

Zoho Perspectives: An inside look at the values that drive us.

Zoho Perspectives gives you an inside look at the values and principles that have brought us success.

<https://www.zoho.com/perspectives>

What software owes to dog food



One of America's most notable exports is its hackneyed Business Speak. Thanks to this ready generosity, people the world over may now savor fruit that hangs low, have their ideas escape their heads only to run up handy flagpoles, line up their pet ducks dutifully in rows, and uncover barrels with fish in them, ready to be shot.

But... eating your own dog food? What does that have to do with business? Simply translated, this colloquialism refers to a company that uses its own products and services before it serves them up to its customers.

We plead guilty to this one. **Zoho runs on Zoho. This means we exclusively use Zoho software to run our entire business.** Let's put this in perspective. Zoho has about 5,000 employees spread across many continents, serving 30 million users across more than 150 countries. Everything we do lives on the cloud and runs on Zoho applications. Every employee uses the Zoho suite of office apps, Zoho Mail, Zoho Cliq (chat), and other collaboration tools. Our sales and marketing teams use Zoho Campaigns, CRM, and Zoho Social. Our support teams serve customers using Zoho Desk. We hire people with Zoho Recruit, manage them with Zoho People, and balance our books using Zoho Books. Many of our product teams use Zoho Projects to plan and coordinate product releases, and Zoho Reports serves as the business intelligence tool to track metrics like weekly revenue across products or countries. There are many other Zoho business apps that we rely upon.

We also use custom apps: one to order our lunch, another to manage the review process for our marketing documents, and hundreds of others to handle the nuanced ways businesses like ours choose to do things differently. These custom apps are all built using our app builder, Zoho Creator.

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For a company our size, we surprisingly don't use any business software from Microsoft, Oracle, SAP, Salesforce, or any of the enterprise software vendors seen as inescapable and safe choices for larger companies. And while we've continued to thrive under this shocking abstinence, we've saved millions of dollars that have gone instead to build our products, crafted with pride and offered at surprising value.

Let's talk numbers for a bit now. We started out with the hypothetical exercise of outfitting Zoho with third-party software from some of the companies named above, and from others. We picked marketing, sales, and support software, accounting and human resources, an office suite and other productivity tools to fill in the major categories. Next, we rung up our selections against their advertised prices to outfit a company of our size and employee distribution.

This exercise that neither picked the most expensive vendors nor the highest-priced software editions would have cost us more than \$5 million a year—for only a dozen apps. Had we used Zoho software and paid for it, we would have saved ourselves more than \$3 million a year. We would also have gained access to many more business apps. This massive savings is just the first of many advantages.

Software products from multiple vendors aren't designed to work together. This effort is left to the hapless customer who bears the integration costs—through more software and paid services—that can easily set a customer back more than two or three times the cost of the software itself. Costs aside, users must incur the learning costs and inconvenience of multiple user interfaces, workflows, and admin tools.

Something's profoundly wrong with this picture, yet companies have come to accept this. There is another way that will save a company our size well over \$5 million a year. Just run your business on Zoho software, as we ourselves do.

There are other good reasons we use our own software. Chances are that our software has to fail us before it fails our customers, given how we flog it everyday to fulfill our complex needs.

Using our own products everyday drives their rapid and tireless innovation for the sound reason that we are also the first to reap their benefits. Countless new features have been added to our products since Zoho first needed these capabilities. Zoho SalesIQ (website visitor conversion software) and Zoho Showtime (an interactive training solution) are examples of innovative products that emerged from our own business needs. Even our flagship offering—Zoho One—was born this way. Now our customers get to have them too.

You can see now why we use our own products. And why we're happy to live by that strange virtue of making a daily meal of canine feed.