

5 Low-code Use Cases in CPG: Replacing Sweat Equity with Tech Equity

Table of Contents

03	The Changing Landscape
04	Easing Into the Low-code Revolution
05	Understanding the Muscle Behind Low-code
07	Empowering Employees
09	Powerful Use Cases in CPG
09	Enhanced Experiences Through Automation
11	Collaborative Franchise Management
12	Bullet-proof Return Process
13	Transparent Order Entry
15	Efficient Employee Onboarding
16	Get the Right Advice
17	Check It Out!
18	Hitachi Solutions: An Expert Data Partner

The Changing Landscape

As organizations navigate digital transformation, there is incredible **pressure and opportunity** at the intersection of retail and technology. Customer expectations for an easy, seamless customer experience continue to spiral upward, and if that experience is poor, they'll leave a brand without hesitation.

At the same time, IT teams face intense scrutiny from the business to deliver the tools and technologies that allow employees to provide that state-of-the-art experience. But it's difficult – traditional development methods don't lend themselves to agile, fast, and economical ways of work.

This is why **low-code development** and platforms like **Microsoft Power Platform** are gaining popularity and taking center stage. Low code allows employees with little to no development experience to create solutions quickly and easily. It can be the answer to improving customer experience and empowering employees at the same time. Furthermore, IT teams love low code



In uncertain economic times, a **low-code platform** is a key catalyst to enable retailers to continually adapt and respond to the changing landscape and create new retail capabilities, while keeping IT teams working on critical tasks and projects.

because it allows them to better support changing business needs while minimizing costs and development resources.

In Microsoft's 2022 Low-Code Trend Report, more than 80 percent of business decision makers surveyed said low-code tools have empowered them to be self-sufficient when completing tasks that previously would have required a team of developers. And nearly half (46 percent) strongly agreed that low-code tools have allowed employees to play a more direct role in the organization's digital transformation efforts.



The challenges

- Brands need easy to use, simple, but custom software
- Demand for apps is outpacing IT delivery capacity
- Waning pro developer resources are creating a need for business users to deliver apps
- Off-the-shelf software can be expensive, and may not contain what businesses need

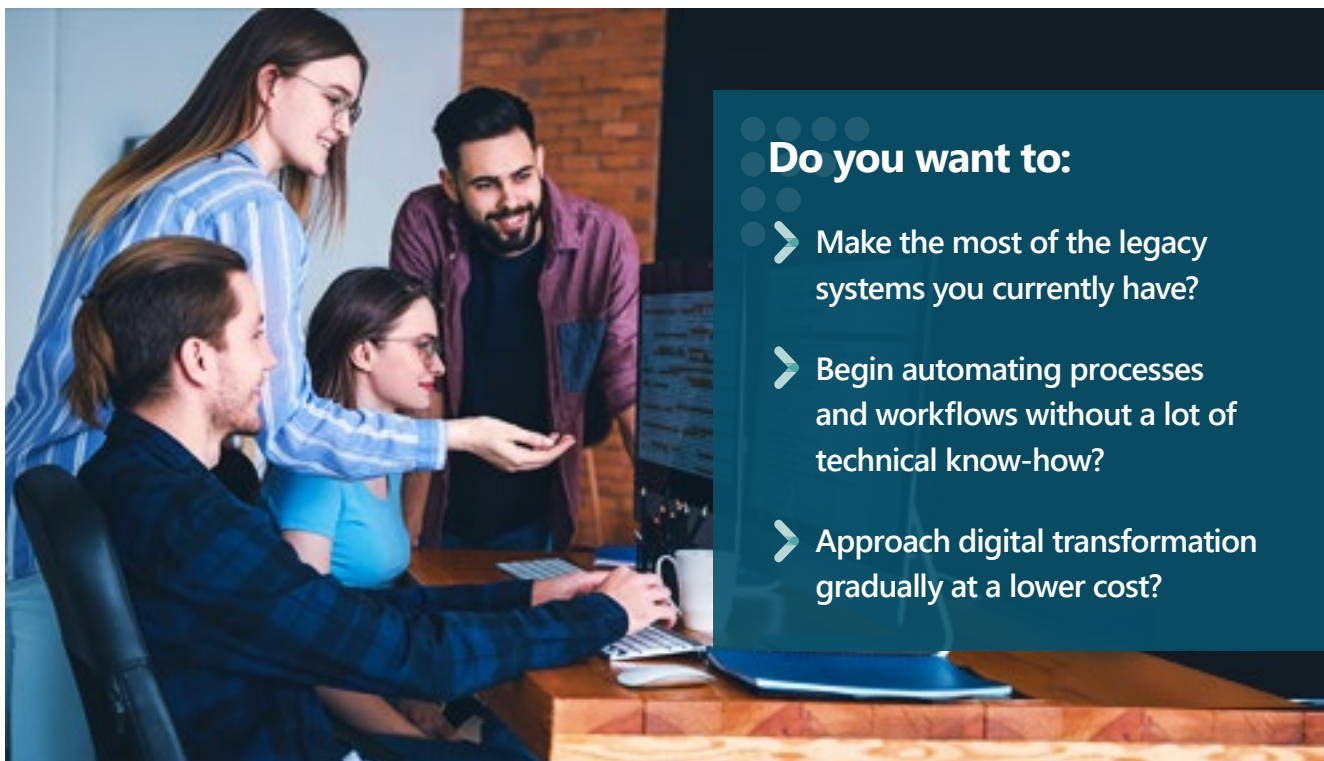
Easing Into the Low-code Revolution

Most brands realize they need to embrace technology to deliver next-level customer experiences, and for some that involves upgrading legacy systems. But many companies need to make the most out of the technology they have. Power Platform is different, and can be the perfect catalyst to build small, process-driven solutions that connect to the core ERP you already have.

If you use Microsoft [Dynamics 365](#) or another ERP solution, [Power Apps](#) and

[Power Automate](#) (two of the foundational tools that make up Power Platform) are how you can tailor and extend those systems to meet your current needs.

For example, suppose you'd like to add functionality to an existing Oracle or SAP-based custom application. Rather than modifying the legacy system directly, you can use Power Apps and Power Automate to build new capabilities around what already exists — such as mobile access.



Do you want to:

- Make the most of the legacy systems you currently have?
- Begin automating processes and workflows without a lot of technical know-how?
- Approach digital transformation gradually at a lower cost?

party applications through a graphical user interface (UI). Whereas traditional development might require writing lines and lines of code for each new element, with low-code tools, the process instead resembles building a flowchart. Application makers drag and drop core elements— workflow, UI components, data connectors, and more — to create independent bots, automations and applications that connect to larger systems.

On average, 41 percent of employees outside of IT customize or build data or technology solutions using low-code tools, according to [Gartner, Inc.](#) The firm also predicts that percentage will increase to more than 50 percent by year-end 2025.

The low-code approach pays off in three big ways:



It's fast. With the right platform, development can be 10 times faster than traditional approaches. Iterative development and rapid feedback enable easy, consistent collaboration between business and IT departments.



It's powerful. When a low-code platform includes complete automation capabilities, applications can easily integrate into core business systems. The most powerful platforms have native mobile deployment, so developers can create them once and deploy everywhere. Any application built on the platform will be a native mobile app with no extra effort, coding, or resources.



It's easy to maintain. Applications built with low code require far less maintenance and allow for easier updates. Because the vendor keeps the platform up to date with the latest security and device standards, those updates are automatically passed on to the applications using the platform.



Everyone contributes to low-code solutions:

- Business users can participate directly in the development process, speeding up time to results for experimenting, testing, and deploying new solutions
- Professional coders can handle the more technical aspects, such as data integration, custom UI controls, and managing source controls and app lifecycles
- CIOs and IT teams can secure and govern the whole process by granting access to resources and capabilities, and by nurturing a collaborative community of innovation

Empowering Employees

The people closest to the customers and a company's business issues often have the best insights into how to improve the day-to-day customer experience. And they are commonly frustrated by not having the tools they need to do their best. This includes everything from having to use ad-hoc paper-based processes for administrative functions to not having the right information about a customer when they need it.

Take stock of how employees feel about the processes and digital productivity tools they use today and consider what they need to succeed in the future. If companies can help employees get more time back

to support customers, or shave time off administrative processes and tasks, then they're moving in the right direction.

Ask yourself:

- Do employees feel empowered by the tools they currently have?
- Are they equipped to collaborate effectively?
- Can new technology like low-code and no-code tools help solve their challenges?
- Do employees have the tools they need to remove friction from the customer experience?

“

“If you remove all agency from people, if they can't contribute, if they can't make any decisions, it can be really discouraging.”

”

Nicole Forsgren, partner at Microsoft Research



Close Digital Gaps

Brands are using low code to close the digital gaps currently filled by paper-based processes. Digitizing information and operations through low code can provide a single version of the truth for both online and in-store operations.



Improve Customer Engagement

Customer Engagement begins with knowing the customer. Low code can help put relevant information in the hands of the employees who work directly with customers to improve their experiences and increase satisfaction.



Customize Efficiency

The people closest to the customer usually know best how to improve a process. Using low code, employees can become citizen coders and/or work with IT to build the applications they need to connect with customers more efficiently and productively.

Powerful Use Cases in CPG

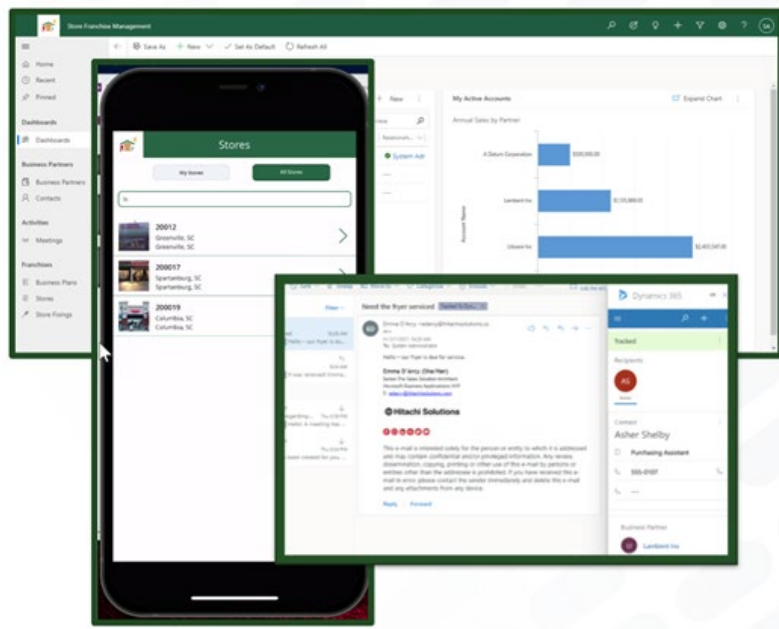
1 Enhanced experiences through automation

A simple low-code solution can take paper processes to the digital sphere, creating better experiences by standardizing operations, supplying consistent data, and providing transparency for quick issue resolution.

Hitachi Solutions deployed such a solution for a national brand that included versatile checklists that allow team members to complete routine tasks in the stores, upload photos, and report

and track issues through to completion, all using a mobile or tablet device.

Task data is stored in a central database for easy reporting through a Power BI dashboard and runs from Microsoft Teams to optimize collaboration between employees at all levels — from front-line workers to regional store managers who may need to approve a task.



Hitachi Solutions' low-code inspection solution

The quest for increased automation is driven largely by shifting customer expectations and a nonstop search for efficiency. Robotic Process Automation (RPA) through Microsoft Power Automate is another tool that enables a human process or task to be recorded or programmed into a software script. The script mimics the human interaction within the application's user interface.

With RPA, automation at scale is available to everyone— from information workers to super users to pro developers. Programming skills aren't required to configure an RPA bot. And because it's code-free technology, any non-technical person can set up the bot using drag and drop features through a GUI (graphical user interface) and intuitive wizards.

At Hitachi Solutions, we recently worked with a major brand to create 80 sophisticated bots to replace its legacy RPA system. In three months, we were able to streamline processes and maximize efficiency, even reducing the amount of time it takes to complete processing from hours to just minutes. In addition to updated systems and processes, the company now has an automation system that is reliable and future-proof.

The company's employees were trained in how RPA works, and they can now easily create bots for routine tasks, allowing them to focus on work that requires emotional intelligence, reasoning, judgement, and customer interaction.

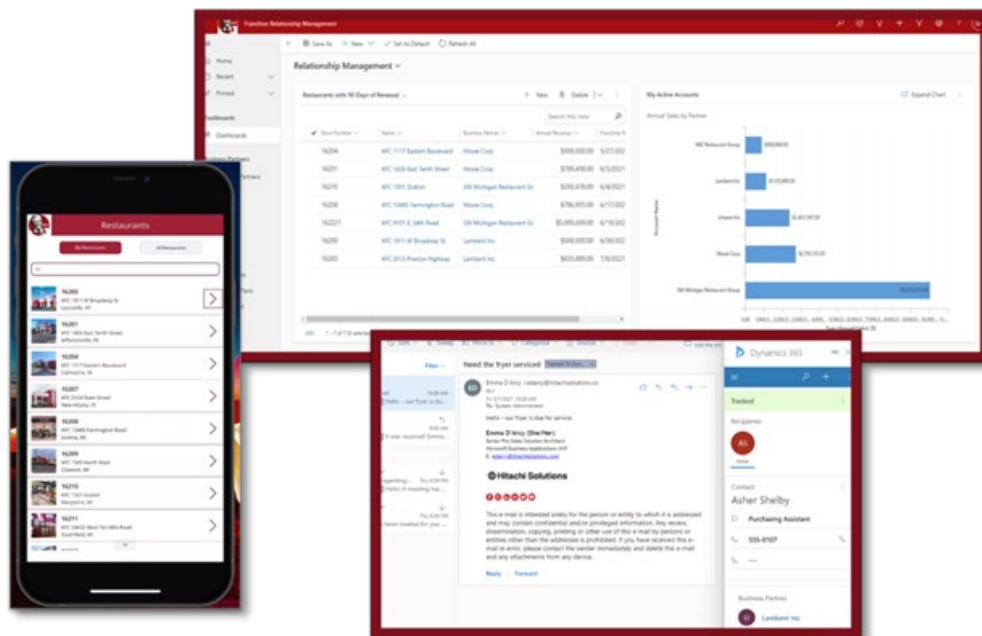
2 Collaborative Franchise Management

It's important to franchisors that their franchisees prosper because their success reflects upon the brand. But franchisees can't do it without transparent, two-way communication. Our franchisor, a large retail customer, was struggling with communications, brand management, and product marketing. The company needed a mobile solution for easy collaboration, management, and clear insights into franchisee operations.

Hitachi Solutions implemented a low-code, self-service portal that allows franchisees and franchisors to communicate efficiently and transparently, keeping track of their needs all in

one central location. The portal makes it easy for franchisors to securely share information including guidelines, branding, marketing materials and legal agreements, and expirations and assets.

Franchisees can update their information and submit required documentation and photos easily. With the new tools, franchisees can better represent the brand and deliver better service, while franchisors can have the insight they need to help franchisees deliver more compelling offers to customers, as well as ensure consistency between store locations.



Hitachi Solutions' franchise management solution

3 Bullet-proof Return Process

Hitachi Solutions helped a leading manufacturer/brand modernize an antiquated product return process, where hundreds of agents were struggling to navigate between multiple, disparate systems. They also had to create multiple records to process a return, including copy/pasting inbound and outbound codes without any system validation. The process was time consuming, leading to high error volume and frustrating customer delays.

Hitachi Solutions' answer was a streamlined low-code solution using automated workflows. Agents can now complete a transaction while capturing and verifying data in multiple back-end systems, including CRM and the company's on-record ERP. Users are guided through the process, automatically verifying the customer information, creating the interaction, and retrieving details for service types and codes. Transaction-time processing and error volume

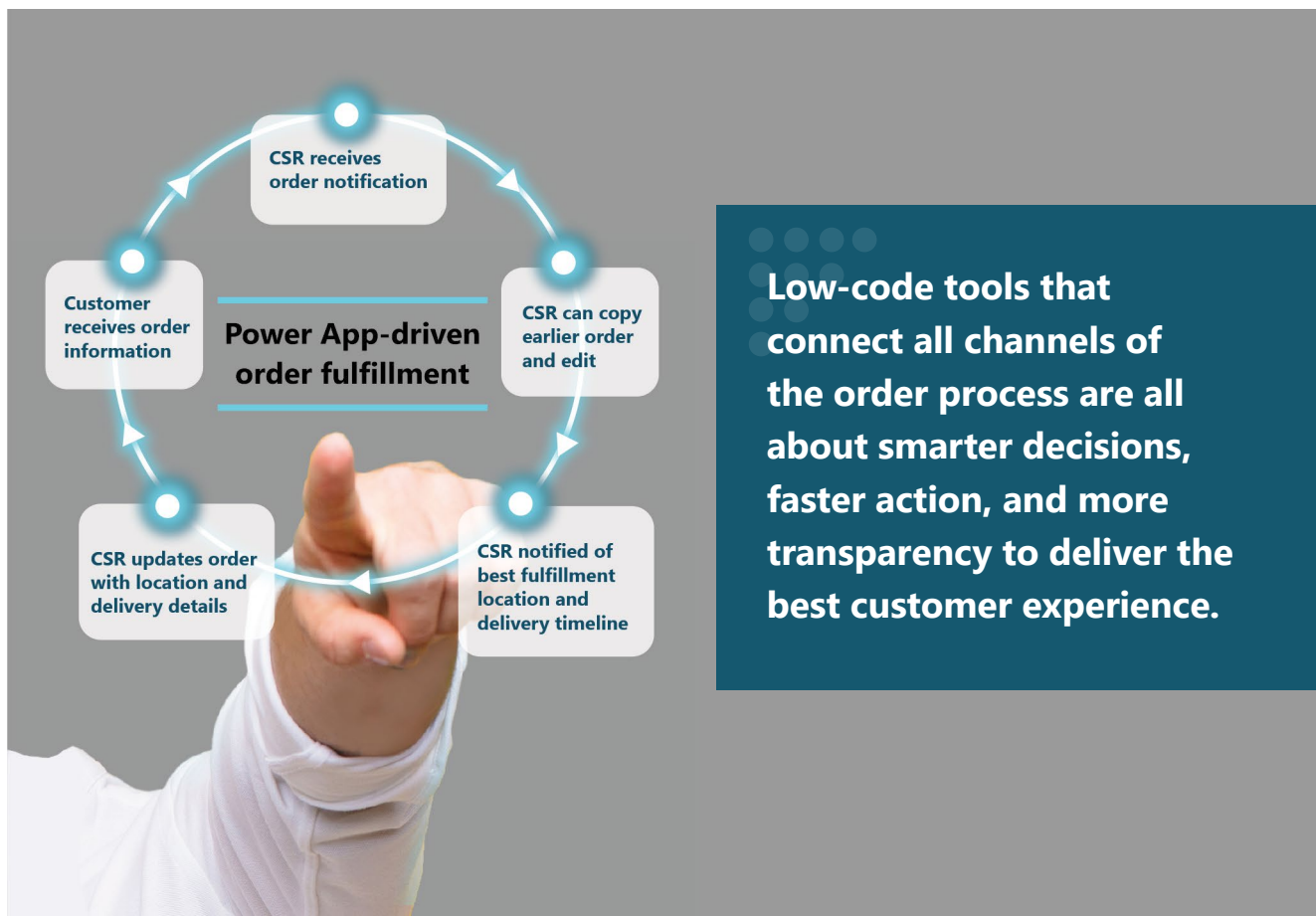


4 Transparent Order Entry

A distributor with multiple production facilities needed to standardize and improve its customer sales experience, so customer service representatives (CSRs) could receive product updates and provide delivery forecasts more consistently and accurately. With different product groups working independently, the company asked for an easy-to-use solution that provided an omnichannel connection to its CRM system and order management systems.

We developed a low-code solution that integrates with the customer's order management system, which, in turn, suggests

the best production facility to fulfill the order based on manufacturing specifications, margin, location, shipping schedules, and time to deliver. CSRs also have access to the CRM system to copy earlier orders and edit for reorder, improving accuracy and accelerating the data entry process. By connecting the fulfillment solution with the sales channels, CSRs and customers are in the loop saving valuable time, while reducing internal stressors, delays, and mistakes.



“

Only 36 percent of frontline workers think they have the technology tools they need to be more productive and helpful in delivering a superior customer experience.

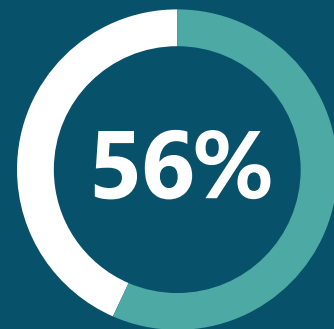
”

Forbes

Frontline workers spend most of their time at work using technology. But the tech they use often doesn't support their needs.



were unsatisfied with tech provided by employers



had to use personal technology at work

The state of frontline work experience 2021 GOOGLE WORKSPACE

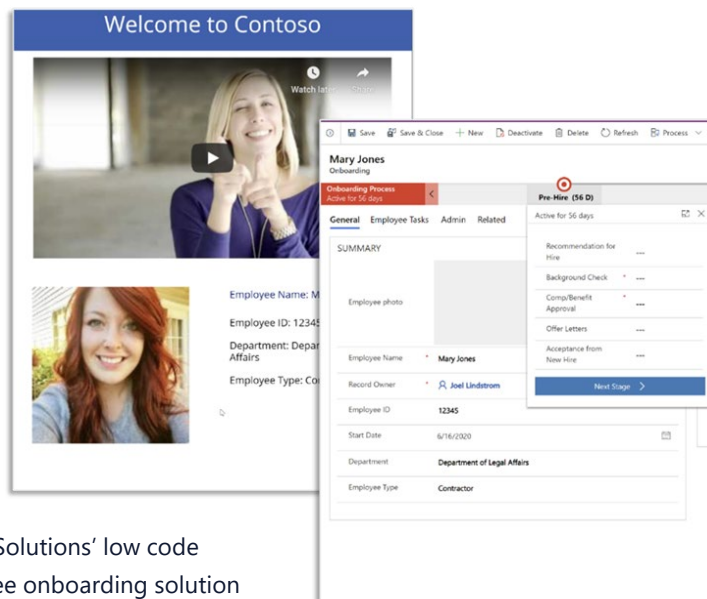
5 Efficient Employee Onboarding

In many organizations, onboarding new employees can be a complicated, paper-driven and laborious process. Multiple departments are typically involved, leading to missed steps and other delays that leave new employees waiting days for information, equipment, training, and so on. This often means new employees develop a poor impression of their new employer.

Hitachi Solutions recently worked with a large retailer struggling with a manual onboarding process that provided little to no visibility into the status of new hires. The firm needed to digitize and streamline the process, providing

checkpoints for internal approvals and validations throughout the process.

Through low code, Hitachi Solutions created an immersive, process-based experience for hiring managers and a simple task-focused experience for new employees. The solution supports multiple functions, including recruitment, position submissions, and onboarding and offboarding. Using Power Platform's low-code tools based on Azure, the system is secure and robust, allowing access only to those who need to provide input or approval.



Hitachi Solutions' low code employee onboarding solution



In a recent study by [SHRM](#), 69 percent of employees said they are more likely to stay working with a company for three years or more if they experienced a good onboarding experience.

Get the Right Advice

Low code can't solve all your problems, but it can help with many. If you can help an employee regain time to support customers, or shave hours off administrative processes and tasks, you're moving in the right direction.

Power Platform's low-code approach to solution delivery has enabled thousands of organizations around the world to use technology to transform their business, allowing more makers than ever to create applications and use mobile platforms to adopt new ways of working.

Although it's certainly possible to implement low-code solutions on your own, it's far better to work with a partner that has a proven track record of successful implementations. [Hitachi Solutions](#) can leverage its long-standing expertise to help you determine which of your existing processes are prime for low code, define incremental goals, establish metrics, and proactively identify potential risks. And we do it with an **unrivalled commitment to quality** and your success.

“

Hitachi Solutions is industry focused, and we help our customers focus on application innovation to leverage affordable and achievable business outcomes. The Power Platform sits at the nexus of all that.

”

Hitachi Solutions' Senior Power Platform Director

Check It Out!

Take a look at the following opportunities to learn more about low code and how to leverage it to modernize your retail business, empower your employees, improve the customer experience, and boost profitability. Then [contact us](#) and we'll get started today.

- [Power Platform Governance](#)
- [Power Apps Maker Assessment](#)
- [Digital Factory Assessment](#)



Hitachi Solutions: An Expert Data Partner

A Microsoft global systems integrator 3,500+ strong. We have been developing and delivering Microsoft-based, industry-focused business transformation solutions to customers for nearly two decades.

Through advisory services, industry and technology expertise, and implementation excellence, our skilled professionals support and accelerate our customers' data and business system modernization initiatives, end-to-end. Embracing people, processes, applications, and technologies, our number one goal is to drive outcome-based value throughout the organization and help customers achieve sustainable ROI.

Reach out today!



global.hitachi-solutions.com