CHEF'D

Transforming the Customer Experience with Better Data

A newly architected modern data platform helped Chef'd refine customer marketing, improve offerings, and reduce long-term operating costs

The Challenge

- Better understand customer behavior by effectively gathering and interpreting clickstream data

- Track website use in real time, capitalizing on relevant data to offer smart recommendations and improve targeted marketing

- Integrate ERP data for a more strategic analysis of meal kit expenses such as food costs, shipping, perishability, inventory management, and vendor relationships

The Solution

- Partner with Neudesic, a Premier Google Cloud Solutions and Services Partner

- Leverage the Google Cloud Platform Data Technology Stack, anchoring the architecture with tools such as BigQuery and Dataflow

- Efficiently transition from Amazon Redshift to a more cost-effective and functional platform

The Benefits

- Established modern data platform built for scalability and growth

- Customer-centric approach to data management, focusing on value for the end-user

- Lean, agile operating environment fueled by fast reporting and real-time data access

- Improved analytics fuel complex supply chain decisions and protect cost structures

> *Data transformation creates impact companywide, but particularly for our customers. We're making smarter marketing decisions based on real-time insight that improves the customer experience, but also empowers our best partnerships and customer offerings.*
>
> **– Chris Tambos, Chief Data Officer, Chef'd**

The Client

Chef'd is a meal kit company like no other – with thousands of options and flexible, subscription-free ordering that keeps control in the hands of the consumer. Partnered with world-famous chefs, culinary influencers, and nationally-recognized brands such as Betty Crocker and Coca-Cola, Chef'd offers delicious meals that feature seasonal ingredients and lifestyle preferences such as gluten-free, vegetarian, quick and easy, family friendly, and much more. Delivering fresh, pre-portioned ingredients to help users discover better eating that fits their unique lifestyle, the company's mission is to change the meal kit landscape one plate at a time.

The Challenge

With steady and significant growth based on orders coming into its website as well as its mobile app, Chef'd saw a corresponding increase in its data requirements. More customers, a greater number of partnerships, and a broad spectrum of vendors drove data expansion, along with integration with other retailers' Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) vendor ordering systems. Organic growth in the firm's scope of data and integrated platforms, coupled with a wealth of data in its own cloud-based ERP system, created challenges in achieving a holistic view of customer behavior and operational data.

The firm needed to access and understand clickstream data in real-time, gaining more insight into the choices customers make while browsing the site. What partnerships most appealed to customers, and what products and services did they interact with and purchase? Greater understanding here would help the company refine partnerships, targeted ads, and user recommendations, ultimately powering more personalized value for end-users. In addition, improved accessibility to real-time data would accelerate company analytics used to determine cost structures and accurate projections – critical in the perishable food industry. Factors such as vendor relationships, ingredient choices and shelf life, costs of goods sold, shipping commitments, and more, needed to be evaluated quickly and easily to assure the most productive and profitable offerings.

"Of the thousands of ingredients we inventory, which ones should we reorder today to fill demand, and in what quantity? Should we portion garlic internally at our packaging plant or buy it from a supplier already portioned in a two-clove package? Chef'd faces these types of questions every day. We wanted to use data to look at 'what if' scenarios and draw conclusions that could save us time and money," says Chris Tambos, Chief Data Officer at Chef'd.

Each of these elements was further complicated by the organization's key differentiator – its subscription-free meal kits. "Because we're dealing with fresh ingredients that can spoil, it saves our company money when inventory and purchasing decisions can be fine-tuned with better intelligence from this platform," added Tambos. The firm's complexity of supply chain and overall operations required a scalable, enterprise-class data warehouse and processing solution, designed to support real-time data insight and analytics.

> ❝ *Managing data effectively is critical in any business; however the perishable nature of our services demands even more attention to proper data techniques and strategies. Perfecting a data architecture is an investment in operational efficiency for long-term growth and always evolving data requirements.* ❞
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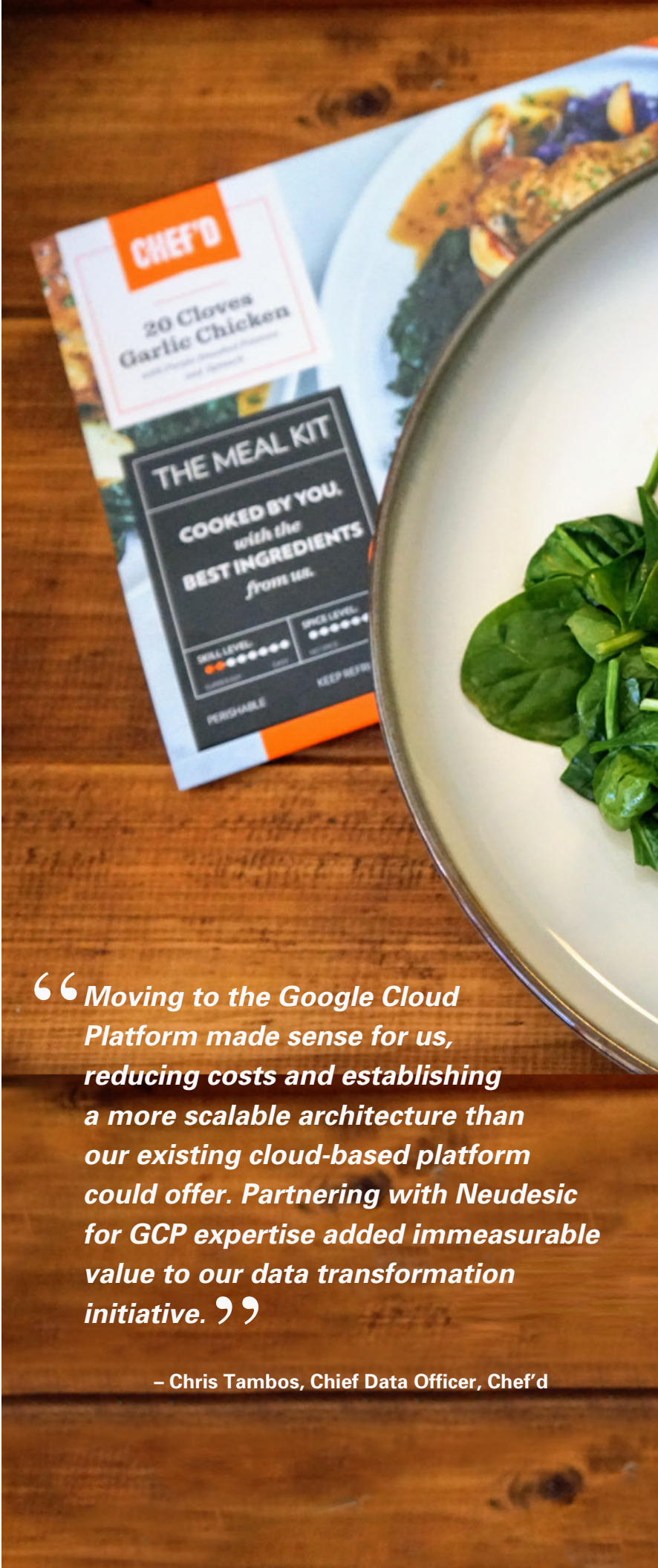> **– Chris Tambos, Chief Data Officer, Chef'd**

The Solution

The IT team at Chef'd was engaged from the outset, but didn't have the resources or development expertise to re-architect the company's platform from the ground up. A referral from Google Cloud Platform pointed Chef'd to Neudesic, a Premier Google Cloud Solutions and Services Partner that could help them explore their options for modernization. Neudesic's team of data engineers and cloud architect-certified professionals demonstrated that moving systems to Google Cloud Platform (GCP) would provide a better customer experience, streamline operations, and reduce costs. This was a departure from the firm's existing architecture, with its data warehouse built on Amazon Redshift.

> " *Reducing costs is just one of key advantage, as Chef'd anticipates tremendous growth potential on the new GCP platform.* "
>
> **– Chris Tambos, Chief Data Officer, Chef'd**

Capitalizing on GCP's flexible family of cloud-based services, Neudesic incorporated tools such as BigQuery and Dataflow to anchor a modern data platform design. BigQuery, for example, was instrumental in enabling a more efficient and scalable data warehouse. Data was micro-batched into BigQuery as a single source represented through the entire enterprise data warehouse – this eliminated a laborious reporting process that previously required Excel data transfers from a range of various source systems. Data could now be viewed in near real-time, dramatically improving company operations and the ability to make hour-to-hour decisions. Dataflow was used to transform and enrich clickstream data, helping improve predictive analytics and enable real-time personalization.

> " *Moving to the Google Cloud Platform made sense for us, reducing costs and establishing a more scalable architecture than our existing cloud-based platform could offer. Partnering with Neudesic for GCP expertise added immeasurable value to our data transformation initiative.* "
>
> **– Chris Tambos, Chief Data Officer, Chef'd**

The Benefits

Working in partnership with Neudesic, the team at Chef'd modernized its data platform for long-term scalability. Reporting is fast and based on real-time data, optimized through a single source. Instead of handling a slow and arduous reporting process, data managers are more efficient and spend time analyzing rather than collecting data.

Data from disparate sources is automatically gathered and normalized for deeper and more intelligent business analytics. For example, GCP's natural language technology plays an important role in parsing the unstructured ingredients data from hundreds of thousands of recipes, and creating standardized ingredients, or SKUS, using specific food items and portion sizes. This data is used to analyze trends and calibrate ingredient inventory levels at the Chef'd warehouse.

Insight into customer behavior allows the firm to deliver more targeted advertising and marketing, resulting in a better user experience for customers. Internal operations benefit as well, with better insights into organizational data driving greater efficiency and reducing costs of human capital.

Better data is poised to help Chef'd grow, with GCP resources creating a lean, agile operating environment. Using the right tools and team, and recommending strategies and deploying technologies designed for fast results, Neudesic helped Chef'd architect a new company vision fueled by what the firm's data could tell them. Intuitive, effective, and scalable, the GCP platform at Chef'd has solved long-term operational challenges and transitioned a team of data gatherers into powerful data users.

> " *Neudesic brought an ideal team to the table for our needs. They worked closely with us to keep the project moving, incorporating strategic thinking that demonstrated a strong understanding of our needs and challenges.* "
>
> **– Chris Tambos, Chief Data Officer, Chef'd**

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