



Creator

From chaos to order:

BriarTek's journey with Zoho Creator to optimize operations



Table of Contents

03
The
company

05
The
challenge

06
The
solution

07
Benefits
and ROI

09
Looking
forward

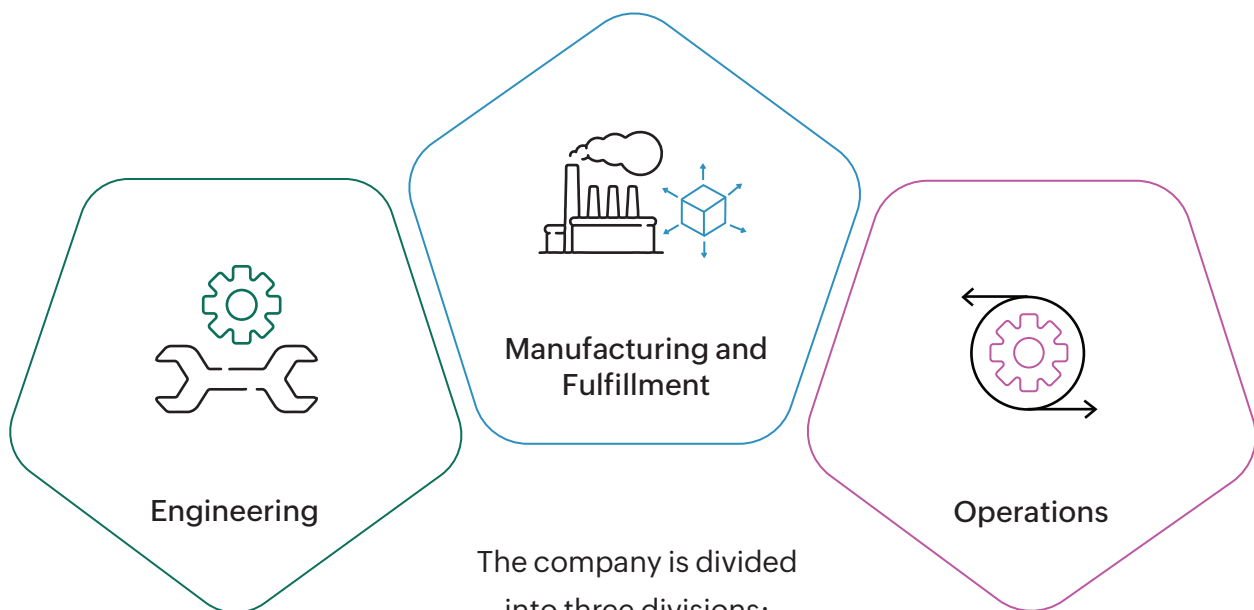
10
About us



The company: BriarTek Inc.

Founded in 1998, BriarTek Inc. is an American marine safety beacon manufacturer and supplier based in Alexandria, Virginia. The company provides beacons for navies, tug and barge fleets, and other large clients.

BriarTek designs, manufactures, and supports marine safety beacons used worldwide as man over-board alarms. The U.S. Navy, U.S. Army, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and NATO naval partners are some of the prestigious clients who rely on BriarTek to safeguard their seafarers worldwide.



Engineering

The Engineering division is responsible for developing new products and providing technical support for the existing products and manufacturing processes. The team comprises a diverse group of design engineers, including electrical, firmware, mechanical, and systems engineering specialists. The engineers allocate their time equally between two main responsibilities, new product development and providing support for existing products.

Manufacturing and Fulfillment

This division is responsible for both manufacturing the products and fulfilling customer orders in a timely manner. It comprises team managers and production workers, with distinct roles and responsibilities. The team managers handle order processing and contract management, while the production workers focus on manufacturing orders for inventory and shipping customer orders.



Operations

The Operations and Executive division is responsible for overseeing the organization's business development and administration, including HR and accounting. The section is composed of corporate officers, accounting staff, and administrative personnel. It ensures smooth functioning of the organization's day-to-day operations.

We interviewed Joe Landa, one of the company's founders and inventor of its first product, to understand how BriarTek uses Zoho Creator.



The challenge:

BriarTek receives repair orders for their products, but they were not being handled appropriately due to the lack of a unified system. This particular challenge made the company realize that it needed a system to pull and connect data from different departments.

Some of the major pain points it faced were:

- Difficulty tracking the flow of paperwork from inventory purchasing to finished-goods sales.
- Lack of an approval process for centrally stored work instructions.
- Separate management of various small app subscriptions.

"We came up with a tool in FileMaker to manage the situation, and it worked fine for a few years," says Landa. "However, with time, it became increasingly difficult to use due to FileMaker's updates. As a result, we began looking for a simpler solution," he explains.

BriarTek used Podio in addition to FileMaker for tracking customer feedback, contacts, and repairs. While Fishbowl Manufacturing served as their ERP for most functions, various add-on applications were used for tracking different processes, such as accounting and compliance regulations. This led to cluttered processes and caused errors and delays, ultimately affecting customer satisfaction.

To address these challenges, the company turned to a solution that would enable it to track repair orders with greater accuracy and efficiency—enter Zoho Creator.



Solution:

The team at BriarTek assigned a summer intern the task of looking into a replacement for FileMaker and Podio, and after evaluating several platforms, recommended Zoho Creator.

Once they started using Zoho Creator, team members found that creating custom apps tailored to their specific needs was more efficient.



Zoho Creator is more reliable than Podio, more flexible than Trello, and easier to get started than FileMaker and Appian. It was easy enough that a college intern with no experience was able to set it up and build a working app.

— Joe Landa, Founder, BriarTek



The first app they built took only a day, while the more extensive inventory app took two engineers several months, including design and testing.

They've built several apps to manage various key processes, however the largest project they accomplished with Creator is the updating of their inventory management system. BriarTek manufactures its own products, and it needs to track several thousand components, work-in-process sub-assemblies, and finished goods.



Benefits and ROI

When asked why they chose Creator over other platforms, Landa listed the below reasons:

- Reliability of the platform
- Ease of use
- Ability to scale up to more complicated projects



As time went on, we realized that Zoho Creator apps were frequently more practical than other third-party apps we had utilized. Mainly because we could tailor apps to our exact needs!

— Joe Landa, Founder, BriarTek



In addition, the ability to customize has helped BriarTek build apps that mirror the best possible version of their niche processes. Some of the apps are:

Expense tracker:

This app reconciles non-inventory and non-travel expenses to the corporate credit card accounts. Company accounting procedures include several items for travel vouchers that were not found on any of the existing add-on programs, so the team created a travel voucher app in Zoho Creator and effectively decreased the accounting workload. The same was true for non-inventory expenses, so the team made a specific app for that, replacing Expensify.



Travel management:

This app handles the approval, planning, and accounting of travel-related expenses.

Engineering release site management:

This app manages the configuration of design files used for product manufacturing.

Compliance management:

This app tracks internal audits and inspections for compliance with various government regulations, since BriarTek sells some of its products to the government. Most of these regulations require regular internal inspections, such as part inspections, to prevent counterfeiting. Before Zoho Creator, these internal inspections were done using flat forms, and files were stored on a server. Today, the team is able to track these inspections and provide notifications when updates are due, making both compliance and reporting easier.

QA repository:

This app stores BriarTek's quality assurance testing and records.



Looking forward:

BriarTek is in the process of developing a Creator solution to replace its current ERP system, Fishbowl Manufacturing, which tracks its component inventory, manufacturing orders, and sales.



This move is a part of the company's efforts to modernize its technology and improve its overall efficiency and accuracy in tracking business processes.



About Us

At Zoho Creator, we've always worked towards a single purpose: empowering users to build functional apps with minimal coding expertise. We've helped over **14,000** brands create custom solutions and improve their end-to-end operations across a variety of industries. With over **16 years of experience** in serving **B2B and B2C organizations**, we have the best tools in the trade to help you improve your business.

You can get started with Creator by visiting our [signup page](#). You can also check out our [pre-built apps](#) to get started right away!





Creator

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We'd love to talk! Reach out to us

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