

# Automating the agrarian supply chain with low-code



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# The company

Founded in 1983 by the late Gilbert Oldershaw MBE, the Oldershaw group is an independent family-run business based out of the UK, and the leading producer of onions, shallots, and garlic.

The Oldershaw group grows over 150 hectares of onions and shallots, over 80 hectares of potatoes, carrots, and cauliflower, plus the traditional Lincolnshire crops of winter wheat, peas, and sugar beet.

They partner with a select group of British growers (growing onion, shallots, and garlic) and help them manage their operations from growing to packing, importing, and processing.

The group supplies its British retail, wholesale, and food manufacturing partners with over 2,000 tonnes of produce every week.

## Businesses in the group:

**Oldershaw of Moulton Ltd**

**Moulton Bulb Co Ltd**

**Goldwood Moulton**

**Moulton Bulb Imports Ltd**



# The challenge

Oldershaw is the leading producer of onions, shallots, and garlic in the UK. It has earned accreditation from groups such as BRC and LEAF, thanks to its continued investments in technology.

Over the years, the group has introduced many industry-first practices, such as improved processes for drying and curing onions, the presentation of onions on supermarket shelves in form fill packaging, and the introduction of fresh garlic, shallots, and prepared red onions to UK supermarkets.

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***We were looking to go paperless as much as possible. We have an ERP solution in place, but it didn't cover every part of the business and we wanted to get away from paper or spreadsheets.***



**Robert Oldershaw**  
Director, Oldershaw



For Oldershaw, process innovation has helped them improve their product's quality and drive down costs.

A couple of years ago, the group identified areas that created bottlenecks in their operations:



### **Paper-based recordkeeping**

At the time, employees relied heavily on paper-based tools to record their work—things like checklists, labels, books, and more. While it's quick and easy to use these tools to record information, it's hard to use the data without first converting it to a digital format. Plus, paper-based tools need dedicated space to be stored, and can get damaged if not looked after.

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*Paper records are quicker and easier than using an app. For example, if you've got a long checklist, it can be simpler for an employee to have the piece of paper on a clipboard and go tick, tick, tick, that's done. But it doesn't help when we're trying to interrogate that data afterward.*





### **Communication tools**

Employees had to walk up to their colleagues on the factory floor or use a two-way radio system if they needed to pass on a message. Both these methods were not efficient ways of communication.



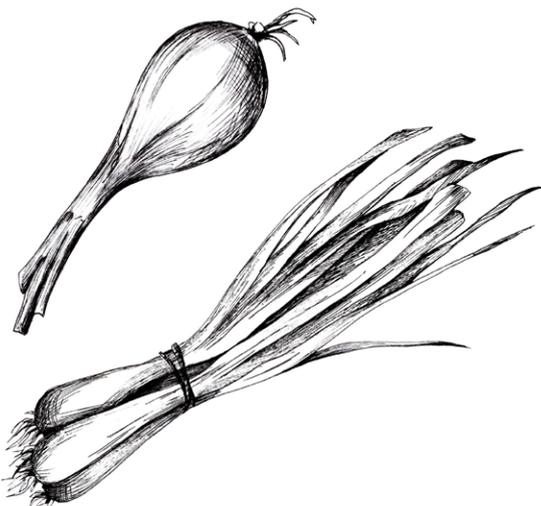
### **Traditional software**

Oldershaw use an on-premise ERP system that they implemented at their organization in 2009. The system doesn't offer all the features to cover their business processes, though, and they had to use software like spreadsheets and paper-based tools to cover the gap. This made it hard for the group to scale its operations and keep up with the latest technologies.



### **Recruitment**

When recruiting new people, the group's HR team had to manage the job postings manually and follow up with the stakeholders for the status of the job. The team also had to calculate staff wages and benefits manually. This resulted in delays in hiring and created an admin nightmare for the team.



# The solution

The group was looking for a solution that offered advanced functionality, was simple to set up and build, and had a great user experience.

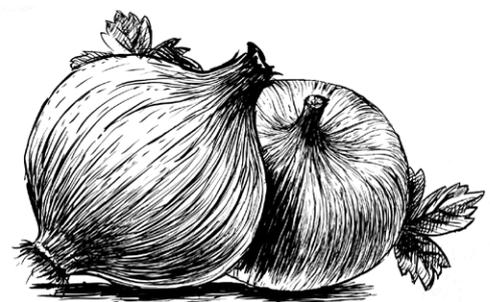
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*We wanted to create something entirely bespoke to us, rather than just a complete off-the-shelf solution. So it had to be complex enough to fit the needs of the business while being simple enough so that most can easily use it.*

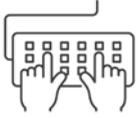
Employees looked at options like Caspio, Nak, and many online form builders. But those tools were either too basic or too complex for their needs.

Only Zoho Creator checked all three boxes for them.

Oldershaw started using Creator in a minor way, but their use of the platform has grown considerably over the last three years. From a couple of users to over 80 named users who use several apps to get their work done.



## Key use cases:



### Data entry

In the past, the group's employees used paper-based tools to record information. Now, employees can fill in relevant information on the Creator app on their phones, and the data is automatically stored in the database.



### Integration

Oldershaw has created a one-way integration between their traditional on-premise ERP software and Creator, such that data flows from the ERP to Creator-based apps and the SQL database. This helps them keep a consistency of data across platforms.



### Analytics and reporting

The applications pull data from all available sources, analyze it, and present it in customized dashboards that help employees, management, and other stakeholders get a bird's eye view on key activities.



### IT asset management

The group has created an application that helps it track its IT assets. The application acts as an asset register and keeps a log of assets allocated to employees, tracks problems with the devices, and more.





### **COVID testing**

Oldershaw tests its employees for COVID every week. The results of the tests are logged into this application. When an employee's number is entered into the application, it brings up whether they've had their vaccination or when they're due to have the vaccination, along with the number of vaccines they've taken.



### **Human resources**

They've embedded a Zoho Creator form on their website, which has a drop-down that shows open jobs. When people apply, they're directly fed into the Creator-based HR apps, where the team can process their applications.

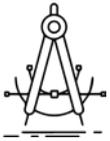


### **Communication**

The group has created an app that automatically notifies employees when there's a change in a customer's order three days in advance. This pertains to situations like when the customer has a promotion coming up or when they might have changed their product pack size.



# Benefits and future plans



## **Accuracy of information**

With the use of Creator-based apps by shop floor staff, management can now validate data entered and make certain data fields mandatory—something not possible on a piece of paper. Putting those kinds of controls and validation in place provides the group with a complete set of data and better accountability.



## **Better reporting**

Thanks to the applications automatically sourcing information from multiple sources to customized reports inside the applications, staff can access up-to-date details on demand.



## **Transparent communication**

The applications enable the management and HR teams to disseminate critical information to staff. Additionally, the group's employees can access reports within the applications to access data on demand, rather than needing to request access.



## **Application adoption**

The group uses several Creator-based applications to run different parts of its business. Thanks to the simplicity and superior user experience of the applications, most of the staff at Oldershaw actively use the applications in their daily work.

# Future plans



*I think that's its an exciting thing that we know that there's a lot further we can go with Creator. And, the farther we go, the more we learn, the more we can then apply that to those principles and formulas, and whatever else, to something else in the business. You never think, 'Well, I've reached the limit of the application*



**Robert Oldershaw**

Director, Oldershaw

The group has even hired and trained an employee to help build custom applications for different use cases inside the organizations. They expect to see more applications created to tackle multiple use cases soon.



# About Zoho Creator

Running a business is no mean feat, and we believe we can help. Rapidly build custom applications that are a perfect fit for your business, or choose from our extensive range of prebuilt apps and modify them. The best part? You don't have to be a programmer. Just signup, pick a plan, and start building!

Great brands trust us:





[www.zoho.com/creator](http://www.zoho.com/creator)

We'd love to talk! Reach out to us:  
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