PREDICTIVE INSIGHTS

Data is everywhere. *Direction* is rare.

How a Leading Restaurant Brand

Closed the Gap Between Data and Decisions

How Predictive Insights helped a global restaurant brand make better decisions, in every market, in time to matter.

The Morning Before

A restaurant manager walked into work and started the same routine she had been running for years.

Open the planning tool. Pull up the day's budget, a number set months earlier at head office. Compare it to a sales forecast that takes the day-of-the-week average of the last 3 to 6 weeks. Adjust by judgement. Decide how much protein to prep before opening, how many staff to schedule, how much stock to order today.

That was the process. In every restaurant. Every morning. And most of the managers running it were experienced and capable.

But when Predictive Insights measured what the combination of central budget and individual judgement was producing, there was clear room to improve. The median manager forecast error was over 30 percent, and a at least 5% of managers were off by more than 100 percent.

Which is to say: on any given day, the number the manager was building the shift around had roughly a coin-flip chance of being within about 30 percent of what actually happened.
The consequences ran in both directions. Some days the forecast was too high and the restaurant was overstaffed against sales that never showed up. Other days it was too low, the queue moved slowly, and a regular quietly decided to try somewhere else next time.

None of this reflected poor management. It was the math of judgement-plus-budget in a business where demand doesn't behave like a straight line, and the aggregate impact across the business was material.

Every one of those slightly-wrong forecasts carried a cost: a little overstaffing here, a lost regular there. Individually invisible; in aggregate, a standing liability. Call it decision debt.

Why This Became *The Moment*

The brand's head office team, whose job is to look across markets for productivity levers, had been circling the forecasting question well before forecasting became table stakes for global restaurant brands.

They had seen a competitor's forecasting product piloted in another market. It worked. But it was priced for a scale and margin structure that didn't fit every market the brand operates in. They wanted the outcome without that price tag.

Meanwhile, Predictive Insights had been building forecasting infrastructure for other businesses in the market, and analytics infrastructure for the brand's licensed operations. The underlying modelling was strong, and the brand had already seen it in action.

When the global team came to evaluate the approach, Predictive Insights presented it directly: 15-minute-interval forecasting, using POS data plus event data, weather, holidays, and local context. More accurate than what the brand had already tested, at a fraction of the cost.

The first pilot was defined narrowly: a specific subset of restaurants in two regions, run for three months to prove the model.

The Pilot

The pilot's job was simple in principle. Run Predictive Insights' forecasts alongside the existing budget-plus-judgement process, measure what each produced, and show the difference.

Three months later, the difference was measurable in the way that matters, not in the elegance of the model, but in what happened when the two forecasts were compared to what actually got sold.

In the pilot, the median Predictive Insights forecast error was 12 percent, and fewer than 5 percent of forecasts were off by more than 30 percent, against a baseline where a meaningful share had been off by more than 100 percent.

But forecast accuracy is a headline number, not a business outcome. What the brand needed to see was what happened downstream:

Revenue increased by 1.4 percent across the pilot footprint, attributable to better forecasts. In a business of this scale, a lift of that size is sales that were previously being left on the table every day.

Wasteful staff allocation dropped by the equivalent of 14 percent of the wage bill. It is worth being precise about: this was not a cut to the wage bill and not a reduction in headcount. The same people were on the clock at the times their labor was actually needed, the lunch rush that had been understaffed, the mid-afternoon lull that had been overstaffed. The wage stayed; the productivity of the wage moved.

Food waste came down by 10 to 30 percent depending on the restaurant, with the highest-waste locations recovering the most. Guest satisfaction, measured through the brand's own tracking, moved up 2 percentage points. A 2-point lift in a metric that rarely moves.

Every one of these was a downstream consequence of the same thing: a manager building the shift around a forecast that was materially more likely to reflect the day about to happen. A manager more certain in their decisions.

Why The Head Start Is The Moat

Every vendor in demand forecasting can now produce a forecast at 15-minute intervals. That wasn't true when Predictive Insights started doing it, and the years of head start are the point.

Producing a granular forecast is table stakes. What's hard, and what takes time to get right, is what happens next: turning that forecast into intelligence, and turning intelligence into a decision recommendation that reaches the manager in the moment she needs it. Being early meant Predictive Insights had years to work on the part everyone else is only now discovering is the actual problem.

A daily-accurate forecast can be wrong at midday and right at 3pm, and still look accurate as a daily average. But a manager staffing lunch service does not act on an average. She acts on how many people to have on the line at 12:00, at 12:15, at 12:30. If the forecast is only accurate at the daily level, every fifteen-minute staffing decision she makes off it can be wrong, and she won't know until the shift is over.

Predictive Insights forecasts at 15-minute intervals, by channel, by product, at every location. That granularity is what turns a forecast into a decision the manager can make with confidence: the recommendation she sees is calibrated to the actual shape of the day, not to a smoothed average that describes no real hour in particular. Every downstream product, the labor recommendations, YooDoo, the research work, depends on that foundation.

From Forecast To Decision

The rollout following the first pilot proceeded roughly one division every 6 to 12 months, market by market, across several continents, alongside ongoing engagement with the brand's licensed and corporate operations country by country.

Each rollout was like engaging a different client, different POS systems, data infrastructure, and appetite for integration. Some markets integrated Predictive Insights directly; others plugged into third-party platforms; some built their own stack and then used the forecasts more intensively t han any other market.

Somewhere along the way, a pattern emerged that changed how Predictive Insights thought about the engagement. The forecast was reaching the right systems and the recommendations were being generated, but the outcomes were still uneven, because a forecast that lives in a dashboard doesn't translate itself into a decision. Someone still has to open it, interpret it, and act. The best managers did that well; the busiest often didn't have time to open the dashboard at all.

There was a quieter version of the same gap: even when the recommendation was right, Predictive Insights couldn't see whether it was followed. The loop was open.

This is the gap YooDoo was built to close. YooDoo is the operator-facing, tech-stack-agnostic product that takes the forecast, the production timing, the prep call, and the stock decision, and delivers each to the manager on WhatsApp, before the shift, in a format she can act on directly.

That last part is the piece to sit with. YooDoo doesn't wait to be asked, it arrives, in the twenty minutes before service, in the same WhatsApp thread the manager already uses with her team. The best interface for a manager under pressure isn't a new interface; it's the one already open on her phone.

Make better decisions. Earlier. That is the entire product.

The first live YooDoo deployment has been the first time Predictive Insights can see how managers actually engage with recommendations: which they follow, which they override, and where the model needs to keep learning. Closing that loop opens a new one, a forward-looking feedback loop that can flag a decision drifting off the forecast while there's still time to change it. A manager who plans to prep 10 batches when the day calls for six gets a quiet prompt: you're four over, is that deliberate?

The decision stays the manager's; the tool just makes sure it's a decision and not an oversight.

Four Products, *One Engine*

Six years in, Predictive Insights delivers four connected product lines to the brand.

Forecasts remain the foundation: 15-minute-interval forecasts by product and channel up to a few weeks out and updated daily. Daily-level forecasts stretching 12 to 18 months into the future. Everything else sits on top.

Predictive Insights has also helped the brand build internal labor recommendation capability, drawing on what Predictive Insights has learned building labor recommendations across the retail, hospitality, and restaurant sectors, translating fluctuations in demand and restaurant-level characteristics into staffing that matches the day.

YooDoo is how the forecast, the labor recommendation, the prep call, and the stock decision reach the person making them, not through a dashboard she has to remember to open, but through the app already in her hand.

Insights and research is the fourth line, and the one that best shows how the engagement has evolved. Beyond forecasting, Predictive Insights has used the forecasts to help the brand think about strategy, informing marketing and promotional decisions, evaluating operational questions such as stock ordering, and understanding the customers in each store's catchment.

The engagement started with a demand forecast. It became an operational partnership.

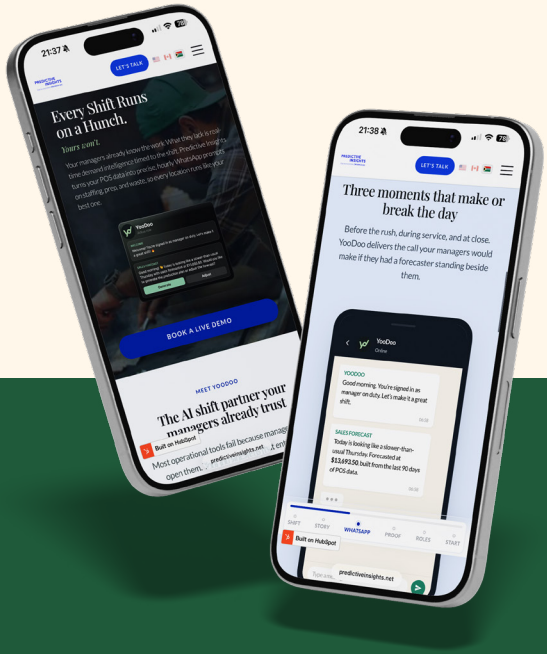
The Behavioral Layer

There's a piece of what Predictive Insights does that operators don't see, and it matters more than the product tour suggests.

Even the best managers are subject to well-documented cognitive biases. Two show up daily. Status quo bias, defaulting to what you did last time, is exactly the wrong instinct where demand is variable; staffing a Friday like a busier Saturday because it's easier systematically leaks margin. Loss aversion, weighting potential losses more heavily than equivalent gains, is a lever: framing a suboptimal decision as what you stand to lose tends to move it.

Predictive Insights builds both into how recommendations are presented. YooDoo, in particular, is designed to remove the cognitive load of the decision entirely, the manager isn't asked to interpret a forecast, she's handed a recommendation framed in a way that respects how decisions actually get made under pressure.

This is what most differentiates Predictive Insights from an off-the-shelf tool. Anyone can build a dashboard. Fewer teams have thought carefully about the person on the other side of it and the operating model that should drive it. This is behavioral ops: using the data not only to surface the right decision, but to change the behavior at the location so that decision actually gets made, consistently, across every restaurant. The goal isn't average consistency. It's lifting every location toward the best of them.



What Changed

For The Manager

The best test of any operational tool is what the person using it does with the time it saves them.

Two stories recur across markets. The first is the skeptical manager. In one location, a manager decided when the forecasts went live that he could beat them, he'd run that restaurant for years. For three weeks he adjusted the forecast every morning based on his own read, and every time the adjustment made it worse. At the end of the three weeks, he stopped adjusting. That pattern, skeptical manager tries to beat the model, discovers he can't, now repeats in every market, and Predictive Insights plans for it.

The second is what managers do with the hours they win back. The old routine, pulling the budget forecast, adjusting it, printing plans, is gone, replaced by a recommendation that arrives on WhatsApp before and during service. Managers spend that reclaimed time on the floor, with staff and guests: the role moves back toward hospitality and away from spreadsheet arithmetic. For a brand whose identity is built on guest experience and fresh food, that's the outcome that matters most.

What This Proved, and What Comes Next

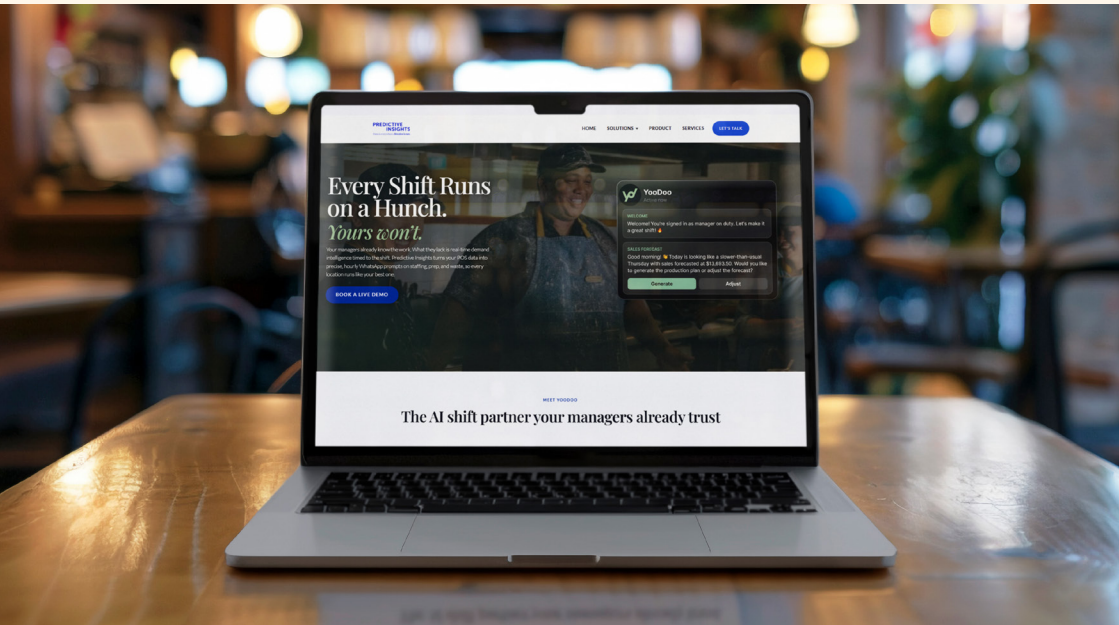
Predictive Insights is now rolling behavioural ops out through YooDoo across additional markets, with further pilots planned.

But the more important thing this engagement proved is not about any single product. It's how much variability exists between restaurants that, from the outside, look identical, and how little of the data those restaurants generate is being used to close it. That gap, between the data restaurants already have and the decisions they actually make, is the gap Predictive Insights was built to close.

Six years inside a global restaurant brand, across five continents and twenty-plus countries, is what taught them how.

For every other multi-unit restaurant brand still running on judgement-plus-budget, the question isn't whether the gap exists. It's how much it's costing you. Call it decision debt: the compounding cost of every shift built on a number that was a little bit wrong. Predictive Insights is in the business of paying it down.

Have you measured your decision debt?

Predictive Insights Data is everywhere. Direction is rare.

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