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YOUR KEY TO SUCCESS

Feeding America & Keystone Business Services:

How Technology is Helping to Fight Hunger

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OVERVIEW

More than 49 million people rely on food programs in the U.S. Therefore, it's critical that non-profit organizations focus on ending hunger by concentrating on their missions of providing equitable access to food rather than being bogged down with burdensome administrative tasks and unproductive technology operations. This is particularly true for Feeding America, the largest U.S. charity by revenue with a nationwide network of more than 200 member food banks feeding more than 46 million people annually.

The partnership between Feeding America and Keystone has led to the optimization of NetSuite's configuration, improved ease of use, and simplified processes for the organization. In addition, the administrative burden on the staff has been alleviated so employees can focus on ending hunger.

The success story of Feeding America's implementation of the cloud-based business management software platform NetSuite serves as an inspiring example of how technology can empower non-profit organizations to fulfill their missions more effectively and make a meaningful impact in their communities. It also highlights the importance of partnerships with knowledgeable service providers like Keystone Business Services to achieve these goals.

Background

In 2018, Feeding America went live on NetSuite. After the launch and use of NetSuite, Feeding America partnered with Keystone to optimize the current technology environment, implement custom solutions and improve its overall ease-of-use. The partnership has been so successful, Keystone continues an ongoing working partnership with Feeding America to this day.

Challenge

Feeding America's decision to switch to NetSuite was driven by the need for a modern, flexible software solution. The organization had been using inefficient software for more than 20 years, but it was outdated, required manual data entry, and often caused frustrations and inefficiencies.

To ensure optimization continued smoothly after the initial launch, Feeding America sought a partner that could provide best practices, troubleshooting assistance and staff training as well as navigating the complex NetSuite world.

THE RIGHT PARTNER

After the initial meeting, Keystone was the clear partner for feeding America.

"Rolling out a corporate-wide software impacted thousands of employees, hundreds of member food banks, millions of dollars in donations and too many partnerships to count," said James Broniarczyk, Senior Director, Solutions Architect & Development, Feeding America. "The search for a partner for continued support was overwhelming, but Keystone's deep institutional understanding of how all the pieces fit together made the company stand out. We worked with three partners previously, and after receiving a referral from a board member to connect with Keystone, we knew we found our ideal partner."

The partnership between Feeding America and Keystone is a compelling example of the importance of finding the right partner for complex projects. It also underscores the critical role that a trusted and knowledgeable partner can play in helping organizations optimize their operations. It showcases how a deep understanding of an organization's unique challenges and a commitment to personalized solutions can lead to lasting success and mutual growth.

A MODERN AND FLEXIBLE RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Keystone's team acted as an extension of Feeding America's internal NetSuite and IT teams, providing a range of services for the migration process to NetSuite. Services included:

01
Flexible Support:

Keystone's ability to provide flexible support by allowing Feeding America to add or reduce hours on a weekly basis demonstrates a commitment to aligning support with the organization's evolving needs and budget constraints.

02
Dedicated Team:

The dedication of a team of five resources to ensure availability for urgent requests is crucial for handling the complexities of a migration project. This approach allows for a focused and responsive support system.

03
Comprehensive Services:

Keystone's support services encompassed a wide range of activities, including customization, configuration, development, troubleshooting, training, and escalation management. This comprehensive support ensured that Feeding America received assistance in various aspects of their NetSuite implementation.

04
Expertise and Best Practices:

Keystone's expertise in NetSuite and their guidance on best practices for using the software were invaluable for Feeding America. This expertise helped optimize and tailor NetSuite to meet the organization's specific requirements.

05
Liaison to NetSuite:

Keystone's role as a liaison to NetSuite, including effective communication with the software vendor and issue escalation, demonstrates the company's ability to manage vendor relationships and resolve potential roadblocks.

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

Once the migration to NetSuite was complete,
it was time to implement various custom solutions.

NetSuite's ability to accommodate custom solutions is a valuable feature that allows Feeding America to operate more efficiently by allocating resources to focus on their core mission. And, Keystone's expertise in implementing them is invaluable. Let's learn more about the custom solutions and their impact on the organization.

01   Blue Donations Receipts Process

02   New Vendor Setup Portal

03   Freight Subsidy Revamp & Support

04   Grocery Discount Program

Increasing Efficiency:
Blue Donations Receipts Process

Feeding America's Blue Receipts Process is a key operational component of the business. If a national partner donates to a local food pantry, Feeding America needs to capture the information and report back to the donor. Prior to NetSuite, the manual workflow was a significant volume-heavy process with up to 30,000 donor transactions imported daily.

Transitioning from a manual, one-at-a-time processing approach to an automated system is a significant improvement. This shift not only reduced the risk of errors but also enhanced overall efficiency by two-thirds and increased donor transparency.

Managing millions of records efficiently requires a structured data management strategy. The previous workflow created an abundance of unnecessary records. Within NetSuite, establishing a purge process was essential for maintaining system performance.

Project Phases

Keystone broke down the improvement process into three distinct phases to bring a focused approach to address specific challenges within the Blue Receipts process, making it more manageable and effective:

PROJECT 01

Overhaul:
Overhaul the process with a new script that significantly reduced processing time.

PROJECT 02

Optimize:
Optimize exception and duplicate handling for better troubleshooting and reporting.

PROJECT 03

Deploy:
Deploy a solution for auto-uploading multiple blue receipt files to further streamline the process.

Reduced Transaction Volume

Cutting out two-thirds of the transaction record volume is a substantial achievement. This reduction not only enhances efficiency but also simplifies data management and reporting.

Feeding America was receiving data from member food banks in an excel file, and each line had to be processed into an individual sales order in NetSuite. Keystone developed a solution that grouped multiple lines simultaneously into a sales order, resulting a dramatic cut in time.

In addition, Feeding America learned after the first project that staff could only run the "queues" at night or over the weekend because it would stall the workflow. Keystone quickly realized the problem in the process and developed a custom solution. Staff no longer needed to work off hours or come in during their days off.

2/3
of recorded volume eliminated

Enhancing Automation:
## *New Vendor Setup Portal*

Feeding America recognized the need to streamline and simplify the vendor creation process, which was previously manual and non-integrated.

Feeding America previously had to manually enter vendor information into the database, relying on email communication, and dealing with potential errors or illegible information in submissions. It worked with Keystone to implement a quick and efficient onboarding process for all new vendors.

The organization desired to automate the vendor information capture process, which was a tedious, non-traceable email workflow. Keystone's approach was to create a fully auditable approval process in NetSuite that captured all pertinent vendor details – making it easier to create and approve new vendors within the system. The transformation of Feeding America's vendor onboarding process resulted in significant improvements in efficiency and data management.

Since 2020, 616 new vendors have been onboarded through the automated process. Dozens of hours of data entry time have been saved in just one year. The automation, visibility and customizable reporting formats have also contributed to additional time savings.

Overall, this project demonstrates how technology and custom solutions can streamline complex processes, save time, improve data accuracy, and enhance overall efficiency.
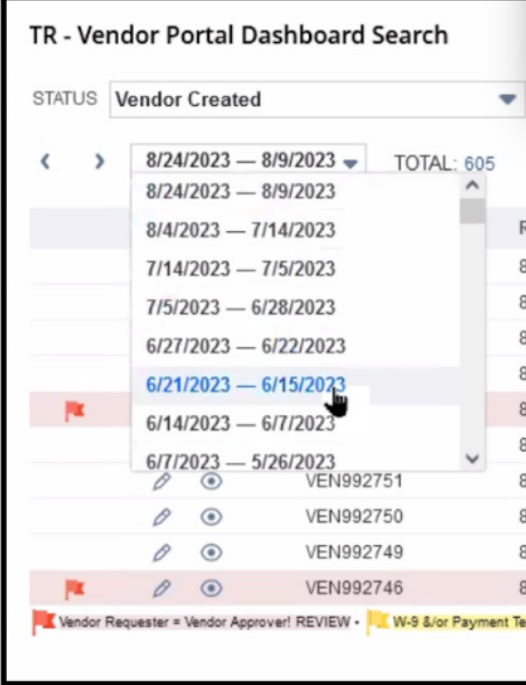
Example of the workflow process.

Files can be sorted by date and other custom safe search functions. A drop down menu identifies where the file is in the approval process.

Optimizing Usage:
Freight Subsidy Revamp & Support

As the country's largest food rescue organization, Feeding America partners with food manufacturers, grocery stores, restaurants, and farmers to rescue food and deliver it to local member food banks.

The biggest challenge is coordinating transportation. Food is donated, but the people in need are in a different location.

During COVID, the increase in donations made the problem more apparent. The solution was an automated process that can source and subsidize freight in a timely fashion.

The program was launched with the goal of helping more than 200 member food banks become more specialized and distribute food in a shorter time frame.

Feeding America can offer member-specific freight support for various order types within NetSuite. It utilizes a custom record and a "Freight Support Item" to offset the freight cost of transportation items or produce vendor freight line items on sales orders, providing a cost offset for member food banks.

The program includes budget tracking, exception criteria, start and end dates, and period-specific freight support, ensuring efficient and member-centric freight support management within NetSuite.

The program has significantly improved the efficiency of member food bank support, streamlined the process, and reduced the administrative burden.

Program Expansion

Due to the program's success, it has been expanded with the goal to be more robust and user-defined, leveraging native NetSuite functions. For example, a script is used to validate and apply subsidies to sales order records. A discount item was used to ensure proper expense accounting, eliminating the need for manual journal entry adjustments.

Overall, this initiative showcases how technology and custom solutions can address critical logistical challenges, save time, and improve resource allocation, benefiting nonprofit organizations like Feeding America in their mission to provide food to those in need efficiently and effectively.

Gaining Scale:
Grocery Discount Program

Feeding America and Keystone implemented an application to transfer funds and allocate grants and discounts that member food banks can leverage. Previously, the process of obtaining discounts was manual, where Feeding America would reach out to vendors individually to inquire about prices and volumes for specific items.

With the new automated system, Feeding America can send requests to all vendors and source the best price for needed items. This eliminates the need for manual vendor calls and allows for a more efficient and competitive bidding process among vendors.

Feeding America also implemented a Member Discount Rate program specifically for Grocery Order Types. This program offers discount management process in NetSuite, including Sales Order, Item Fulfillment and Invoice.

Overall, the automated system saves time, subsidizes pricing and improves volume and pricing management. It also reduces the reliance on institutional knowledge, which is especially helpful during times of employee turnover.

Additionally, it frees up employees who have been promoted to higher positions to focus on their new responsibilities, rather than relying on their institutional knowledge for the success of the discount program.

FEEDING A SUCCESS STORY

The partnership between Feeding America and Keystone has led to the optimization of NetSuite's configuration, improved ease of use, and simplified processes for the organization. In addition, the administrative burden on the staff has been alleviated so employees can focus on ending hunger.

"Keystone operates as an umbrella network, meaning that it has connections and relationships with various organizations and companies," said Eric Jozwiak, Founder & President, Keystone Business Services. "This network can provide smaller member food banks with access to resources, knowledge-sharing and collaboration opportunities. The back-and-forth communication that is often required in such migrations can be made easier by working with Keystone, as the company is already familiar with the processes involved."

"With Keystone's support, Feeding America has been able to implement a variety of customized solutions that have created efficiencies, enhanced automations, gained scale and optimized usage while navigating the complexities of the implementation and ensuring a seamless transition for our 200 member food banks and thousands of employees," said Broniarczyk.

Keystone is familiar with Feeding America's process and synergies, making the company an ideal partner to assist affiliated member food banks and many other companies and non-profit organizations with similar migrations and software solutions.
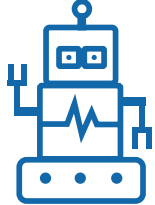
Increased Efficiency

Optimized Usage

Gained Scale

Enhanced Automation

PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES

Keystone prides itself on being a trusted advisor and providing personalized services. The company takes the time to understand the specific needs and goals of its clients, ensuring that the solutions offered are tailored to clients' unique circumstances. Keystone is committed to integrity and honesty in its work.

In addition, Keystone works with its non-profit clients to provide competitively priced services in the market. For example, with Feeding America, Keystone has contributed:

- A large in-kind donation during the COVID-19 pandemic

- 250 hours of service

- A discounted rate program, completing 3,500 hours of work at an average bill rate that is 15% below the standard rate

- Cash contributions totaling $8,600 to Feeding America over the past few years

These contributions, along with the in-kind donation project, were aimed at supporting the greater cause of ending hunger and being a committed partner.

Demonstrating its commitment to giving back and supporting its clients and the broader community, Keystone has a dedicated community outreach page on its Website that you are encouraged to visit.

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