



# C.H. ROBINSON



Food & Beverage Solutions

## CASE STUDY

### Bloomin' Brands, Inc.® Builds Supply Chain Efficiency, Saves Costs through C.H. Robinson's Award-winning Services



With foresight, initiative, and resourcefulness, Bloomin' Brands, Inc.®, one of the world's largest casual dining companies, worked with C.H. Robinson to tackle all-too-common pain points in the foodservice industry and are now reaping the rewards.

○ Globalization, increasing competition, and logistical complexities in the food and beverage industry have made it harder for companies to effectively manage their supply chains. Although it may sound contradictory, supply chains are both growing and shrinking at the same time: globalization is expanding the overall geographic region a company can serve, but consumer demands for convenience are also creating new small-scale supply chains within those larger service areas.

In addition to these spatial supply chain intricacies, new food safety practices and compliance directives are increasing the need for accurate track and trace capabilities. Foodservice providers must have clear supply chain visibility down to the SKU level, a difficult task when the pool of available suppliers continues to grow.

**“We needed to improve visibility to the transactional data that really drives a supply chain.”**

**– OWEN BRADY,  
SUPPLY CHAIN  
DIRECTOR, GLOBAL  
DISTRIBUTION &  
LOGISTICS, BLOOMIN’  
BRANDS**

This lack of visibility is often most pronounced in the purchase order process. Without proper end-to-end insight, it becomes nearly impossible to gain control of the supply chain and all its suppliers, distributors, and associated costs. Bloomin’ Brands, Inc.® (Bloomin’ Brands) faced these challenges.

## **OPPORTUNITY**

As they expanded to more and more store locations, Bloomin’ Brands’ supply chain became correspondingly more complex. With four successful restaurant brands (Outback Steakhouse®, Carrabba’s Italian Grill®, Fleming’s® Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar, and Bonfish Grill®), the supply chain team needed to improve efficiency through order quantity consolidation and supplier/distributor optimization.

Indeed, a growing number of SKUs, suppliers, and distributors flowed through Bloomin’ Brands’ manual purchase order process, requiring a great deal of resources. Supplier and distributor costs were often misaligned with discrepancies frequently found only during invoicing, creating more after-the-fact administrative work via credits and adjustments. Additionally, costs were rarely separated into their composite segments, giving no insight into what—freight, fuel, product, handling, or something else—was truly driving cost changes.

“Restaurant kitchen managers had to complete manual tasks like auditing invoices, which was time consuming. We needed to improve visibility to the transactional data that really drives a supply chain,” shared Owen Brady, supply chain director, global distribution and logistics for Bloomin’ Brands.

## **TURNING POINT**

Bloomin’ Brands recognized opportunities in their legacy supply chain and anticipated that continued growth may have generated further challenges. A supply chain evolution was necessary both to keep them on course for continued success and to provide centralized support for individual restaurant locations.

C.H. Robinson had been providing transportation services to Bloomin’ Brands for some time. During a business review of that relationship, “our C.H. Robinson account manager was able to identify that Managed Procurement Services (MPS) could enhance our support to our restaurants,” said Owen.

“The combination of superior people, process, and technology made our decision an easy one.”

— OWEN BRADY

## SOLUTION

Bloomin’ Brands understood the importance of implementing supply processes that not only addressed current challenges but also could scale along with their business’s growth and change. Owen stated that he and his team “looked at other supply chain management providers, but they only offered pieces of what we were looking for. C.H. Robinson’s MPS was the best option for us with their end-to-end solutions. The combination of superior people, process, and technology made our decision an easy one.”

MPS team members met with Bloomin’ Brands to assess their entire supply chain, identify current processes, and pinpoint opportunity areas. Then, the team designed a customized, holistic supply chain plan for Bloomin’ Brands that combined C.H. Robinson’s powerful managed procurement technology with optimized logistics solutions.

Kristen Brooks, vice president of global procurement for Bloomin’ Brands, noted, “We never felt like we were being sold to in the whole process. It was an organic conversation around how the MPS solution could help streamline our supply chain.”

To ensure C.H. Robinson’s strategic solution would fit their needs, Bloomin’ Brands implemented MPS in pilot markets, observing how MPS practically operated and analyzing the results. This test phase allowed Bloomin’ Brands to see actual outcomes before making enterprise-level changes. Operators in the pilot markets saw cost savings and improvements in overall efficiency; buoyed by the confidence that C.H. Robinson’s Managed Procurement Services could provide data-driven benefits, Bloomin’ Brands chose to implement MPS across their entire network.

C.H. Robinson’s MPS team worked alongside Bloomin’ Brands every step of the way, consolidating supplier and distributor data, mapping all system connections, and helping with program setup from start to finish. Bloomin’ Brands and C.H. Robinson jointly supervised all service releases, and C.H. Robinson’s MPS team orchestrated in-person location trainings to ensure smooth transitions throughout the process.

## “Implementing the MPS solution helped transform the Bloomin’ Brands supply chain.”

– LISSETTE GONZALEZ,  
VICE PRESIDENT,  
GLOBAL PLANNING  
& FORECASTING,  
BLOOMIN’ BRANDS

“The MPS team worked directly with various departments and stakeholders to help them understand what we were doing and why. It was clear that they had this process under control and would handle all aspects with little additional work on our end,” said Kristen. In the end, Bloomin’ Brands obtained insights into their full ordering processes through access to a supply chain dashboard tailored to their specific visibility and analytics needs.

### OUTCOME

Supplier and distributor invoices are now all managed through C.H. Robinson’s managed procurement technology, reducing the time, energy, and resources once spent on these tasks. Full visibility to individual cost components allows for tracking costs over time and easily making adjustments to effectively manage supply chain expenses. And numerous checks and balances built into the purchase order process have minimized claims, giving Bloomin’ Brands the confidence that contracted costs are accurate.

“The cost avoidance that the MPS solution provides through invoice auditing is worth the price of admission,” said Tina Lewis Davis, director, global procurement for Bloomin’ Brands. Kristen added, “Having a system that’s doing that for you means we don’t need an army of people to chase those pennies on the floor.”

Additionally, end-to-end MPS insights translate to clear network-wide visibility during critical food safety situations. Because Bloomin’ Brands has a clear sense of which products are in which restaurants at any given time, they can act quickly to take appropriate action. “C.H. Robinson is constantly monitoring the market, which allows them to respond to advisories and recalls in a swift manner,” shared Kristen.

Building on these foundations, C.H. Robinson leveraged their full suite of services to further optimize Bloomin’ Brands’ supply chain, implementing other logistics solutions like inbound freight consolidation. With full visibility to the big picture of their supply chain, Bloomin’ Brands and C.H. Robinson have driven annual supply chain cost savings of seven to 10 percent.

Lissette Gonzalez, vice president, global planning and forecasting for Bloomin’ Brands, put it succinctly: “Implementing the MPS solution helped transform the Bloomin’ Brands supply chain.”

“Leveraging third-party providers like C.H. Robinson can be—and has been—a valuable asset for us.”

— KRISTEN BROOKS,  
VICE PRESIDENT,  
GLOBAL  
PROCUREMENT,  
BLOOMIN’ BRANDS

## FUTURE

Through close teamwork and a focus on results-driven problem solving, C.H. Robinson’s MPS team has become an extension of the Bloomin’ Brands family, winning “Vendor of the Year” twice. Both companies continue to hold regular, in-person monthly status updates and twice-yearly market reviews to stay agile. Tina said, “The level of transparency and candor in our relationship has opened the door for broader collaboration to find those win-win opportunities.”

Of course, the food and beverage industry is constantly evolving, and Bloomin’ Brands is poised to successfully transform along with it.

“Foodservice supply chains are complex,” shares Kristen. “Leveraging third-party providers like C.H. Robinson can be—and has been—a valuable asset for us.”

To learn more about C.H. Robinson, watch [our video](#), visit [our website](#), call 800-323-7587, or email [solutions@chrobinson.com](mailto:solutions@chrobinson.com).



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