**crunchtime**

# Tacala Companies improves audit scores and ops excellence with Zenput

Tacala Companies, a leading Taco Bell franchisee since 1989, uses Zenput to replace pen and paper processes, record data with integrity, and ensure safety and quality throughout their 350+ stores in the Southeast region of the U.S.

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| Quick Service | 350+ Locations | U.S., Southeast | Ops Execution |

**TACALA COMPANIES**

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## 10s of thousands
of dollars saved with elimination of paper

## 5%
Reduction in task management time

## 6%
Improvement in brand audit scores

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# Challenge

### Lack of data integrity, visibility, and accountability

Tacala Companies was using a variety of pen and paper methods to carry out daily operational activities and food safety review checklists across their Taco Bell stores. The leaders at Tacala Companies, including Ken Guardino, Ops Services Director, found that the manual process of recording and sharing data led to inefficient and inaccurate results.

Management didn't have clear visibility into how each store's checklists were being filled out and recognized the associated risk and opportunity for improvement. To get ahead of potential guest and food safety issues, the team set out in 2019 to find a technology partner that would help them:

- Execute operations with ease
- Make data-informed decisions with integrity
- Foster accountability throughout the entire team

# Solution



> ## "The biggest cost reduction was the elimination of the booklets that housed all of our paper checklists."
>
> **Ken Guardino**
> Ops Services Director, Tacala Companies

## Replaced pen and paper processes with digital operations platform

Once Tacala Companies found Zenput, the Taco Bell franchisee was eager to test out the platform in 30 stores to replace its pen and paper processes. To garner buy-in from its stores that piloted Zenput, Guardino noted, "We really went down the path of explaining to [the stores] why we were doing this, helping them understand that while paper and pencil worked for decades, technology is here in a way that will help you as a manager, as a person that's in charge of leading your team, to serve your customers and your team members… it will allow you to be more efficient in what you do and hold yourself and others accountable."

The stores that tested Zenput adopted the platform very quickly and positively, and soon, Zenput was rolled out in phases by region to all of the remaining stores. As the stores developed trust in using the system, Tacala Companies began to use Zenput in many additional areas of the business beyond operations, including, but not limited to:

- Visit plans for above-store leaders and area coaches
- Executing brand SOPs like food safety checklists
- Conducting audits

In addition to using Zenput's projects and forms, Tacala Companies takes it a step further by utilizing bluetooth thermometers integrated with Zenput on their tablets. Using this kind of technology allows the franchisee's teams to keep an automated and close tab on their food safety and eliminates the possibility of human error in temperature readouts. Zenput's Temp Monitoring also enables operators to receive instant alerts and corrective actions when food or equipment levels go out of range, so teams can react quickly and get ahead of any potential food safety incidents. "As time went on, we kept getting better and better at the execution of our food safety review checklist at the store level," Guardino says.

# Results

## Cost savings, reduction in task management time, and improvement in brand audit scores

Tacala Companies saw outstanding improvements in both cost and time savings as well as data integrity with Zenput. "The biggest cost reduction was the elimination of the booklets that housed all of our paper checklists… we're actually saving tens of thousands of dollars within our organization," says Guardino.

The Taco Bell franchisee also achieved a 5% reduction in task management time by utilizing Zenput's projects and forms functionality. With their time freed up, Tacala Companies' managers can focus more on providing an exceptional guest experience and ensure the delivery of "safe food with kind service," Guardino notes.

Since Tacala Companies started leveraging Zenput, they've been able to achieve a lofty 6% improvement in brand audit scores since 2020, making the franchisee's owners extremely pleased. Guardino attributes a large part of that success to how their teams leverage Zenput during area coach visits. "They arrive
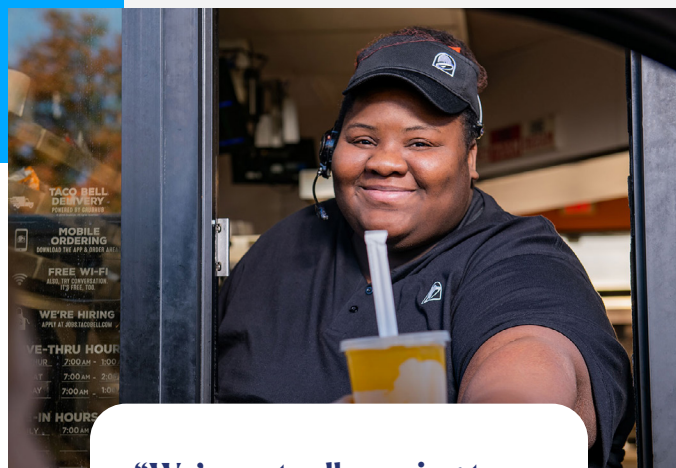
> **"With their time freed up, Tacala Companies' managers can focus more on providing an exceptional guest experience and ensure the delivery of 'safe food with kind service.'"**



> **"We're actually saving tens of thousands of dollars within our organization."**

in a restaurant, utilize Zenput to record their visit from a customer perspective, talk to team members, then they continue on with their teaching," Guardino asserts. "Our area coaches love that. It keeps them focused, engaged with their managers and their team members while having fun at the same time teaching others."

Taco Bell Corporate was quick to notice Tacala Companies' success using the operations execution tool—so much so that Zenput has been adopted by 6,800+ corporate and franchised Taco Bell stores as of 2023. Tacala Companies has also received recognition as a finalist in Crunchtime's inaugural Ops Excellence Awards in 2023, painting a bright future of operational excellence for Tacala Companies and other Taco Bell groups. Guardino shares, "Being an Ops Excellence Award finalist demonstrates the commitment and dedication of our Tacala team to utilize Zenput to improve ops and allow us to share our success with others."