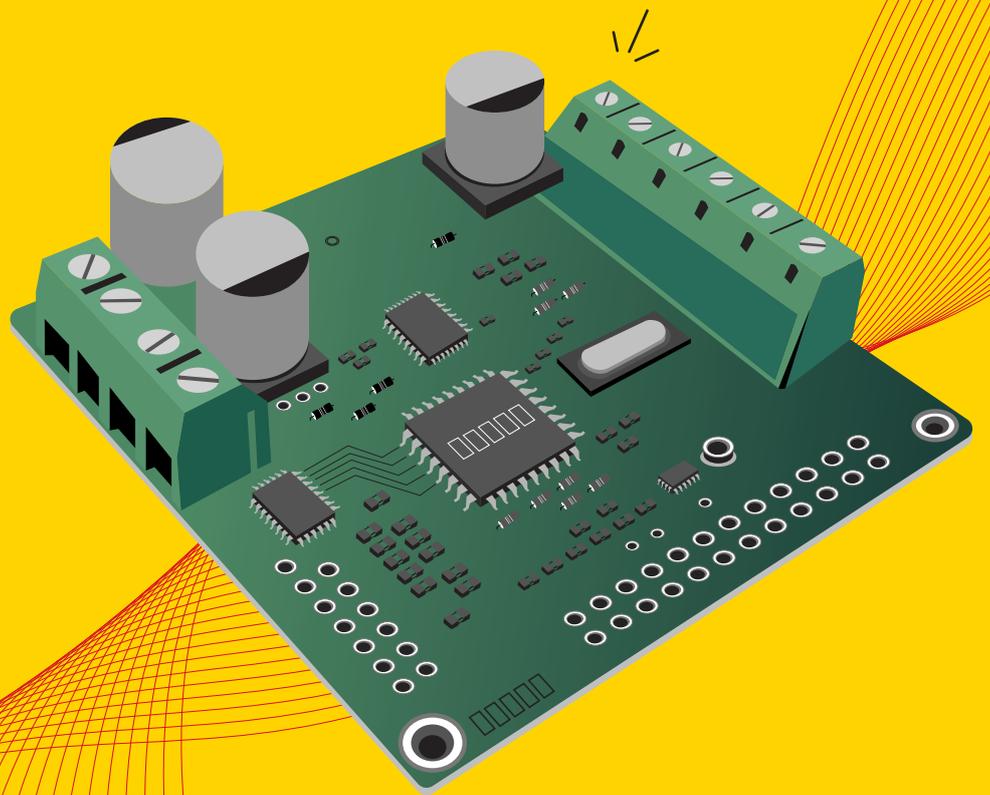


Zikodrive slashes Production
and Operations management
time by over 90% with Zoho One

Zikodrive



Brief Summary

Zikodrive began its journey with Zoho two and a half years ago when it switched from running its business using multiple applications from a variety of different technology solution providers to the all-in-one suite of Zoho One. As the business grew and its needs became more complex, it realised it needed to create more structure and organisation in order to continue to scale in an effective and efficient manner.

The use of many different applications meant Zikodrive was paying multiple providers and not driving the sort of value it could gain from consolidation. It also meant processes were siloed and information was impossible to share across the business, which it began to recognise as a significant risk to its future business performance.

Zikodrive is a specialist company with often complex requirements so it needed to find a provider that offered flexible solutions that could be tailored easily to adapt to serve customers with different needs and one which enables it to have the freedom to add further features in future.

To date Zikodrive has implemented or uses fourteen Zoho applications: CRM, Social, Mail, Cliq, Projects, Books, Connect, SalesIQ, WorkDrive, Sign, Notebook, Flow, Creator and Lens. It has also created many other bespoke applications using Zoho Creator and Zoho Flow.



Before switching to Zoho One we used many isolated apps - Insightly for CRM, Trello for projects as well as a simple version of Microsoft Projects, Teams for instant messaging, Xero for finances, Office 365 for email and the list goes on. Not only did they not easily interact but it meant managing many contracts and not getting the best value. Plus we didn't get the flexibility we wanted to tailor some solutions completely to our business. We were able to switch easily across to Zoho and managed that ourselves with some help from customer support.

Phil Bates

Managing Director and Co-Founder, Zikodrive

The company



Zikodrive is an award-winning UK-based designer and manufacturer of motor controllers for brushless, stepper and DC motors. Established in 2012, it covers hardware design, firmware/programming and manufacturing, all within the UK. It also offers comprehensive customer support from its UK office.

The company is privately held and was set up by university friends Phil Bates and Graham Fick to deliver motor control solutions to a wide range of customers. It began focusing on custom projects with a bespoke design service for motor controllers to enable it to meet any specific customer requirements.

Zikodrive made the move to begin the release of a standard range of brushless motor controllers, stepper motor controllers and motors in 2015 to complement the custom solutions. The range is programmable and can be quickly customised to meet any application requirement. In 2019 the company setup a dedicated production line to manufacture its products, after previously outsourcing this aspect.

Covering the whole process from design, testing and right through to manufacturing enables Zikodrive to cut lead times significantly and offer enhanced value to customers, as well as reduce risk and increase organisational knowledge.

Quality is hugely important and Zikodrive has an integrated quality management system across design, manufacture and operations to ensure it delivers high quality solutions to customers.

Every brushless DC or stepper motor requires a driver or controller to operate. Without one, these motors will simply not run – like a car with wheels, an engine and seats, but no steering wheel, gearbox or control pedals. The controller is arguably the single most important aspect in shaping the performance of a particular product, such as a pump or robot as it will be the controller that unlocks the potential of the wider application.

As you might therefore imagine, the range of applications for Zikodrive controllers is extensive. Whether it be small pumps, high end audio equipment, power tools and related equipment through to medical and veterinary equipment, Zikodrive has a range of options that will work. Each application requires different performance factors to be emphasised. Certain applications require high efficiency, others positional accuracy. Hence, the approach that Zikodrive takes to offer a flexible, customisable range, as well as a full custom design service.

The Challenge



I was aware the different solutions we were using did not work together and a Zoho video I watched on YouTube talked about silos which I then recognised as a significant risk to our business. We were starting to deal with bigger customers and it was obvious that we needed to get more organised and connected internally to function successfully.

Phil Bates

Managing Director and Co-Founder, Zikodrive

Zikodrive had started out by adding new providers to help it run its business as needs arose. However, once it reached the next stage of growth it realised the need to reassess its technology solutions strategy to find something more suitable to meet its goals.



Taking manufacturing in-house was a catalyst to address this and the team conducted extensive research, looking at a whole host of solutions across the industry. Phil Bates, Managing Director and Co-Founder, knew he had to find a solution provider that could:

- Scale easily with the company as it grows.
- Enable better integration across different company processes.
- Provide structure and organisation to a business where often specific information was held by individuals, rather than centrally accessible to those who would benefit from it.
- Create more efficiency to enable senior team members to focus on strategy and growth.
- Provide opportunity to improve customer experience.
- Provide value for investment to ensure license costs don't haemorrhage budgets - something even more important to a fast growing business.
- Enable flexibility to help it cope with complex and often disparate bespoke customer needs, while at the same time helping its standard range continue to flourish.

The Strategy

Zikodrive conducted extensive market research and trialled several providers but found Zoho One met all requirements, including:

- Depth and breadth of solutions available within one suite.
- Value - extremely competitive price point for a business suite of applications and one where costs only increase as the company, and therefore its number of users, expands.
- Flexibility and ease of internal development and customisation.
- Scalability with no boundaries - all apps able to scale quickly and grow with the company.
- Reduced administration through vendor consolidation.
- Future ability to add new solutions as needs continue to change as well as improve aspects such as customer experience as the business matures.



Manufacturing has a lot of complexity and if you do not address it in an organised way you risk wasting a colossal amount of money. That was the driver for us to switch strategy. We were looking for an ERP system and much more to integrate. Until we found Zoho One, we had trialled applications from other providers that seemed much more difficult to manage, only offered specific modules which were very rigid in nature, or that were hugely expensive and prohibitively so for a business of our size. As a fast growing company I don't have money to throw away on expensive IT systems.

Phil Bates

Managing Director and Co-Founder, Zikodrive



With Zoho One I love that you just pay for the users you have. It seems like a very fair model. It delivers the functionality we need and is hugely easier to use. I handled the migration from our previous CRM across to Zoho CRM and it just worked and was up and running within a couple of hours. I also like how there are so many more options for other applications we can try in the future to help drive our business success.

Phil Bates

Managing Director and Co-Founder, Zikodrive

Converting prospects to sales

Zikodrive uses Zoho Sales IQ to help engage prospects and convert to sales. Often sales result from initial web-based enquiries that come in and are handled through SalesIQ. It used to receive more phone enquiries, but as preferences shift, customers are now showing a preference for self-service online, making it essential to have an effective system to manage this.

Custom design solutions for customers are often generated through SalesIQ as dialogue occurs when the customer cannot find what they need from Zikodrive's standardised solutions, and a bespoke solution can still be agreed to generate new sales.

Handling project communication

Zikodrive is a heavy user of Zoho's instant messaging application, Cliq. It often creates channels around custom projects to involve engineers, factory workers and other internal stakeholders. This means all discussions related to the project are visible and recorded, and real-time collaboration is enabled. It also ensures all those involved in a particular project have all the same information, as opposed to previously individual chats which get lost resulting in mistakes or missing details.

Improving customer support

Lens has had a great impact on what level of customer service support Zikodrive has been able to support. Customers can now demonstrate specifically what they are doing, for example, how they have wired something up. This enables Zikodrive to resolve customer problems faster, with a more personal approach and is something it plans to expand going forwards.

Structuring business processes and adding automation

Zikodrive set out to develop a system that would be simple from the outset but could be progressively scaled and automated. For example, it started a component management system simply with set locations on shelves, before adding barcode scanning and creating a small phone based app. After this it integrated BOMs (bill of materials) into specific product information so it can directly track available components against the controllers they're used in. Zikodrive has since developed additional automation into the system which is linked directly to the integrated quality management system.

Another example is automated reporting on production times that feeds directly through to Zoho Analytics and enables Zikodrive to view specific data, average data and high level data. Similarly, it has automated sales processes so they connect directly between Zoho Books and a customs operations app built in Zoho Creator meaning Sales Orders automatically sync between these. This is hugely important in driving out waste and increasing efficiency and enables all teams to get a clear understanding of how processes are functioning in practice and where improvements can be made. The fact that Zikodrive has been able to implement these aspects progressively and dovetail them in with ISO-9001 and Lean Six Sigma type processes is hugely beneficial, useful and a major part of the scalability that Zikodrive likes about Zoho's solutions.



We have been integrating many processes into our Zoho software tools - both existing apps and the bespoke ones we have created. For example, a new customer would be inputted onto CRM, then this would trigger a hardware design order/request, followed by triggering orders for the factory to manufacture. Then serial numbers are recorded against that customer record, making any after-sales service easy to handle. For example, if a product comes back for repair, anyone in the company can back track over the entire process, rather than making information requests to individuals. This saves everyone precious time as well as ensuring things are not forgotten or lost. It's also hugely important in conducting root cause analysis and diagnosing any specific issues quickly where they occur.

Phil Bates

Managing Director and Co-Founder, Zikodrive

Creating custom business solutions



As many processes are complex and a significant proportion of customer requests are bespoke, Zikodrive has used Zoho Creator to help develop many processes which dovetail to its business needs, including a very specific Inventory application tailored to the company.

This includes an ERP system to help the company handle design, firmware and development, manufacturing and general business operations.



A major benefit to Zikodrive has been the ability to customise systems quickly and to develop our own systems through which all relevant staff can see exactly the information they need. As a designer, programmer and manufacturer, there are numerous, sometimes quite complex, processes to maintain and management were previously being overrun trying to keep up with all these. By having an integrated platform that is increasingly automated it has enabled us to build a system tailored to our needs, built around a combination of standard Zoho apps and many customisations through Creator and automated using Zoho Flow.

Phil Bates

Managing Director and Co-Founder, Zikodrive



I wasn't aware of Deluge, Zoho's scripting language before I started at Zikodrive but began learning it on day one. I have since developed seven comprehensive apps on Zoho Creator using Deluge along with Zoho Flow. It is quite perfect and easy to learn. All of the documentation available makes it really efficient to learn. Initially I was talking to support daily, but around a year later now it is just monthly or even less frequently.

Thomas North

IT and Tech Support, Zikodrive

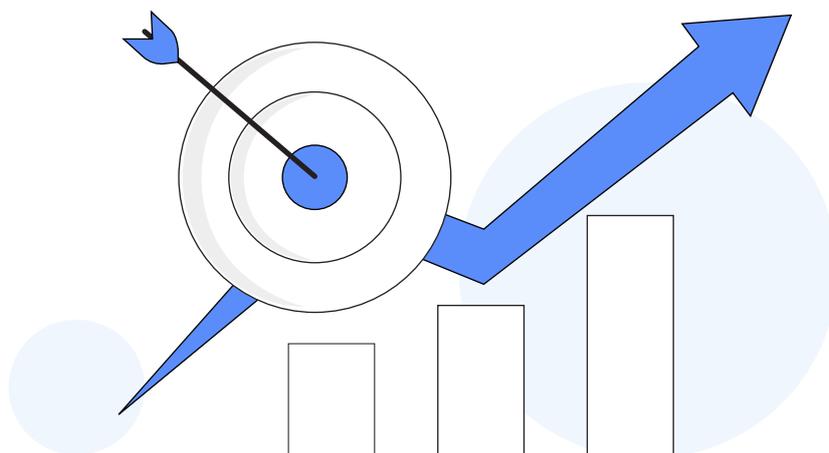
Zikodrive's bespoke developed apps are as follows:

- **Zikoquality:** tracks all quality management related information – Non-conformance reports (NCRs), controlled documents, manufacturing analytics, customer complaints and any other issues related to quality, risk register, Document Management System, tracks issues and SMART projects.

- **Zikobuild:** production ERP system; tracks individual motor controllers by serial number and/or product type; firmware library for controllers, finished and component stock management system that links to ZikoOperations and allows for record keeping on customers; development work and returns information for individual controllers.
- **ZikoOperations:** links to Zoho Books (via Zoho Flow) and imports and exports sales order information, simple Kanban system showing status of different orders, historic order tracking, links to Zikobuild to monitor stock and assign serial numbers to individual orders.
- **ZikoMarketing:** track webpage updates, contact library, blog article tracker – status updates, video tracker – status updates, event planner.
- **ZikoIT:** simple IT app enabling bug tracker, IT requests, job tracking.

Key benefits

Zikodrive has already seen the switch to Zoho One create huge improvements for its business and expects to see further positive impact in time as it continues to introduce new Zoho solutions or creates further bespoke solutions using Zoho tools.



Through integrating processes into one system, Zikodrive has reduced factory paperwork by 100%, creating a paperless system for all its records. This not only creates more efficiency, but is kinder to the environment.

The company has reduced the need for inter-departmental calls by 80% as information is readily accessible and records easy to access. This frees up valuable time, especially among senior management, to focus on strategy and business growth.

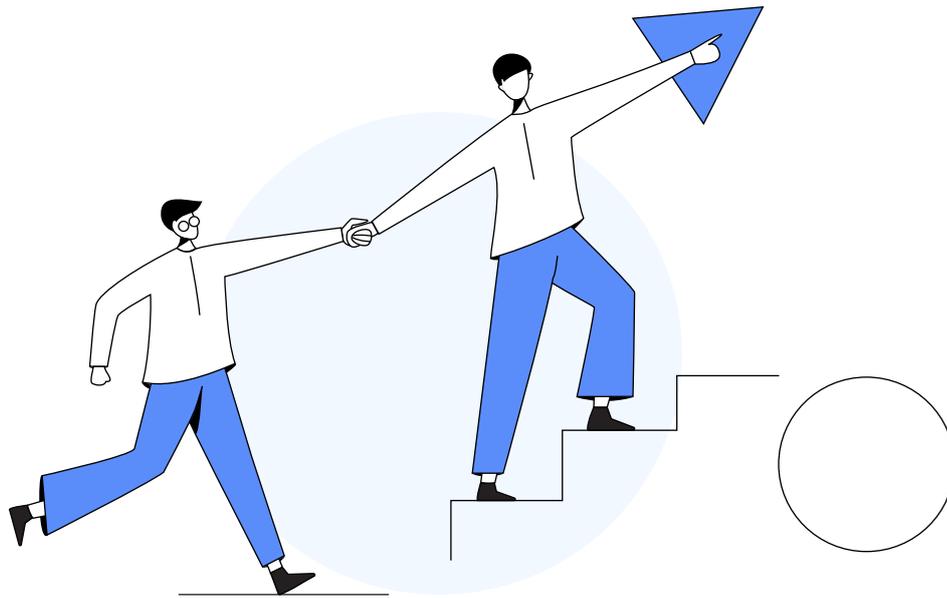
Zikodrive is finding the use of digital records invaluable to help minimise risk and help it deal more effectively with any problems that arise. For example, its improved product information tracker has improved the development process by 60% as issues are quickly accessible and can be updated and stored, both for learning and traceability.

Zikodrive has conducted an overview study to investigate benefits across the company. It estimates that combining systems in this way has reduced management time on day to day jobs (production and operations) at least 90%. It has enabled staff members to be much more self-sufficient, giving them access to key jobs required which they can then initiate, rather than rely on management discussions for guidance on task-setting.

In addition, it has enabled quality management processes rooted in ISO-9001 or Lean 6 Sigma to be directly integrated into the system, rather than being conducted separately. This helps improve compliance across the company and has made a big difference in building this into the culture and habits of the company.

Future and long-term vision

Zikodrive's immediate ambitions are to continue to scale up and as part of that, increase its capabilities in several ways. As the business continues to grow and mature it will use Zoho and Zoho Creator-built bespoke applications to improve customer experience, quality, efficiency and scalability.



It plans to launch several new products to its range in the next few months. Its current customer base tends to be smaller, but makes larger investments in terms of order volumes. Zikodrive anticipates the new range will significantly increase the customer base, but these customers will purchase less volume. Therefore tech support requirements also change and a new system is needed to handle these efficiently. It will implement Zoho Desk into its website to introduce faster customer service for simple enquiries to mitigate the risk of overburden with support requests. It will also build further online resources and introduce some automated responses to meet the expected change in demand.

The company is also looking to continue to integrate Zoho Analytics in order to analyse several data points to contribute to strategic decision-making, continuous business improvement, to anticipate trends, to delve into mistakes and ensure the risk of repetition is reduced, to improve quality and to maximise operations to drive further success.

Zikodrive plans to improve customer experience. One way is to improve customer visibility into projects handled using Zoho Projects to give them full and real-time transparency of project progress. This also delivers more efficiency, reducing customer enquiries direct to the business, and replaces a more time-heavy human element with a digital option.

The company plans to further integrate the custom apps it has built to enable everything to flow more smoothly. It will also serve to significantly increase operational capacity by reducing errors that can create larger customer problems as well as introducing more automation to cut out time-wasting processes.
