



Litehouse Foods assures performance through uncertain times

A prosperous business must run smoothly
24x7x365 — downtime is not an option

7-minute read

Litehouse has been in the business of great tasting foods since 1958. With a restaurant and a blue cheese salad dressing so good customers would bring empty jars to take some home, Ed Hawkins Sr. and his family launched an enterprise.



Over the decades since, Litehouse has become a leading producer and marketer of salad dressings, cheeses, dips, sauces, apple cider and freeze-dried herbs. It manufactures more than 130 products that are sold at leading grocery stores throughout the US and Canada.

Recently, facing ongoing growth plus the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Litehouse needed a more efficient, flexible way to ensure the performance of critical business and manufacturing applications. Its solution was automation based on [IBM® Turbonomic Application Resource Management](#) software.

In just the first 7 days,
Litehouse used Turbonomic
to perform more than

400

actions to boost performance and efficiency

Intelligent automation helps
make continuous resource
decisions to support

24x7

performance

Continuous change in the environment requires a new approach to automation



“Downtime is not tolerated,” says Ben Budge, Senior System Administrator at Litehouse. “The PLC [programmable logic controller], the recipes, the orders, shipping logistics, and the systems we use to analyze data to make the smart business decisions — it’s all got to be running smoothly 24x7x365.”

Litehouse used a third-party resource scheduling and load balancing solution

that is common in the foods industry, but it wasn’t cutting it for Budge. “It does an okay job, simple analytics. But even in a highly aggressive mode it didn’t seem to optimize in a logical fashion. It just load-balanced resources,” says Budge. “We wanted a solution that would take the burden of judgement calls off our plate.”

With its rapidly growing environment, Litehouse wanted something smarter

— a solution that could give answers to questions like:

- When do we need to provision more capacity because the cluster is running hot?
- How much?
- When do we make a purchase for additional hardware?
- When are our workloads not getting the resources they need to perform (or getting too much)?
- When and how should they be redistributed to mitigate these risks?

“Our environment is always changing, always expanding as we either buy new companies or new plants,” says Budge. “We were constantly challenged with balancing infrastructure cost and performance. That’s what led us to look for a solution that we could automate. When you grow you can leverage automation to solve a lot of problems — effectively managing resources to assure performance is one of them.”

“Turbonomic has been performing very well and has been an integral part of keeping our operations running during this pandemic. It’s nice to have the peace of mind, that we have a system that can keep our critical systems running optimally even under increased demand.”



AI automates performance assurance, reduces costs



Today, Lighthouse uses Turbonomic to intelligently and dynamically resource the company's applications. Budge and his team started by automating VM placement and soon found that, beyond simple load balancing, they could use Turbonomic to truly match demand to supply and assure performance while also consolidating workloads.

Next, Budge and his team began right-sizing VMs with Turbonomic. According to Budge: "Before we started right-sizing with Turbonomic we were in a position where we needed to purchase more RAM for a couple clusters and provision a new host to our dev cluster. With Turbonomic, we have been safely driving down our resource usage." Within the first

week, the team safely reduced existing overprovisioning while also preventing impending risks.

"We reduced our dev footprint. Now, instead of needing an additional host, we have a spare host that can be powered down and removed from dev," Budge adds. Just in the first week of using Turbonomic, the team prevented impending VM overprovisioning, memory congestion and overpriced workloads. It also reclaimed significant computing capacity:

- From production: ~350 GB memory and ~25 cores
- From DMZ/monitoring cluster: ~75 GB memory and ~10 cores
- From remote site: ~ 24 GB memory and ~12 cores per cluster

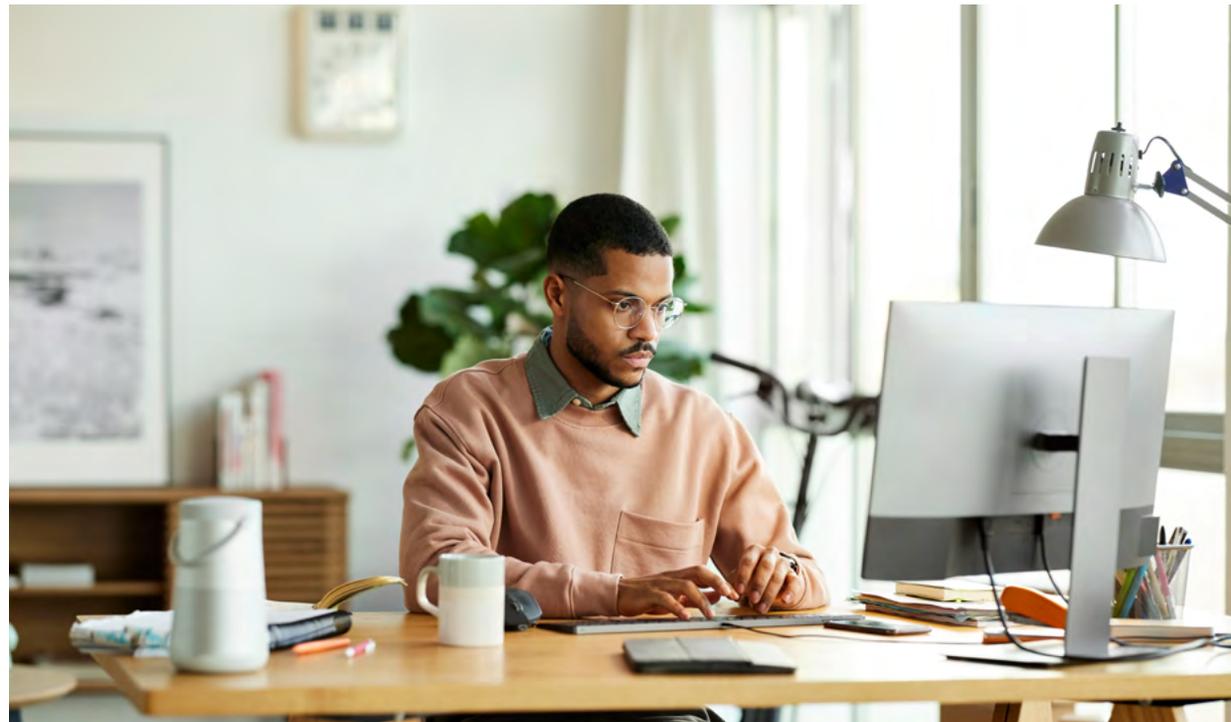
"In just the first seven days Turbo executed over 400 actions," says Budge. "Being able to know that something is there making decisions in terms of performance is great ... and not someone, something, right. It's an AI, but it's got its own personality, I guess."

Peace of mind in uncertain times

When the COVID pandemic hit, Litehouse, like the rest of the world, faced the unknown. Its various business channels saw dramatic ups and downs, and demands on the data center fluctuated even more than usual. Closed restaurants weren't ordering bottles of dressing and takeout lunch spots weren't serving salads with dressing in pouches. Demand also decreased when schools closed and other contracts shut down. But in-store purchases skyrocketed as the population flocked to grocery stores to stock up for lockdowns.

On top of fluctuations in demand, Litehouse employees had to transition to remote work. "As we all began working from home, we weren't sure what this was going to look like. What are we going to have to worry about? And it became pretty apparent, not a whole lot. That's how Turbonomic has been a part of it," says Budge. "It's been a part of our COVID strategy — being ready for anything — from the start."

Litehouse has been resilient in business and, thanks to Budge and his team, resilient in IT operations as well. Even during a pandemic, Litehouse has



continued its tradition of giving back, supporting local food banks and other community initiatives.

For Budge and his team, their diligence in using automation to assure performance and increase productivity is paying off.

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Achieving seamless business operations



With dynamic application resourcing now part of Litehouse’s day-to-day IT operations, Budge looks to integrate automation into server build processes. As his team formalizes the methods by which dev and line of business teams request resources, Turbonomic will run in the background to either validate that the infrastructure can accommodate the requests, or determine how much additional capacity must be procured.

“We want to officially commoditize compute infrastructure,” says Budge. “It’s a consumable commodity with an intrinsic dollar amount attached to the request. We need to know what that dollar amount is when we make a build, as well as, is there room to grow? Or, do we have too much capacity allocated here and not enough there? We’re looking forward to doing even more to ensure seamless business operations with Turbonomic.”



About Litehouse Foods

[Litehouse](#) (external link) produces more than 130 products — including salad dressings, dips, cheeses and freeze-dried herbs — that are sold at leading grocery stores throughout the US and Canada. Originating as a family-run business, Litehouse is now a 100% employee-owned enterprise with a focus on giving back to its communities. The company is headquartered in Sandpoint, Idaho.

Solution component

- IBM® Turbonomic Application Resource Management

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