

B2B · DISTRIBUTION · ENTERPRISE

Darbar Foods.

How Chimera Marketing replaced 200+ operations staff with a custom-built distribution platform — saving the largest ethnic food distributor on the US West Coast more than half a million dollars in monthly wages, while serving 695 retailers across 8,000+ product SKUs.

01 — THE CHALLENGE

An enterprise distribution business *run entirely by hand.*

Darbar Foods has, since 2002, served as the largest distributor of ethnic and South Asian food products on the United States West Coast — supplying mainstream retailers, supermarket chains, restaurants, and independent grocers from a base in Ontario, California. By the time Chimera was engaged, the business had grown into a serious operation with hundreds of active accounts, thousands of products, and tens of millions of dollars in annual flow. But the way that business actually ran had not changed in nearly two decades.

Every order placed by every retailer was processed by a human being. Stock checks were done by phone. Invoices were typed manually. Payments were chased one call at a time. To keep pace with the volume, Darbar had hired **more than 200 individuals** spread across cities and states — each one a manual handler in a chain that had no automation at any link. Their website was effectively empty: a placeholder with no catalog, no ordering, no customer accounts, no visibility into anything. The wage bill alone was running well above **\$500,000 every month**, and growing.

"The business worked. But it worked because of brute force — hundreds of people doing manually what software should have been doing automatically. That kind of operation is expensive, fragile, and impossible to scale."

THE CORE PROBLEMS

- **200+ operations staff handling every transaction manually.** Orders, invoices, payment chasing, inventory reconciliation — every action required a human touch, every day.
- **\$500,000+ per month in wages** just to sustain that manual operation. Hiring more people did not solve the problem; it deepened it.
- **No retailer self-service.** 695 active customers had no way to browse the catalog, place an order, check stock, or even see their own outstanding invoices without picking up a phone.
- **No visibility for leadership.** Without a digital system, Darbar's own team had no real-time view of sales, payables, receivables, or product performance. The business ran on memory and spreadsheets.

THE OPERATIONAL SHIFT — FROM 200+ MANUAL ROLES TO A SELF-SERVE PLATFORM

BEFORE — MANUAL OPERATION

200+
OPERATIONS STAFF

- Order intake (by phone & email)
- Manual stock checks
- Invoice generation
- Payment chasing
- Retailer account management
- Reporting (manual spreadsheets)

\$500,000+ / MONTH IN WAGES

CHIMERA
→
REBUILD

AFTER — AUTOMATED PLATFORM

6
SYSTEM ADMINISTRATORS

- Self-serve retailer ordering
- Real-time inventory visibility
- Automated invoicing & billing
- Automated A/P & A/R tracking
- 695 retailers managing own accounts
- Live executive dashboards

97% HEADCOUNT REDUCTION · \$500K/MONTH SAVED

02 — THE SOLUTION

A unified platform.

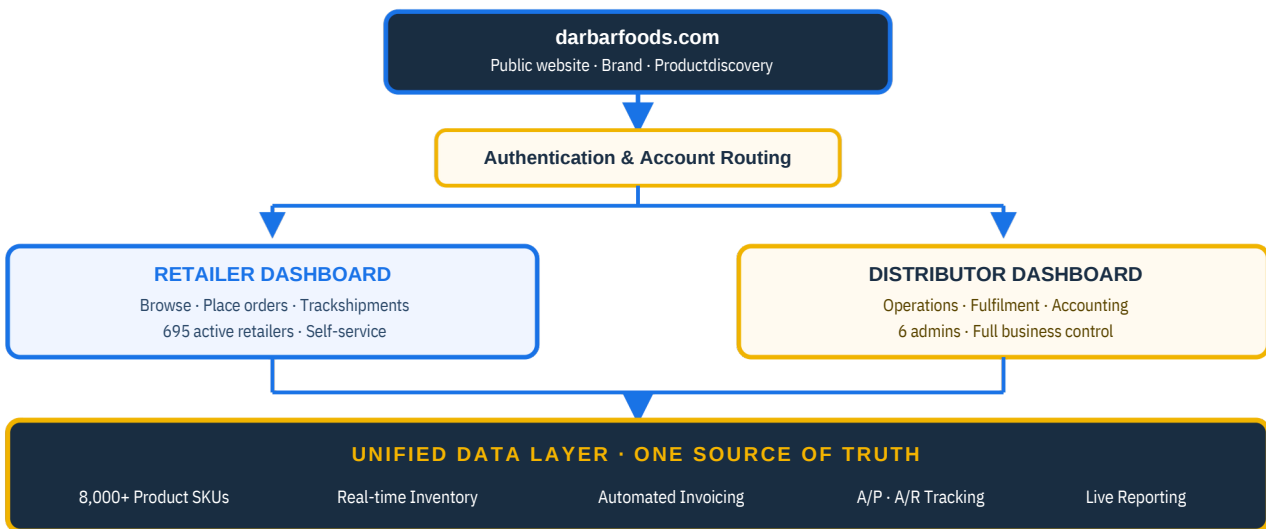
Two dashboards. One source of truth.

Chimera did not propose to fix the existing operation. The existing operation was the problem. What we proposed instead was to **rebuild Darbar's entire commercial infrastructure from scratch** — a single integrated platform with a complete product catalog, dual self-serve dashboards (one for retailers, one for distributors), automated billing and accounting, and a real-time view of every transaction flowing through the business.

The architectural decision that made this work was the **dual-dashboard model**. Retailers needed a clean, simple ordering interface — they did not need to see internal accounting. Distributors and Darbar's own team needed a powerful operations interface — they did not want their views cluttered with consumer-facing UX. By splitting the platform into two purpose-built dashboards on a shared data layer, both audiences got exactly what they needed without compromise.

"You cannot solve a business problem by adding more people to it. The only way out of a manual operation is to make the operation itself unnecessary — and that requires building software that customers actually want to use."

THE PLATFORM ARCHITECTURE — WHAT WE BUILT



03 — THE STRATEGY

Sequence over speed. *Foundation first.*

The temptation in a project this large is to build everything at once. Chimera chose the opposite. The platform was sequenced deliberately, in three distinct phases, because **each phase had to support the next**. There was no point building dashboards before the product catalog existed; no point building accounting before retailers were ordering through the system; no point loading 8,000 products into a system nobody had access to yet.

The first phase was the **foundation**: brand, public website, and the unified product catalog with 8,000+ SKUs — each assigned its own unique identifier so that downstream systems would have a consistent reference for every item Darbar handled. The second phase was the **customer-facing layer**: the retailer dashboard, account creation, ordering workflows, and the gradual onboarding of 695 active retailer accounts. The third phase was the **operations layer**: the distributor-side dashboard, accounting integration, automated invoicing, A/P and A/R tracking, and the executive reporting that gave Darbar's leadership real-time visibility for the first time in the company's history.

"We could have built a flashy launch in three months. Instead, we built something that would still be running the business in ten years. That meant doing the unglamorous work — naming every product, mapping every workflow, validating every account — before we shipped anything user-facing."

THE THREE-PHASE BUILD

- **Phase 1 — Foundation.** Brand identity, public website, full product catalog of 8,000+ SKUs with unique IDs, category architecture, and search infrastructure. Nothing customer-facing went live until the catalog was complete.
- **Phase 2 — Customer Layer.** Retailer dashboard built, accounts onboarded in phased batches, ordering workflows tested with real customers, payment terms migrated from manual to automated billing.
- **Phase 3 — Operations Layer.** Distributor dashboard, internal accounting integration, A/P and A/R automation, executive reporting and KPI dashboards, and the staged decommissioning of manual workflows.

Throughout every phase, Chimera operated as the embedded technology and operations partner — not as a vendor delivering software, but as the team responsible for the operational shift itself. As each piece of the platform came online, equivalent manual functions were retired in step. The headcount reduction was not a sudden cut; it was the natural consequence of an operation finally working the way it should have always worked.

04 — THE RESULTS

200+ staff replaced. \$500,000 saved every month.

\$500K
SAVINGS

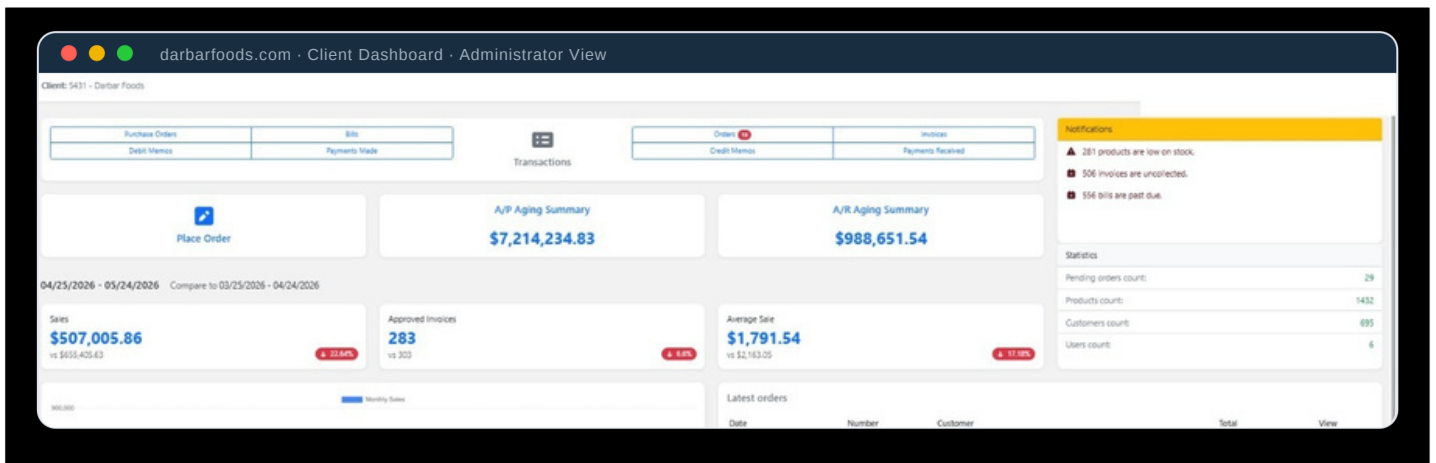
97%
REDUCTION

695
RETAILERS
SELF-SERVING

8,000+
LIVE

The platform now runs the business. The 200+ person operations team has been replaced by **six system administrators**, supervising a platform that processes the same — and growing — volume of distribution traffic automatically. The \$500,000+ monthly wage bill that sustained the old manual operation has been eliminated outright. The platform itself does the work, twenty-four hours a day, without breaks, without errors of memory, and without the operational fragility of a human-powered chain.

The dashboard below shows the platform live: **\$7.2M in active accounts payable** tracked automatically, **\$988K in receivables** visible in real time, **\$507K in current-month sales** processing without manual intervention, and a full year of monthly performance history that Darbar's leadership now sees the moment they log in.



"This is what enterprise transformation actually looks like. Not a marketing campaign. Not a website refresh. A complete rebuild of how a business operates — and a measurable reduction in what it costs to operate."