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RESEARCH

# ZOHO CREATOR ANNOUNCES ENTERPRISE- GRADE FUNCTIONALITY

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## THE BOTTOM LINE

The demand for increased flexibility and extensibility from one's technology ecosystem is rapidly growing, but most midmarket low-code platforms lack the end-to-end capabilities required to develop scalable solutions. Zoho looks to remedy this problem with the launch of Zoho Creator Platform's newest edition. Zoho Creator now enables users to build low-code custom business applications for use cases requiring blueprinting, integration, and analytics without the need for any external applications, all from a single codebase. Nucleus expects the release to increase the cost-saving and productivity benefits typically achieved by Zoho Creator customers.

## THE ANNOUNCEMENT

On March 3, Zoho announced the latest version of Zoho Creator Platform. The low-code application development platform (LCAP) offering provides users with an all-in-one solution that unifies IT teams and business users. Traditionally, midmarket low code tools cater to either business users or professional developers, resulting in tools that are only suited for simple use-cases or require a steep learning curve and deep coding knowledge. This results in poor adoption and leads to a multi-vendor low-code ecosystem, susceptible to privacy, security, and management challenges. Zoho addresses these issues by supporting developers of varying skill levels to build, integrate, and analyze within a shared environment.

We highlight several new features available on the Zoho Creator Platform that will enable businesses to increase development control, build a connected solutions ecosystem, and promote collaboration between business units and IT:

- **Application Development Life Cycle Management.** New application development life cycle management functionality provides project managers and administrators greater governance control and visibility over low/no-code projects. With the latest release, Zoho introduces role-based access controls, audit trails, backup options, application IDE, dashboards to view and manage users, billing dashboards, personalization options, and branding customization tools.
- **Collaboration and Communication.** Zoho introduced integrated messaging, screen share, and audio and video calling capabilities to promote teamwork further and reduce the friction between business users and developers. With the workforce becoming increasingly dispersed, these tools will support communication and collaboration between various stakeholders during the design and build processes.
- **Multi-Environment Deployment.** Zoho now supports the launch of applications within the development, staging, or production environments. Users can continue to make changes and additions at any stage of the development cycle without disrupting the existing application. This drives flexibility and efficiency within the dev/ops cycle, where teams can work on projects based on the availability of talent instead of a traditional waterfall approach.
- **Connected Ecosystem.** Standardization and connectivity are priorities with the new release. Zoho offers a single dashboard environment to create, integrate, analyze, and manage low-code built applications. Universal cloud modeling functionality allows developers to make connections and automate data integration protocols with a unified data architecture, including over 600 pre-built connectors. A new integration status dashboard provides a view of each integration's performance, with

success or failure status and error detection to help organizations resolve issues quickly.

- **BI and Analytics.** An embedded BI and analytics engine is now available as part of Zoho Creator Platform's base offering. At no additional cost, users can capture insights from data within applications and perform predictive analytics, what-if analysis, and data blending directly within their respective environments.

## TYPICAL BENEFITS

Through Zoho Creator user interviews, Nucleus has determined that businesses often realize decreased operational costs and improved productivity within six months of deployment. (Nucleus Research V177 – *Zoho Creator cuts operational costs* – November 2021) The following section explores how the new updates would impact these typical benefits.

### REDUCED OPERATIONAL COSTS

Zoho Creator's unified solution builder provides tools for every stage of application development, from blueprinting to testing to publication. The base offering includes integration, analytics, and data management tools, traditionally offered as add-ons in the LCAP market. Where SMBs and midmarket organizations would typically need to purchase multiple modules or solutions from various vendors, Zoho Creator users can manage the entirety of the Dev/Ops cycle with a single license. Zoho Creator is priced at a fraction of the costs of other comprehensive LCAP products, often coming in as low as 20 percent of comparable offerings. With unlimited data usage, mid-sized Zoho Creator customers have reported cost savings of over \$1M per year in retired third-party subscriptions and annual IT costs cut by 50 percent.

**Zoho Creator users report IT savings of up to 50% by retiring 3<sup>rd</sup>-party applications.**

### INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY

Zoho has focused on IT and governance controls with the new release. Process blueprinting, internal guide rails, and role-based access functionality reduce the amount of human error during development and the associated rework involved. With project lifecycle management tools and dashboards, team leaders have greater visibility and control over the entire



development process to orchestrate activities better. Users often report that a significant time sink is identifying bugs. With audit trail functionality, developers can track the actions of users at the granular iterative steps of the build to identify errors, accelerating the overall development process.

LCAP offerings in the midmarket generally reduce app development time by over 50 percent compared to traditional hand-coding approaches. Nucleus expects Zoho Creator's end-to-end development platform, where all development stages are contained within a single environment with a cohesive look and feel and capability interoperability, would deliver similar if not greater productivity gains.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Zoho is recognized as a leading LCAP vendor, delivering enterprise-grade functionality to SMBs and the midmarket. (Nucleus Research V154 – LCAP Technology Value Matrix 2021, October 2021) We see Zoho leaning into its strengths with the new release, providing a comprehensive LCAP at a lower cost point than competitors. Sandbox testing, governance controls, and extensive security protocols are several elements that make Zoho Creator an enterprise-grade LCAP.

Heavy investments in AI/ML functionality further differentiate Zoho Creator. For example, users can incorporate predictive analytics within custom-built applications to perform sales forecasting for specialty items; With improvements to ZIA, Zoho's Intelligent (AI) Assistant, users can generate reports through conversational queries. Nucleus expects Zoho Creator to capture additional market share within the midmarket as businesses prioritize costs, usability, and ease of administration to pursue their digital transformation initiatives.