new model set records for guest satisfaction, employee retention, and opening-period sales.

Operational efficiency improved across the board. **Sales per labor hour increased by 19%** through workflow optimization and technology enablement—not by cutting staff, but by removing friction from how work got done. The proven store format gave leadership confidence to continue investing in growth.

And the brand kept its promise. Guests experienced the same warmth and nostalgia they had always valued, leaving as satisfied as they ever were. The transformation happened behind the scenes—visible in the financials, invisible in the dining room.

> **The Takeaway:** Transformation does not require disruption. The hardest work is often changing everything that matters while preserving everything that made you worth caring about in the first place.

Engagement Overview

Client:	Restaurant & Retail (600+ locations, $3B+ revenue)
Duration:	2+ years
Capabilities:	Strategic Planning | Enterprise PMO | Technology Integration | Operational Excellence | Change Management