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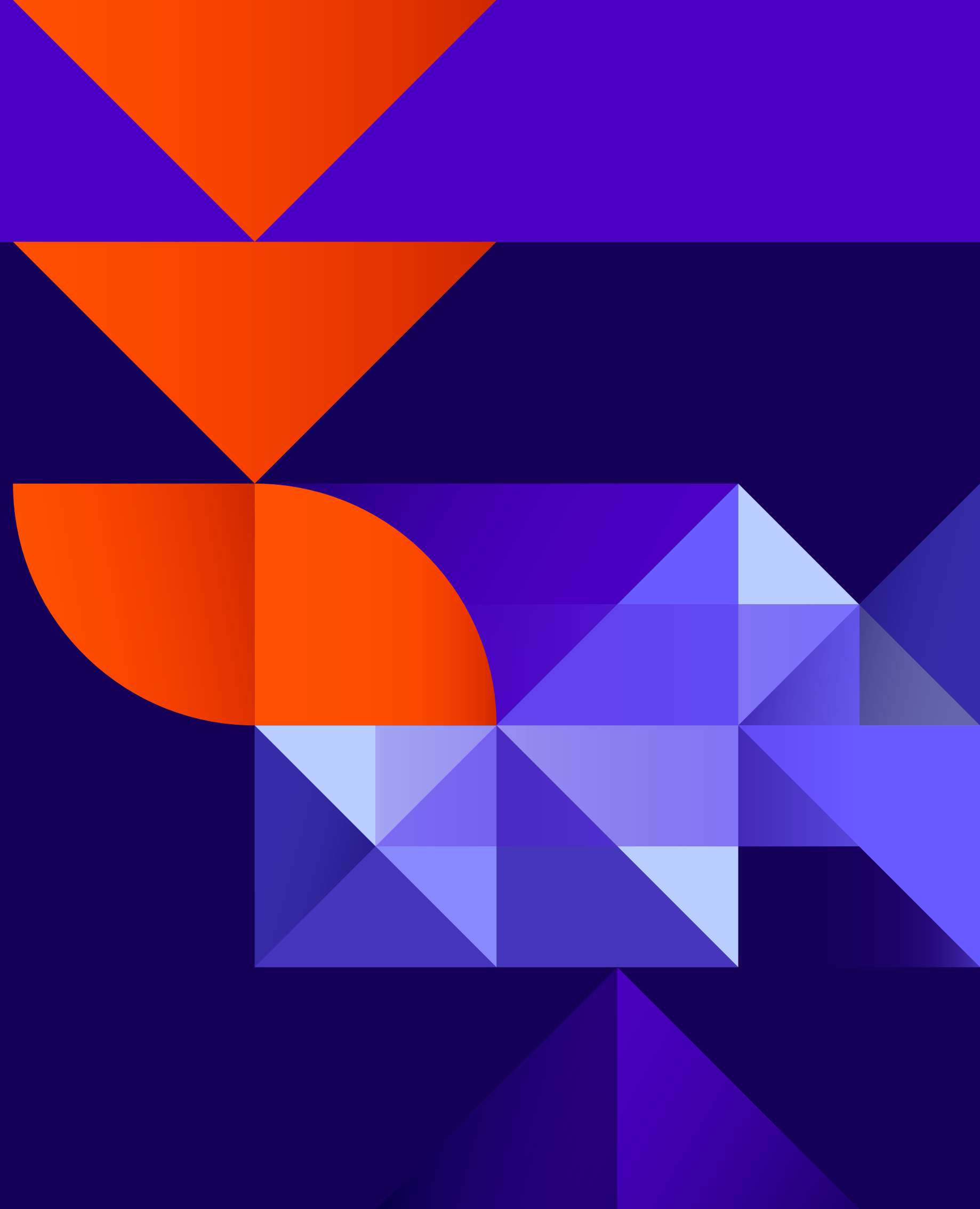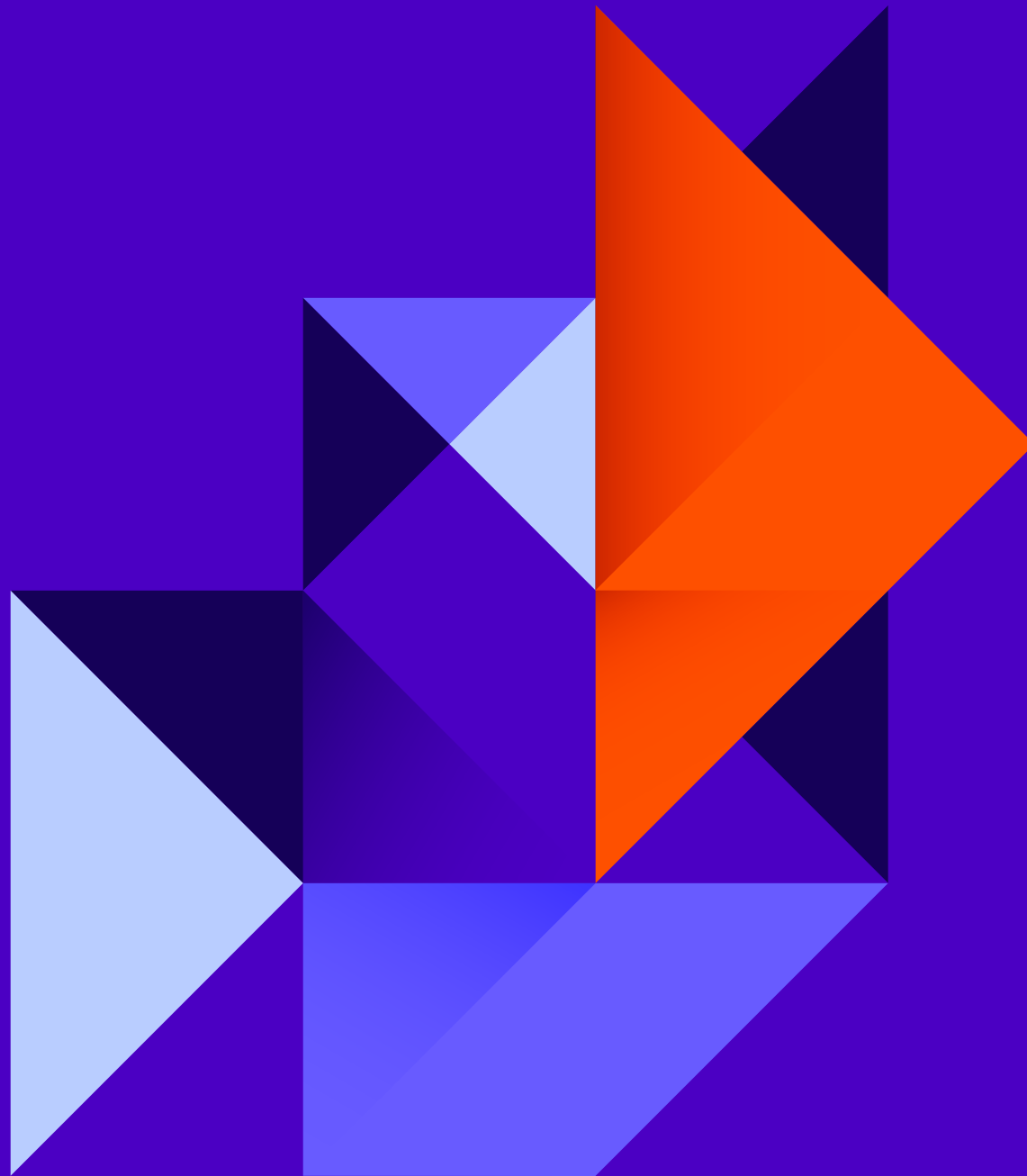# Blasting through the 5 common obstacles that stand in the way of success.

The Food and Beverage marketer's mini-guide to getting a product to market

How to blast through the 5 common obstacles that stand in the way of delivering a successful product to your consumer

What's inside:
If you're a marketer in a Food and Beverage business desperate to make the product launch and update process smoother, faster, and safer, then this mini-guide is for you. We take a look at why we think the process is broken – and what you can do to fix it.

# Your expertise is your company's innovation capital

As a marketer in the Food and Beverage industry, you know what you're bringing to the table. Your thorough understanding of the market - and the desires of your consumers – is critical to your business's success.

You use that expertise to brief in updates to existing products, and the development of new ones. You tap into it to build business cases, and optimise pricing and promotion strategies. And it helps you design feasible project plans that satisfy your business, the retailers it sells to, and that most importantly, delight the end consumer.

Blimey. You'd think your company would lay out a carpet of rose petals for you when you come in in the morning. But no such luck.

In fact, Marketing has one of the toughest jobs in the product launch and update process.

Think about it: no other function is involved from start to finish. From prototype sampling to costing and compliance, from packaging brief to print deadline, and from first idea to ad campaign. Plus, you're usually managing the whole shebang, too. And it's this combination of big-picture-thinking and managing all the minute details that makes your job so incredibly intense.
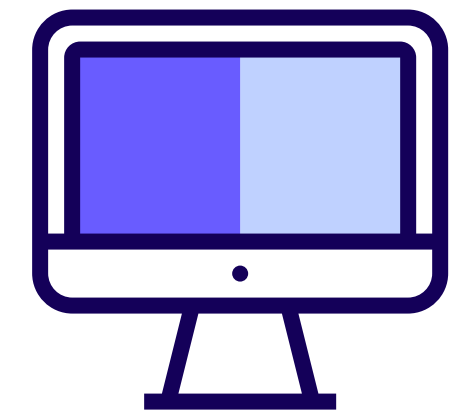
A closer look at 5 common challenges to a smooth project run

In all the years that we've been working with Food and Beverage manufacturers, we always come across the same 5 time and resource sinks that are keeping their marketers from focusing on their real job. Let's take a closer look:

1. **You spend too much time gathering information**
   You're constantly hunting down product information, packaging specs, supplier details. (And you need some sweet stakeholder management skills to do that.) Plus, once you get hold of the data, it's hard to verify that it's actually the latest, and approved, version.

2. **You have no visibility of the project status**
   You're expected to project-manage the entire process – but can't track where things are at. With different functions working from their own systems (which, let's face it, are mostly spreadsheets), you have no way of knowing what's going on. Which means you can't bring in the big guns to fix an issue early, before it escalates.

"It's the lack of visibility that's the biggest challenge. A single point of failure can blow the whole thing"

Lauren M.
Food & Beverage marketer

3. You're moving things along manually
Let's go back to those disparate systems for a sec. Since they're not made to talk to each, other, a huge amount of time goes into re-keying data from one tool into another – complete with the risk of human error that brings. Then, when you're done, you have to identify the next person in the process, and email them the project, hoping they'll pick it up

**In some businesses, up to 40% of employees' time goes into duplicate data entry.**

4. Things change up until the last minute
Let's just say that things aren't exactly linear, are they? Changes to e.g. product information, or health claims, can happen up until it's time to go to print. And that's a breeding ground for last minute mistakes (which could trigger all sorts of deadline, consumer safety, or legal issues).

5. You have to make up for any delays that happened earlier on
And finally, because you're in charge of hitting production runs, supplier deadlines, and printing schedules, it's your job to iron out the knock-on effect on the project that any earlier glitches in the process may have caused. Not fair? You tell'em!

Together, these five obstacles make the Food and Beverage innovation process incredibly hard to manage. They create significant waste in time and resources. And they're pretty risky for your business, too.
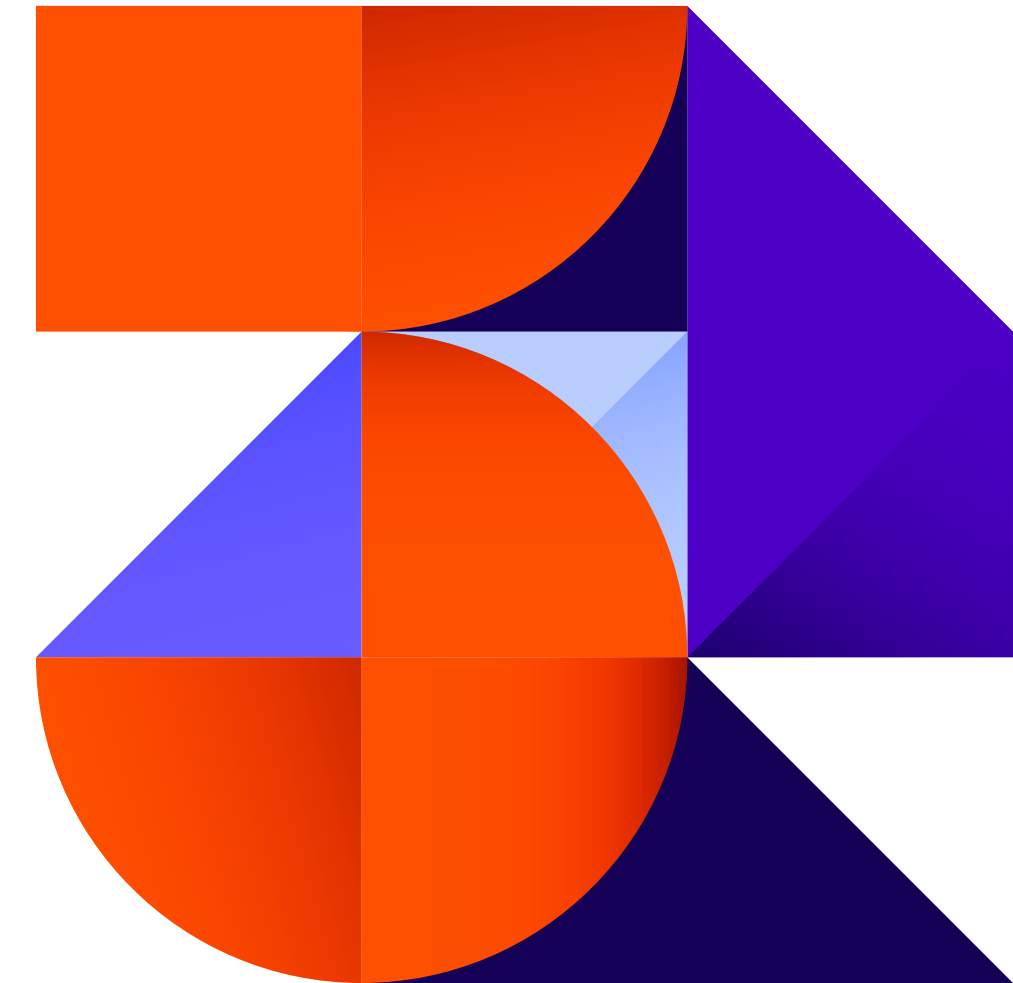
The 4 principles of a successful end-to-end workflow

But – and we think you'll like this news – they're completely avoidable. There's a faster, more efficient, and safer way to deliver a shelf-ready product. It's absolutely affordable for most businesses. But it does require a fundamental re-think of the way you go about product innovation. Here's what that looks like:

Principle #1:
**It's an agile process. Let's embrace that.**
It all starts with acknowledging that the innovation process is iterative. That means you need to build as much 'ability to act' into it as possible. That could mean empowering approvers to make an artwork change right in the system, or allowing them to re-route a project for another compliance check: whatever it takes to move things along without breaking them.

Principle #2:
Smash the information siloes
Product innovation involves dozens of departments and external partners. If we allow each of them to build their own little view of the project, we're multiplying an already complex situation. Instead, this process needs a single point of truth – a central tool that allows all stakeholders to plug in, and work within the same system. Such a platform will provide up-to-date, and accurate data; establish agreed, proven workflows; and give everyone involved visibility of what's happening, at any point in time. (Neat, huh?)

It's important that it's set up in a way that let's anybody collaborate, without exception: internal departments as well as external partners such as test kitchens, suppliers, labs, or artwork studios. For that to work, it should be cloud-based, and have granular permission management (to define who's allowed to change which bits).
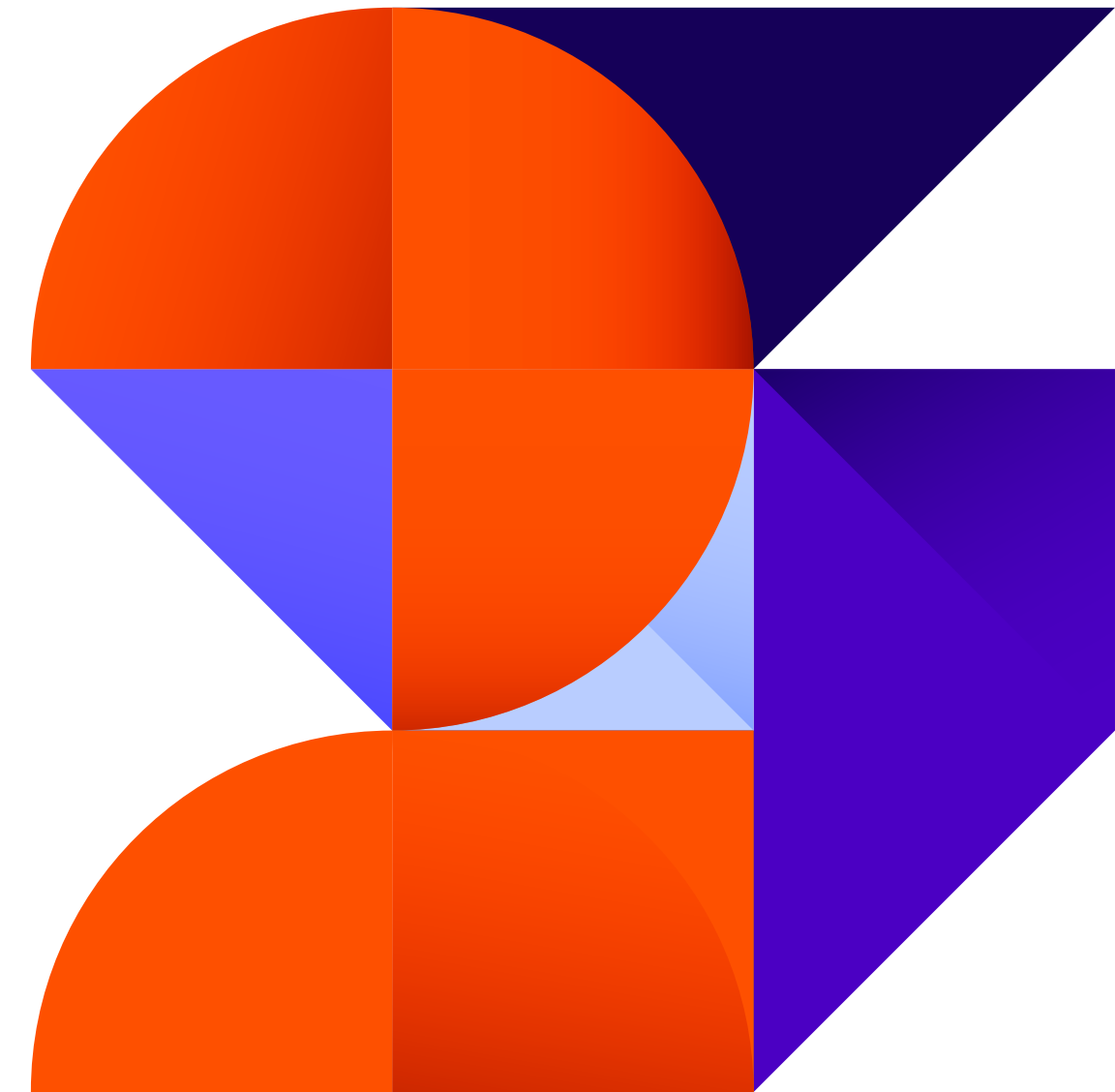
Principle #3:
Fully commit to digital

This is closely related to the principle above. All information needs to be digital. It's the only way to avoid duplicate data entry and ensure that everybody's always working from the latest version. It massively reduces errors. It also enables everyone to access and use the data across all channels and output it in the format they need (for online use, packaging, brochures, syndication… the works).

A great side-effect: working from one digital tool makes the entire process traceable (and creates automatic digital audit trails for compliance!). And that hugely boosts accountability for each person involved.

Principle #4:
**Automate and standardise workflows**

And it's not just information – we need digital workflows, too. Not only does that get rid of email (phew!), it also standardises how things are done in your business (e.g. who gets involved at what point). Of course, these workflows should be customisable (see our point on agility above), so you can build in the checks that are necessary for a safe and accurate innovation process. But more importantly, they need to be automated, so that once a step is completed, the system moves the project along to the next phase. Magic? Almost.

There are a few other things to think about, but we feel these are pretty much the essentials. They're not rocket science, but they're incredibly impactful. Fix them once, and believe us, you won't recognise your job anymore (in a good way!).
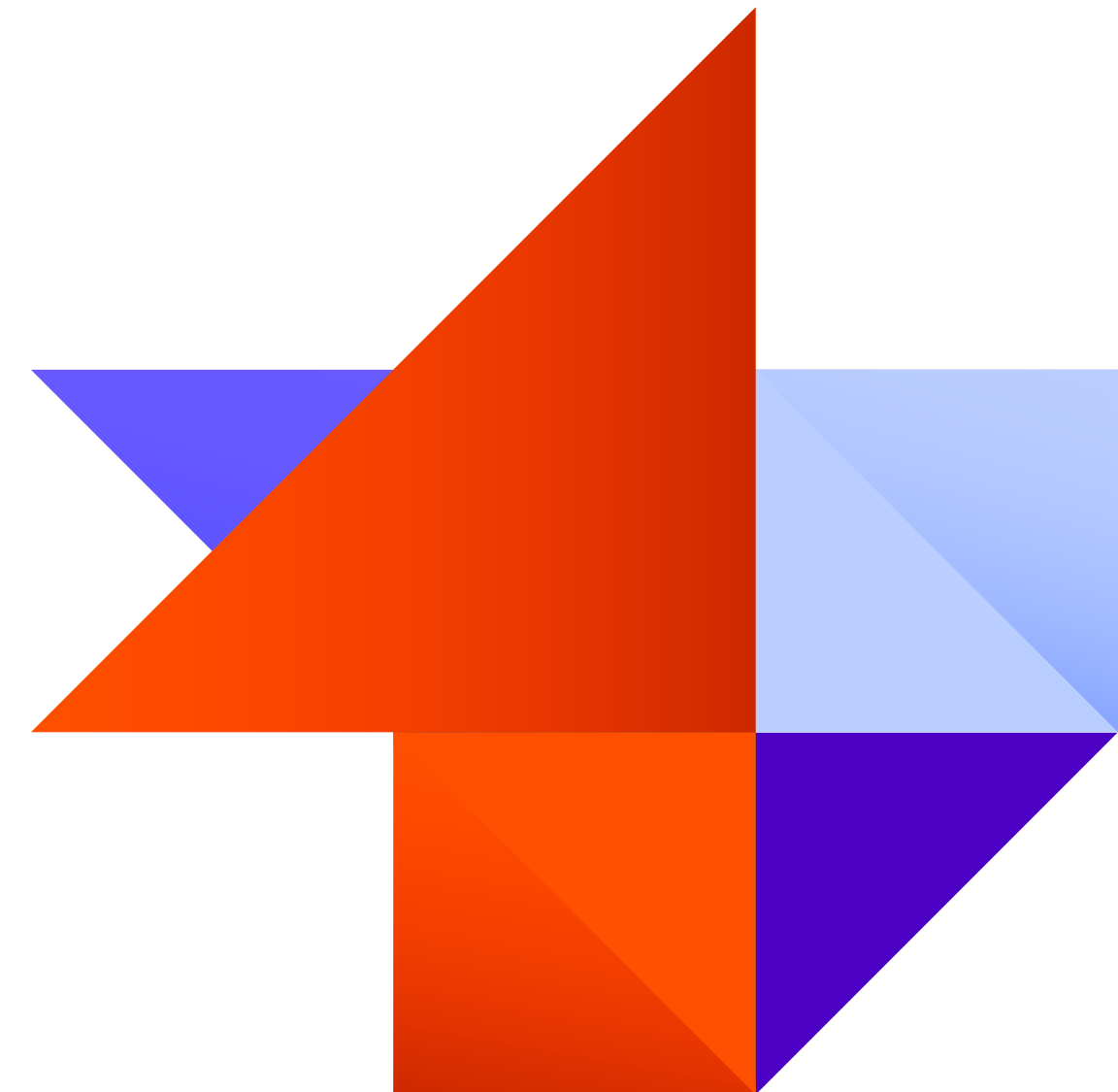
Sounds great.
Now how do I get there?

Glad you asked. Well, there are two routes:
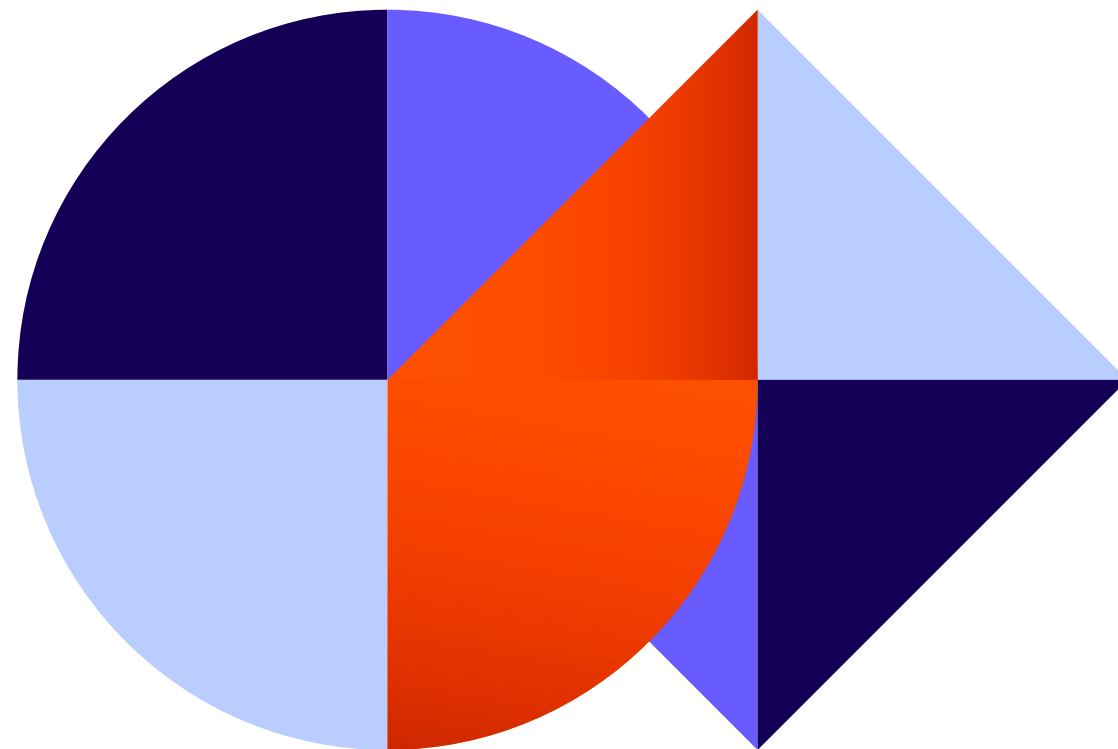
1. Some Food and Beverage businesses try to build their own management systems. While they may solve some of the issues above, they're quite costly to develop and maintain – and they lack the best practice that goes into a tool made for an entire industry (rather than a single company).

2. Others look into buying a solution that already exists. Obviously, that's what we'd recommend, too. Make a list of your priorities and your nice-to-haves, and see how each stacks up, and how affordable it is.

Top tip: your best bet for getting budget out of your decision-makers is to show how such a tool will make life easier for everyone involved – not just your own department. Top tip #2: if you can demonstrate the cost savings, increased throughput, improved accuracy, and reduced risk that such a system can generate - in hard numbers and percentages - you're halfway there. (Let us know [link] when you're ready. We'd can help with that bit.)

Some of our clients have seen up to:

· **90% cost reduction**

· **50% faster time to market**

· **80% faster packaging updated**

We're 4Pack.
Our cloud-based end-to-end product management solution for the Food & Beverage industry has completely changed the way our customers approach – and think about – their product development process.

We've helped dozens of businesses turn their product management processes from bumpy stop-and-go rides into smooth and well-orchestrated workflows. And we'd love to change the game for you, too. **Get in touch** with Helen Poole at helen.poole@4-pack.co.uk or on +44 (0)7773 698 950 for a discovery call.

PS. If you liked this guide, you might also want to read our ebook End-to-End Product Management here. It's a guide for Food & Beverage companies who want to speed up and scale innovation across all their departments – NPD, Finance, Compliance, Packaging, etc – without compromising on risk, or multiplying the costs.

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End-to-end product management

How Food & Beverage organisations can smash their silos and turn product launches into agile, smart, safe, and cost-efficient operations

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