SAFETYCHAIN

CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

HOW ALBERTSONS COMPANIES TRANSFORMED OPERATIONS WITH DIGITIZED PLANT MANAGEMENT

From eliminating inefficient and time-consuming paper processes to achieving transparency with real-time data, more food and beverage companies than ever are leveraging technology to drive improvement. But if you're considering a technology investment for your company, you may be wondering about the practical aspects of implementation. How would a leading food and beverage processor, for instance, really do it – and would it really deliver on the promised results?

This case study as we explores how Albertsons, one of the largest retailers in the country, uses SafetyChain to transform food and safety operations in 18 of its processing facilities. With firsthand insights from Albertsons' Senior Director of Food Safety & Quality Manufacturing, Mark Salimbene, we'll uncover how this prominent company navigated the implementation process, including:

- Key challenges the company sought to solve with technology
- Pre-implementation considerations which needed to be addressed
- The biggest drivers of success in their implementation
- Post-implementation retrospective learnings
- The most noteworthy successes with implementation

We'll begin by taking a look at some of the major pain points Albertsons faced which led them to SafetyChain.

Albertsons' Key Objectives

Headquartered in Boise, Idaho, Albertsons is one of the largest food and drug retailers in the U.S. The company operates under 20 well-known banners, including Acme, Safeway, and Vons. With such broad product categories, Albertsons needed a solution to fit all of their distinct processing facilities. Dairy products, bread and rolls, frozen desserts, prepared soups and holiday meals, and ice are just a few of the items processed across their facilities, so it was imperative that the solution would support a broad product scope. In addition to meeting their specific needs, however, the Albertsons team also had a few key objectives in mind for technology:

Eliminate Paper-Intensive Processes

Before ultimately choosing SafetyChain as their preferred food software vendor, Albertsons had begun their project roughly two years prior. In doing so, they were able to identify precise gaps in their current programs which technology could help them address. For one, they wanted to transform their paper-intensive nature of process control, SOPs, and FSMA preventive controls.

Albertsons wanted to transform the paper-intensive nature of record keeping, SOPs, and FSMA preventive controls into a digital format.

To solve operational problems and inefficiencies, they found that they were creating SOPs on top of existing SOPs, adding complexity and creating what Salimbene refers to as a "paper nightmare." Thus, a key driver for the project was to transform their facilities to a more efficient and effective way of operating that started with a transition to a digital format for all recordkeeping. They hoped this would reduce the amount of paper their people were shuffling through on a daily basis.

Unlock the Value of Data

Another primary objective was to leverage data to achieve real-time control and visibility across all Albertson's facilities. Salimbene described paper methods as two-dimensional; while paper is helpful for record-keeping purposes, it doesn't paint the big picture and is not always immediately actionable. Salimbene recognized real-time visibility as a crucial element that was missing from manufacturing operations.

Additionally, the company sought a comprehensive solution that could offer opportunities for enhancing food safety and quality assurance as well as improve supplier compliance. They needed a tool that would support a robust supplier approval program and better manage incoming raw materials and packaging supplies better.

Corporate Visibility & Standardization

Beyond inefficient paper-and-pen data collection, another barrier Albertsons faced was lack of corporate level visibility into all of their manufacturing facilities. With plants in different states, a small corporate staff and large manufacturing staff, leadership was unable to see into the records and documentation of their facilities unless they physically visited each location. A lack of standardization across facilities further complicated this problem. Therefore, they sought a tool that would facilitate standardization and enable them to track who used which forms, see which records were created, and resolve issues in any facility on a real-time basis. By unlocking the value of this data instead of filing away paper copies, they could leverage insights to drive continuous improvement.

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Before implementation, however, Albertsons had some considerations which needed to be addressed.

What Pre-Implementation Considerations Did Albertsons Have to Address?

Before implementing new technology, it's essential to prepare, prioritize, and address any potential logistical problems that might snag progress. Albertsons had a grand vision and wanted to make their transformation as impactful as possible from the very beginning, but they had some housekeeping to attend to first.

Lack of WiFi in Plants

While SafetyChain software can operate in offline mode without a WiFi connection, Albertsons wanted to facilitate the exchange of real-time data and empower their teams with mobile devices. To that end, they decided to refine the scope of their project to equip each plant with WiFi. While it was a major endeavor, the ability to use tools in real-time has provided tremendous value.

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Rollout Prioritization

Going into the project, Albertsons initially wanted to roll out the implementation plant by plant. They wanted to start with their milk plants since they had the greatest number of these facilities. After consulting with SafetyChain, however, it was determined that a program-by-program approach would be more effective.

Workforce Readiness

Salimbene and his colleagues understood that transitioning from hundred-year-old processes to a modern digital format would be quite an adjustment. To make sure their workforce was ready to embrace the technology, they spent time training and educating their staff. Beyond describing what to expect, however, they made sure to explain the "why" behind the project: they explained the benefits of the solution and how it would help them better fulfill their roles. In addition to addressing these considerations before the project began, there were some standout drivers for success which helped Albertsons get the most out of their implementation.

When training employees, they made sure to explain the "why" behind the project.

What Were the Biggest Drivers of Success During Implementation?

Taking a program-by-program approach, as discussed in the previous section, proved to be one of the most impactful success factors for Albertsons. Having a comprehensive rollout and training program allowed them to move quickly and efficiently. Salimbene affirms that breaking down the rollout by programs, such as receiving and processing, set the foundation for a smoother transition. Had Albertsons gone plant by plant, it's likely the project would have taken far longer, given the number of facilities they have.

Staff Communication

Albertsons continued to communicate with their staff leading up to and during the implementation to make sure everyone was on board. They maintained consistent messaging explaining that the new technology would provide valuable information for quicker decision-making and eliminate paper-intensive tasks at all levels. Additionally, having centralized project coordination and getting all staff involved, including the corporate, was integral to the project's success.

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Getting Buy-in from Staff?

Salimbene believes that having a supervisor who was eager to lean into the project was important, but thoughtful planning and frequent meetings helped push ideas through the organization. Albertsons had several meetings across plants and functions and introduced the technology at least twice to every party over a six-month time frame. They continuously reinforced what they were trying to achieve, and ultimately leveraged corporate influence to drive key messages down the pipeline.

Understanding what helped to drive Albertsons' project forward successfully can be helpful, but it's equally beneficial to find out what they could have done differently. We'll review some of their key learning points in the next section.

What Were the Key Take-Aways from the Project?

Although standardization was an important objective for Albertsons going into the project, it eventually became apparent that inherent differences in each facility called for a unique approach. They started implementation with receiving in their milk plants. While they thought it would be the easiest, they soon saw that it was more complex than they had anticipated. Understanding that each facility might require a slightly different approach, however, allowed them to adjust the system in each location as needed.

Each facility was unique. This called for a flexible solution to support their differences, not a one-size-fits-all software platform.

Additionally, while Albertsons recognized the importance of WiFi from the project's onset, not all facilities were connected during the first few months when the program kicked off. While staff members were able to create records, they couldn't submit them in real-time until their devices went into areas with WiFi coverage. Making sure staff understood how and where records were to be submitted in facilities that were still in the process of being equipped with WiFi was a critical step.

Finally, Albertsons discovered the importance of training personnel to manage and edit their new plant management system after their implementation was complete. Even a system that appears flawless during rolled out can benefit from tweaks or enhancements that improve usability, drive ROI, and best support one's business goals.

For the last segment of this guide, we'll review the successes and major wins Albertsons was able to achieve with technology.

What Successes Did Albertsons Have with the Implementation of SafetyChain?

Since implementing SafetyChain's Digital Plant Management Platform, Salimbene notes that the company has witnessed noteworthy improvements, but that they are continuing to discover added value all the time. As he puts it, these key improvements are just "the tip of the iceberg."

Productivity

One quality of SafetyChain software that Albertsons has found immensely beneficial is the fact that the system doesn't tolerate missing data. This prevents staff from having to track down information, as everything is already there. With the ability to access information from any computer, Albertsons now enjoys quicker and easier access to data which also supports audit readiness and preparation. Although they have just begun to explore the function for creating reports, they have already seen that the system's data collection and ability to roll information up into scorecards will prove to be tremendously useful.

Quicker and easier access to data supports audit readiness and preparation.

Compliance

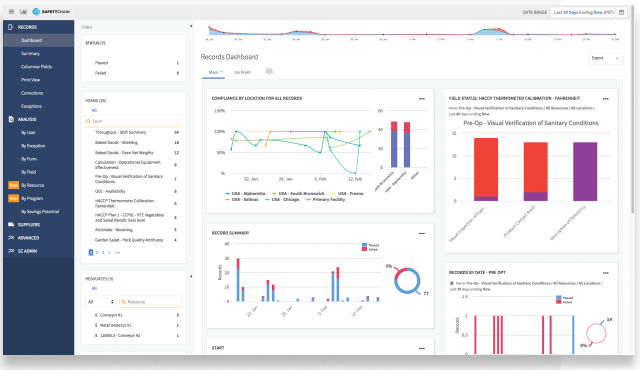
SafetyChain's Plant Management Platform helps companies like Albertsons support FSMA compliance with real-time visibility and enhanced program management. Through the enforcement of maintenance schedules, earliest possible detection of issues, and immediate visibility into HACCP checks, the tool streamlines and centralizes compliance efforts.

By gaining visibility into all their facilities, Albertson has saved time, and money.

Profitability

Albertsons has saved time, money, and hassle by gaining visibility into all of their facilities. Insights which would normally have required a visit to various locations to gather can now be accessed online. Moving forward, the company will continue to reap the benefits of analytics, including data mining, comparisons, and discovery of noteworthy trends.

What Were the Biggest Wins for Albertsons?

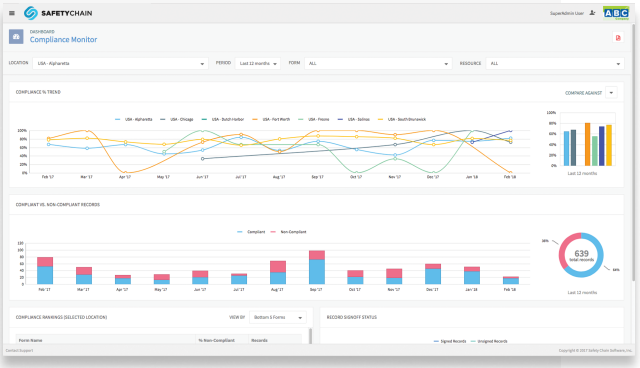


Standardization

While the company wasn't able to standardize every process in every facility, the majority could be. This allowed Albertsons to consolidate many forms across various facilities into one standard form.

Operational Efficiency

Eliminating paper processes and double-entry helped the company become more efficient across all of its operations.



End User Adoption

As you might see in any company, some folks weren't initially receptive to new technology. SafetyChain's ease-of-use helped support adoption and success overall.

Transparency

With real-time access to plant-level programs and compliance, Albertsons now has the ability to see what is happening across their facilities, which was not previously possible.

Real-time analytics enable faster, easier reporting and visual insights for continuous improvements.

Audit Readiness

Having all records digitized and centralized for on-demand access helps with audit readiness and FSMA compliance.

Operational Effectiveness

Real-time analytics have enabled faster, easier reporting and visual insights for continuous improvements throughout all Albertsons' facilities.

Explore the Plant Management Platform and see how digitized plant management can meet your needs.

About SafetyChain

SafetyChain is a digital plant management platform for process manufacturers trusted by more than 2,000 facilities to improve plant-wide performance. It unifies production and quality teams with data and insights, tools, and delivers real-time operational visibility and control by eliminating paper and point solutions.

Conclusion

Before working with SafetyChain, Albertsons was restricted by the use of paper-based systems. As a large enterprise, they needed real-time visibility into the 18 facilities which span across different states to support prompt and effective decision-making. Frustratingly, their attempts to standardize processes using pen-and-paper led to time-intensive and tedious practices.

The challenge of digitizing their records and implementing real-time technology seemed daunting, but by identifying their gaps, weighing pre-implementation considerations, and maintaining communication throughout every step, Albertsons was able to make the most out of their partnership with SafetyChain. Ultimately, while the improvements they have already witnessed have alleviated time and hassle while boosting productivity and profitability, their transformation will only continue to yield greater results in the future.

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While each food and beverage company is unique, seeing how an industry leader leveraged digitized plant management to meet its greatest operational challenges can shed light on the possibilities a similar project could hold for your facilities. From manufacturing to processing and packaging, SafetyChain alleviates the complexity of paper-based system across all functions for food and beverage companies. Now you, too, can turn your files and forms into real business intelligence that support compliance efforts, achieve ongoing transparency, allow for 24/7 audit readiness, and drive continuous improvement.

To find out how SafetyChain can help close the gaps in your processes just as we did with Albertsons, contact us today.

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