



Transforming Workplace Food Programs Through Data-Driven Insights

By Jess Legge + Cody Legge

Advanced analytics are revolutionizing workplace catering by shifting it from a “serve and hope” model to a precise, data-informed service. In this article, we review the metrics that are pushing the industry forward and how analytics and Sifted’s evidence-based solutions are reshaping industry standards and setting a new benchmark for efficiency, personalization, and sustainability.



The evolution of food service is as much about data as it is about taste.

“We’re in the third wave of hospitality at work. We’ve moved beyond endless options and bulk portioning to more refined, conscientious programming.”

Jess Legge, CEO and Co-founder of Sifted

“We are intent at creating food programs that emphasize quality over quantity and consider the entire lifecycle of our service. By exactly matching our offering with the specific tastes of your teams, told to us by our analytics program, we create exceptionally smart food programs,” says Jess.

As the demand for more efficient, customizable, and cost-effective catering solutions grows, data-driven insights are becoming a cornerstone of innovation in the catering industry. Sifted has developed an analytics program that goes far beyond traditional catering metrics, bringing a level of precision and adaptability previously unseen in the field. This article explores the core of our analytics program, the game-changing metrics it generates, and the ways it empowers clients to optimize their food service operations.

The Foundation of Sifted’s Analytics Program: Granular Data Collection

Our analytics program is built on one key premise: understanding exactly how much food should be prepared and how much is actually consumed. By tracking each individual dish—what we refer to as “elements” in our system—we can gather an unprecedented level of insight into food production, consumption patterns, and service dynamics.

Cody Legge, our data and analytics expert, explains the importance of this granular approach:

“Our system doesn’t just track how much food we prepare in total; it tracks how much of each element, by type, is made and then consumed. This allows us to refine every aspect of our service, from production quantities to portion sizes, ensuring we meet specific needs down to the last ounce.”





Key Metrics and Their Game-Changing Impact

One of the most groundbreaking aspects of our data-driven approach is how we track food consumption and production at a level of detail rarely seen in the industry. By doing so, we are able to leverage several pivotal metrics that bring tangible value to clients.

1) Consumption by Element

Understanding which foods are most popular across a team, and which are under-consumed, is an invaluable insight. Many catering services rely on broad assumptions about what customers like. We go beyond the generic metrics of overall food consumption to track how much of each specific dish, down to the different sauce options for that day's menu. This level of granularity allows us to fine-tune menus and recommend adjustments based on consumption data.

"Consumption by element is a critical metric because it allows us to cater to the unique preferences of each team or office. It's about more than just offering variety; it's about creating menus that are perfectly matched to the eating habits of the individuals we serve." says Jess.

2) Runout Risk Management

One of the top concerns in catering is running out of food. This can lead to dissatisfaction for the individual and the program managers, especially if it happens during important events or high-attendance days. Our data program helps mitigate this issue by accurately predicting the likelihood of a runout based on historical data and dynamic headcount adjustments.



"We don't rely on static headcounts. We calculate the risk of runouts by analyzing previous data, such as the variability in attendance and the eating patterns of different teams. If a client wants to minimize the risk of running out, we can predict exactly how much extra food to prepare, based on their preferences." explains Cody.



By adjusting for runout risk with precision, we can ensure that clients never face the embarrassment or inconvenience of under-preparing, while also avoiding the excessive food waste that typically results from over-preparing.

3) Customized Portioning

One of the unique aspects of Sifted's approach is the ability to tailor portion sizes to the specific needs of each client. Traditional catering models offer fixed portions that don't always reflect the varying appetites of different teams. With our analytics, we adjust portion sizes for each element based on past consumption data.

For example, our system can dynamically calibrate portions for a sales-heavy office that tends to gather less often, but consume higher portions when they do eat together. We can dynamically reduce starch portions in a health-conscious environment. This level of customization helps optimize the client's budget by ensuring that food is only prepared and paid for according to actual needs, not assumptions.

"By tailoring the portions to meet the specific needs of each office, we don't just provide a more personalized experience for staff but also help our clients save on unnecessary costs and truly optimize their budgets," says Jess.

4) Menu Performance Over Time

The system tracks and analyzes every detail of service for every service and then reports the long-term performance of different menus and events across all client offices. This historical data allows us to continuously refine the menu offerings, replacing underperforming dishes and improving customer satisfaction.

We've seen clients achieve greater employee satisfaction by iterating on their menu choices with the help of data-driven feedback, ensuring that food programs evolve in line with changing preferences.

The core of this system is feedback. Our platform integrates data from various touchpoints:

- **Host feedback:** Our on-site team captures over 90 data points at the time of service that specifically report the how that day's lunch went. We've spent 10 years crafting the most reliable questions to understand the success of every aspect of service including timing, portion sizes, equipment needs, and satisfaction of staff and decision makers. .
- **Eater feedback:** Surveys are so often underutilized and not an effective way to measure the performance of an entire program. Therefore we developed a more trustworthy metric of satisfaction. We monitor consumption patterns—if people eat more of one element and less of another, our system takes note.

This creates a closed-loop system where feedback informs future production, reducing waste and ensuring that each dish is prepared with greater accuracy than ever before.

The Sifted Advantage: Access to Unparalleled Data

What sets Sifted apart from traditional catering vendors is our ownership of the technology behind our analytics program. We built a proprietary system that integrates every aspect of food production, service, and consumption based on 10 years of experience and data collection.



"This gives us unparalleled flexibility and control over the data. If we identify a new data point that we need to track, we don't have to wait for an external vendor to make changes—we can build it into our system immediately. It also means clients can ask us to track new metrics. If you're curious, let's track it and see what the data say" explains Jess.

Operationalizing Analytics: Ensuring Accuracy and Efficiency

For our analytics program to work effectively, it's crucial that data is collected accurately at every stage of the process. That's why Sifted's team goes to great lengths to ensure consistency in data collection, from precise portioning in the kitchen to real-time feedback from hosts and eaters.

Cody explains, "Data collection mandatory at every level. Host surveys, chef feedback, and consumption tracking are all integral parts of our daily operations. By creating a culture where data is valued and meticulously gathered, we ensure that our analytics are both accurate and actionable."

Through this commitment to data, we eliminate the risk of human error, streamline operations, and empower clients with actionable insights that can be used to optimize their food service programs.

Conclusion: Data-Driven Catering for a New Era

By leveraging advanced analytics to understand consumption patterns, optimize portions, and predict runout risks, we're able to offer a level of service that meets clients where they are.

Our proprietary technology and data-driven approach are what set us apart in an increasingly competitive market, enabling us to create customized food programs that save our clients time, money, and stress.



About the authors

Jess Legge is the CEO and co-founder of Sifted, a company dedicated to transforming corporate catering through data-driven solutions. She is committed to using technology and analytics to optimize food production and minimize waste while ensuring employee engagement and satisfaction.



A serial entrepreneur, Sifted is the third company Jess has co-founded. Through her ventures, Jess built expertise in leading through high growth, brand transformations, and data-centered decision making.

A Purdue University graduate with a degree in Business and a minor in Art & Design, Jess blends strategic vision with creative problem-solving to scale impactful, people-centered businesses. Under Jess's leadership, Sifted has expanded its impact across multiple markets, working with some of the most innovative companies to deliver high-quality catering that meets both operational and sustainability goals.

Cody Legge is the Finance and Analytics Director at Sifted, where he leads industry-defining analytics initiatives that reshape portioning and waste management through advanced statistical modeling.



With a background in business analytics at Skyscanner, he developed pricing strategies, real-time models, and product evaluation frameworks that drove multimillion-dollar commercial outcomes. Earlier in his career at Booz Allen Hamilton, he built large-scale optimization models for the nation's largest vehicle fleet, influencing \$6B+ in acquisitions. Across roles, Cody has combined deep technical expertise with strategic insight to deliver data-driven solutions that transform business performance. He holds an MBA from Carnegie Mellon and a bachelor in mechanical engineering from Virginia Tech.