

Webinar Recap

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE **FOOD** **BUSINESS** SECTOR

Driving Smarter and More Responsive Business Performance

For food businesses looking to build smarter and more responsive operations, digital transformation is increasingly becoming a necessity.

At our recent webinar, **Digital Transformation in the Food Business Sector**, we explored practical ways food businesses can begin this journey.

FEATURED SPEAKERS

- HARSH DAYALANI
- MICHAEL AGBOGO
- TITI NWAGBOH
- BELINDA NWOSU

Digital transformation doesn't always mean expensive software or advanced infrastructure. Sometimes, it simply means starting with the tools and systems that are accessible to you and applying them intentionally to solve the challenges you face.

THEME

Digital Transformation in the Food Business Sector

DATE

May 21, 2026

MODERATOR

Dr Belinda Nwosu — Academic Director, LBS Hospitality Initiative

PANELLISTS
Titi Nwagboh

Co-Founder & MD, Bountip Technologies

Harsh Dayalani

Owner, Chapter Restaurant, Lagos

Michael Agbogo

Founder & CEO, Chitub Company Limited

THE CENTRAL CHALLENGE

THE BIG PROBLEM

The webinar opened with a framing of the central challenge facing food business operators in Nigeria and across Africa: a sector characterised by high energy and passion, yet constrained by operational opacity, analogue practices, and a chronic shortage of business management competencies.

While the world has largely gone digital, many food businesses remain essentially analogue — managing by memory, paper records, and disconnected tools.

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— DR BELINDA NWOSU

DIGITALISATION & VALUE CREATION

DIGITALISATION IS A VISIBILITY TOOL FIRST

The primary value of technology for food businesses is not automation, it is making the business legible to its owner. Without visibility into inventory, costs, and margins, **no informed decision is possible**. Titi Nwagboh explained that without that visibility, no transaction is fully understood, no leakage can be caught, and no bank will provide meaningful financial support.

Harsh Dayalani shared that before digitalisation, costing, procurement quantities, supplier pricing, and labour costs existed only in written notes or in people's memories. The transition to a digital platform brought **consistency, traceability, and a shared understanding** of business performance across all levels of the team.

If innovation without discipline is chaos, and discipline without innovation is robotic, then from day one, creativity and passion must coexist with consistency and discipline.

— HARSH DAYALANI, OWNER, CHAPTER RESTAURANT

FULL FOOD FLOW — WHERE TECHNOLOGY ADDS VALUE

Panellists discussed the full food flow, from procurement through production, holding, service, and sales — and concluded that technology is not a tool for one stage, but for the entire chain.

— KEY AREAS ACROSS THE FOOD FLOW

WHERE TECHNOLOGY ADDS VALUE

P **PROCUREMENT & RECEIVING**

Logging supplier pricing, quantities, and delivery dates for trend analysis and negotiation leverage.

R **PRODUCTION**

Recipe management and standardisation; tracking consumption against expected portion yields.

I **INVENTORY**

Real-time stock monitoring, depletion tracking, expiry alerts, and waste logging.

S **SALES**

Reconciling revenue against cost of goods sold; tracking menu item profitability.

D **REPORTING & DASHBOARDS**

Surfacing the profit margin gap — not just revenue, but the complete cost structure behind it.

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Operators often celebrate incoming revenue while costs silently erode margins. Technology reorients attention toward the complete picture.

— HARSH DAYALANI, OWNER, CHAPTER RESTAURANT

— OPERATIONAL DISCIPLINE

THE FOUNDATION FOR TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION

Technology cannot function properly without operational discipline as its foundation. Michael Agbogo likened the situation to a bank: just as no bank can operate without core banking software in the 21st century, no restaurant can be sustainably managed by intuition and memory alone. The technology only amplifies what is already structured — without that structure, it amplifies nothing.

Michael Agbogo noted a common conflation: many operators assume that digitalisation means complex technology. It does not. What matters is the discipline that precedes it.

THREE CRITICAL MODULES TO FIX FIRST**1** **STOCK MOVEMENT TRACKING**

So that leakages i.e., pilfering, spoilage, or over-portioning, are visible and attributable.

2 **FOOD COST CALCULATION**

Understanding the true unit cost of each menu item, including the real-time impact of inflation on ingredient prices.

3 **WORKFLOW STANDARDISATION**

The chef, inventory manager, and cashier must not operate in informational silos — processes must connect.

— DISCONNECTED TOOLS

DISCONNECTED TOOLS PRODUCE DISCONNECTED INTELLIGENCE

Titi Nwagboh noted a common and dangerous pattern: a POS system for sales, a separate accounting package, a different HR platform, and another tool for procurement, none of which talk to each other. Business owners cannot see a consolidated, real-time picture of their operations.

— BARRIERS TO ADOPTION

WHAT HOLDS OPERATORS BACK

- Digitalisation of legacy processes**
 Long-established manual methods feel familiar and safe; digital systems feel foreign and risky.
- Perceived complexity**
 Operators assume digital systems are difficult and time-consuming to manage.
- Financial anxiety**
 Upfront investment is seen as a burden, even when the ongoing cost of inefficiency far exceeds it.
- Skill gaps**
 Lack of financial literacy means that even when data surfaces, operators may not know how to act on it.

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The loss from inefficiency is often greater than the cost of the system that prevents it. Sadly, some operators need to witness this connection before they can believe it.

— DR BELINDA NWOSU

— USE CASE

BOUNTIP BUSINESS ANALYST

Agentic AI does not wait to be interrogated, it proactively analyses business data and delivers actionable recommendations through accessible channels such as WhatsApp or SMS. Bountip's Business Analyst automates food cost management by linking recipe data directly to inventory and purchasing information.

- The operator inputs the recipe for each dish, specifying ingredients and quantities.
- The system links recipe ingredients to inventory, which carries live purchase price data.
- When the market price changes, the system automatically recalculates each dish's food cost.
- When the food cost margin drops below target, the system flags the item and recommends a price adjustment.



PRODUCTION WASTE

Built into recipe yield calculations



SPOILAGE WASTE

Triggered by expiry alerts; logged on disposal



SERVICE WASTE

Customer returns, manually logged

PATTERN DETECTION

The system aggregates all waste categories and surfaces patterns, allowing operators to identify whether waste is rising in the kitchen, in storage, or at the table.

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Imagine getting a message: inflation went up 5% last week and you're still selling rice at ₦2,000 when your cost is now ₦2,200. The AI has done all the thinking for you.

— MICHAEL AGBOGO, CEO, CHITUB COMPANY

— KEY TAKEAWAYS

10 THINGS TO KNOW

1 DIGITALISATION IS A VISIBILITY TOOL FIRST.

The primary value of technology is not automation, it is making the business legible to its owner. Without visibility into inventory, costs, and margins, no informed decision is possible.

2 OPERATIONAL DISCIPLINE MUST PRECEDE TECHNOLOGY.

Technology built on a chaotic foundation amplifies nothing useful. Standardised recipes, disciplined inventory counting, and consistent workflows must come first.

3 THE SECTOR IS OVERWEIGHT ON REVENUE, UNDERWEIGHT ON COST.

A persistent pattern among operators is celebrating incoming revenue while remaining blind to cost erosion. Profit is defined by the gap, not revenue alone.

4 INFLATION REQUIRES DYNAMIC PRICING.

In Nigeria's high-inflation environment, ingredient costs shift week to week. A business that reprices manually is likely selling some dishes at a loss without knowing it.

5 DISCONNECTED TOOLS PRODUCE DISCONNECTED INTELLIGENCE.

Separate POS, accounting, procurement, and HR platforms means no single view of the business exists. An integrated platform consolidates this intelligence.

6 TECHNOLOGY COSTS LESS THAN INEFFICIENCY.

Over-portioning chicken by 50g per serving across one year's sales could amount to approximately **₦3 million in losses**. A typical software subscription is a fraction of that.

7 AI MEANS PROACTIVE INTELLIGENCE, NOT JUST DASHBOARDS.

Agentic AI monitors data continuously and sends direct, actionable alerts, enabling operators to act before problems compound.

8 DIGITALISATION PROTECTS AGAINST TALENT RISK.

When operational knowledge lives in a system i.e, recipes, costing, inventory protocols, the business's core is protected regardless of who leaves.

9 INFRASTRUCTURE BARRIERS ARE SMALLER THAN PERCEIVED.

A smartphone is sufficient for a home-based operator. Systems run offline and sync when internet is available. In 2026, 'our infrastructure is not ready' does not hold.

10 SCALE SHOULD FOLLOW DATA, NOT PRECEDE IT.

If you are losing money per plate without knowing it, scaling simply accelerates the losses. Validate first; grow second.

— IN THEIR OWN WORDS

KEY QUOTES

A bank is a business, a restaurant is a business. There are so many moving parts that you need to put together. Visibility to these moving parts is absolutely critical.

— MICHAEL AGBOGO, CEO, CHITUB COMPANY

You keep selling, you do not know the food cost, you do not know the margin. You do not know how much the products you bought today have already been eroded by inflation.

— TITI NWAGBOH, CO-FOUNDER, BOUNTIP TECHNOLOGIES

If innovation without discipline is chaos, and discipline without innovation is robotic, then from day one, creativity and passion must coexist with consistency and discipline.

— HARSH DAYALANI, OWNER, CHAPTER RESTAURANT

Speed is only important when you are going in the right direction. And going in the right direction means you know — not think — that you are on the right path.

— MICHAEL AGBOGO, CEO, CHITUB COMPANY

Digitalisation is basically taking the chaos away from the business. It's bringing everything together. And if a chef or a manager leaves, all data is already recorded.

— HARSH DAYALANI, OWNER, CHAPTER RESTAURANT

Revenue, inventory, margins — what you're making, what it costs, and what you keep. You don't need to know every detail; you need to know the important details. The tool drives your attention to the most critical bits.

— MICHAEL AGBOGO, CEO, CHITUB COMPANY

MICHAEL AGBOGO — CLOSING

Speed is only valuable when you are going in the right direction. Hard data, not gut feeling, is what tells you that.

HARSH DAYALANI — CLOSING

Digitalisation is not just software. It is the future of hospitality in Nigeria. Passion is necessary but not sufficient. Discipline and data sustain a business.

TITI NWAGBOH — CLOSING

Choose the tool that answers yes to all five: Does it solve my problems? Is it usable daily? Can my staff adopt it? Does it make my business visible? Does it support my growth?

— DEEPER ANALYSIS

INSIGHTS FOR OPERATORS

THE 'I KNOW HOW TO COOK' TRAP

Many food businesses are founded on culinary talent validated by family and friends. The transition from 'great cook' to 'viable business' requires a different skill set: financial literacy, cost control, and operational management. Passion is necessary but categorically insufficient. The restaurant failure rate, with most closures within two years, is the evidence. Margin discipline sustains a business; passion alone does not.

DATA IS THE MIRROR, NOT THE MAP

One of the session's most evocative metaphors: digitalisation is a mirror. It does not tell you where to go, it tells you where you are. For businesses navigating by feel, seeing accurate financial and operational data for the first time can be confronting. Restaurants that close unexpectedly often fail not because they lacked talent, but because they lacked the mirror that would have shown them their true financial position in time to act.

THE HYPOTHESIS-DRIVEN BUSINESS MINDSET

Agbogo offered a memorable reframe: every business launch is a hypothesis, that your product is good enough for paying strangers. The purpose of early data, collected through technology, is to validate or invalidate that hypothesis before the cost of being wrong becomes irreversible. This transforms digitalisation from a management tool into a strategic compass.

INNOVATION IS NOT SYNONYMOUS WITH TECHNOLOGY

Agbogo challenged a common conflation: digitalisation does not mean adopting complex technology. Innovation is a broader category, it includes standardising a recipe, creating a portion control system, or formalising a procurement checklist. Technology is one form of innovation. The mindset of systematic improvement is the prerequisite.

THE HIDDEN COST OF THE ANALOGUE APPROACH

For most food businesses, the cost of not digitising is far higher than the cost of digitising. Waste, pilfering, over-portioning, mispricing, and missed sales opportunities add up to losses that dwarf any software subscription. The reluctance to invest in technology is, paradoxically, an investment in the very inefficiency degrading the business.

AFRICA'S FOOD SECTOR REQUIRES AFRICA-ADAPTED SOLUTIONS

The panellists situated their conversation within the specific realities of the Nigerian and African operating environment: currency volatility, supply chain instability, inconsistent electricity and internet, and a workforce often learning business management for the first time.

5 QUESTIONS EVERY OPERATOR SHOULD ASK BEFORE CHOOSING A TECHNOLOGY

- 1 Does this system solve my operational problems?
- 2 Is it practically usable every day?
- 3 Can my staff adopt it?
- 4 Does it make my business visible?
- 5 Does it support my growth?