



NUCLEUS
RESEARCH

THE VALUE OF LOW-CODE WITH ZOHO

ANALYSTS

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THE BOTTOM LINE

Nucleus evaluated several Zoho Creator customers to understand the value delivered from Zoho's low-code development platform. Zoho Creator provides application development tools for both non-technical users and advanced developers without compromising the platform's usability or functionality. Zoho Creator is positioned to augment all business development structures with tools to support organizational agility, flexibility, and cost-efficiency. Customers realized benefits surrounding reduced application development time, reduced project complexity, reduced maintenance and monitoring, improvements to customer insights, reduced manual processes, and enterprise-scale performance.

OVERVIEW

Zoho Creator provides a graphical drag-and-drop low-code platform with an IDE allowing both non-technical business-level users and developers to create online database applications centered around their business functions. The low-code platform covers the entire lifecycle of an application deployment project from development to delivery, and with Deluge, a powerful scripting language, users can design applications with little to no code involved. As with many low-code development platforms, Zoho Creator allows users to build and run applications without the need for on-premises infrastructure, saving companies time and money on maintenance. The solution also deploys an easy to navigate and visually appealing UI to support drag and drop visual builders for front-end and back-end development. Business-level users and developers can use these visual builder functionalities to accelerate the creation of forms, pages, and dashboards and simplify processes surrounding integration, workflows, and customer portals. For all skillsets, Zoho provides functionality for one-click deployment, cross-platform compatibility, and auto-scaling for diverse architectures. Within the low-code platform, a developer can build, design, preview, and deploy applications that are compatible with web, mobile, and tablets all at once without additional efforts.

To further support both non-technical users and developers, Zoho deploys toolkits to assist throughout the development cycle. For example, the IDE in Zoho Creator verifies each line of code to detect issues before going too deep into the application development. This helps simplify the process of creating forms, reports, and customized HTML pages within the solution. Workflows can be added to forms and reports through a drag-and-drop interface to automate tasks and custom actions. Additionally, Zoho Creator supports web and mobile SDKs, widgets, and extensions to meet all developers' customizability standards.

Zoho's agile development environment centers around key toolsets such as Sandbox, version control, data connectors, templates, and APIs, and SDKs. The Sandbox allows users to create a copy of an application for editing and testing before fully deploying the application. Zoho's support for version control means that users can recall specific versions of the written code to accelerate the debugging process. Templates offer ready-to-use applications that can be rapidly deployed without sacrificing flexibility and customizability. The solution also provides REST and SOAP APIs that are immediately available without building endpoints. For security, Zoho Creator supports SAML, LDAP, and OAuth2 protocols to ensure users have extensive access management control.

KEY BENEFIT AREAS

Nucleus identified the following specific benefits from the experiences of Zoho Creator customers. Companies realized benefits across multiple segments, including reduced application development time, improvements in managing complex projects, reduced maintenance and monitoring, improvements to customer insights, reduced manual processes, and enterprise-scale performance. Out of these positive factors, the three highlighted below stood out as commonly experienced benefits across customers and industries:

- **Increased Employee Efficiency.** Manual tasks surrounding the development of applications can compound the development lifecycle and lead to project delays and an increase in complexity. With many app development tools, users need previous coding experience and can spend more time defining schemas instead of completing the data maps that use them. Zoho Creator abstracts many application development tasks at a platform level without the need for advanced coding. Non-technical users can access this in a low-code environment through a graphical drag-and-drop user interface. With one company, IT teams also achieved a full 50 percent reduction in time and labor required to perform primary service lines. The time savings allowed employees to direct more attention to value-driven processes within the company, further driving revenue and growth.
- **Foster scalability.** For many organizations, growth is a positive factor but can increase costs surrounding employees, infrastructures, and maintenance. Sustained business growth necessitates an increased demand for business applications, which increases the need for application development tools. Additionally, large traditional application development projects are often extremely complex for even the most skilled and experienced team of developers. Furthermore, working between applications that may or may not use the same coding or structure can create integration issues. This can potentially turn compatibility issue troubleshooting into an entire project consuming an inordinate amount of time and resources. A low-code development platform like Zoho Creator provides a simplified platform to help employees develop complex business applications to cut down the time taken for application development to days and weeks from months and years. The simplified structure increases the overall productivity leading to increased customer satisfaction and growth in the number of new clients. For instance, a client used Zoho Creator to automate manual financial management functions. Increased productivity allowed

Reduce the time
to develop
applications by
50 percent

them to triple the size of the business while keeping the team sizes flat along with rapidly expanding the business on a flat technology budget for four years running.

- **Reduced Maintenance and Monitoring.** Manual tasks surrounding the maintenance and monitoring of systems require multiple hours of fact-checking and cross-referencing each day. These tasks are necessary but take time away from data-focused employees from developing applications and analyzing data for value-added insights. With Zoho Creator, users can reduce the number of manual tasks associated with maintenance and management processes while also reducing the overall complexity of application development. For one company, the time needed to maintain and monitor applications and application development processes saw a 60 percent reduction. The low-code platform could assist non-technical users and developers throughout the development lifecycle with processes such as creating forms, reports, and customized HTML pages.

Scale app development operations while maintaining a flat technology budget

CUSTOMER PROFILES

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND SERVICES COMPANY

The company is an enterprise-level information technology and services company that helps clients in major industries evaluate, secure, and manage technology on the go, either on-premises or in the cloud. The company provides flexible and interoperable services, including mobility, cloud, collaboration, data, cybersecurity, and software and IT as a service. Additionally, the company aims to mitigate technology risks for clients and accelerate time to value.

As the company continued to grow, it required a solution to assist in creating custom applications to run on a highly customized section of the business. The previous solution struggled with scalability and flexibility and did not offer a modern working environment for developers. The company considered solutions such as Microsoft, PowerApps, and Zappier, but none checked off all the boxes.

Upper-level management decided to move forward with Zoho Creator to accelerate time to market and simplify development processes to increase efficiency and reduce costs. Zoho Creator helped the company achieve these initial goals and more by allowing less skilled developers to quickly bring solutions to market. Furthermore, Zoho Creator provided a simpler and more streamlined path to integration with other solutions and systems, further reducing the complexity for employees. The company highlighted the fact that back-end databases are created automatically as well as RESTful APIs. Federation made SSO a breeze, and Deluge gave the company increased flexibility not just within Creator but also when consuming third-party APIs. Benefits realized surrounded significant cost savings from reduced application development complexity as many of the employees working with Zoho Creator had no developer or IT experiences but could create and modify full applications.

Increase app development operations while keeping team sizes flat

HEALTH, WELLNESS & FITNESS COMPANY

The company is a medium-sized health, wellness, and fitness company that builds relationships with companies to support employee health. The company focuses on musculoskeletal injury and disability prevention in areas such as sports medicine, office ergonomics, small site solutions, and specialized solutions. The company helps address early discomfort with OSHA compliant discomfort management treatment to prevent employees from future injury.

The company's growth had rapidly outstripped the capabilities of its legacy technology solutions and development partners. Developers and non-technical users needed a next-generation scalable platform that could handle the dramatically escalating level of complexity. The new platform also needed to be priced lower than the previously deployed legacy technology solutions. Managers also wanted to move development in house to allow for rapid development, iteration, and deployment. The IT department lacked a full stack development team, so a robust low-code platform solution seemed like the ideal path to take.

Before settling on a low-code platform, the company considered a broad array of solutions. The company looked at Salesforce, Heroku, Pega Systems, Google App Maker, Cloud Foundry, and QuickBase but ultimately settled on Zoho Creator. The CTO stated that "not every day are you able to achieve a goal of doing dramatically more, for a much lower cost with technologies and resources." Zoho Creator enabled the company to automate many previously manual Accounts Payable and Case Management functions allowing teams to triple the size of the business while keeping the team sizes flat. Additionally, the company could support the rapidly expanding business with a flat technology budget for four years

running. IT teams also achieved a full 50 percent reduction in time and labor required to perform primary service lines. Upper-level management continued to drive efficiencies with the Zoho Creator platform and leveraged the gains to price their commercial software offerings at over 60 percent below prevailing market prices, largely chasing competitors out of the space. Altogether, the company experienced a significant ROI after deploying Zoho Creator throughout the business structure.

ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONIC MANUFACTURING COMPANY

The company is an enterprise-level electrical and electronic manufacturing company providing lighting for professionals and consumers. The connected lighting offerings bring light and the data they collect to devices, places, and people. The company aims to enhance public spaces, workplaces, and homes with lighting products, systems, and services while delivering energy-efficient solutions.

The company looked towards a low-code solution to assist with ERP applications and systems. The ERP systems often had process gaps that must be filled, and this required using the same ERP platform. The process proved to be complicated, time-consuming, and costly, so the company looked towards low-code platforms as the solution. Before moving forward with Zoho Creator, the company considered solutions such as QuickBase, Ninox, Appenate, and Mendix. The company created a checklist for the selection process categorized by features, integration capabilities, reputation, and cost. With these factors in mind, the company said it quickly gravitated towards Zoho Creator as the platform carried the most weight across all categories. The deployment is still new as the company has only been using Zoho Creator for two months, but benefits have already been realized. Although experience is low, the employees could create three modules and multiple tools with more than 50 forms, as well as 100 reports and dashboards. The efficiency gains were significant as the productivity increase outpaced the previously deployed ERP development tools. The company also stated that the time needed to maintain applications and application development processes saw a 60 percent reduction. The time savings were attributed to Zoho Creator's coverage of the entire application deployment lifecycle from development to delivery. Additionally, the toolkits provided to non-technical users assisted them throughout the development cycle, helping to simplify the process of creating forms, reports, and customized HTML pages within the solution.

Zoho Creator helps companies price commercial software offerings 60 percent below prevailing market prices

LOOKING AHEAD

Zoho continues to deliver an advanced low-code development solution enabling developers and non-technical users to extract the full capabilities expected from enterprise-level solutions. With companies continuing to adopt cloud-based solutions and applications to connect the underlying business infrastructure, the focus will turn towards low-code development platforms to deliver the tools needed to succeed. Zoho Creator excels at enabling both non-technical users and advanced developers on a single platform without compromising usability or functionality. The true value of low-code development platforms lies not only in the applications built but also in improving organizational agility, flexibility, and cost-efficiency. The current work-from-home environment has quickly shown companies that business-level users can compete with developers if given the correct tools to enable them (Nucleus Research *u174 – LCAP Technology Value Matrix 2020 – October 2020*). Zoho Creator is a low-code platform that provides simplified yet comprehensive development tools to users of all skill sets. With Zoho continuing to push meaningful updates to its low-code platform, the overall usability and functionality will continue to grow, solidifying the platform as a solution for all businesses from small to enterprise-level.