How Studio 31 automated 37+ processes and saved over 3 hours every day with Zoho Creator





INDEX

About Studio 31	03
The company	05
The challenge	06
The solution	07
Benefits and ROI	17



ABOUT STUDIO 31

Studio 31 is a decade-old, zero-inventory wedding photography and film company based out of Chennai, India.

They've captured over 7,000 events across 41 cities in South India, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Europe. Their highly skilled team of creative and management professionals have over 200 years of combined experience.

The company has been featured in many leading publications in India, like the Economic Times, The Hindu, Your Story and The New Indian Express, for its unique zero-inventory, zero-capital business model.

Today, after implementing Zoho Creator, Studio 31 is a 100% remote organization after automating over 37 processes from inquiry to delivery.

We were able to eliminate emails by 98% and save up to three hours per day across the organization. This helped us focus more on providing an efficient and effective customer experience that positively impacted the company's brand image in the highly competitive wedding industry in India. We eventually found that people booked us more for the customer experience they got, rather than our creative deliverables. Our customers loved the fact that they'll be able to access all their information through a single dashboard, which gave them complete control over the process and information. Resulting in customer satisfaction and value for the money invested

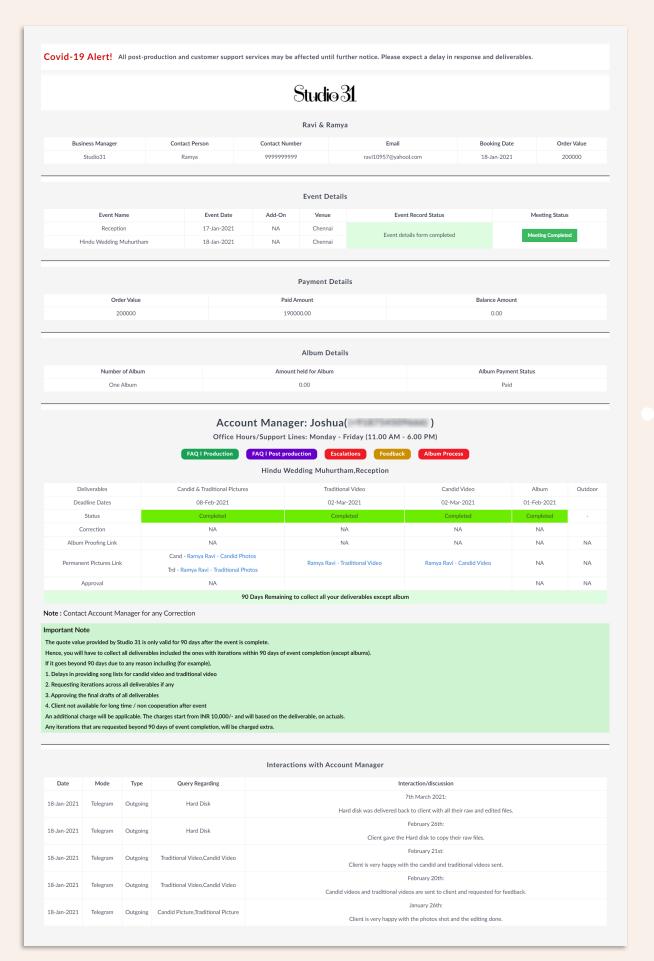
Pranesh Padmanabhan Founder - Studio 31



03

CUSTOMER DASHBOARD

Eliminates email for Studio 31 and its customers by 98%



THE COMPANY

The recession-proof, \$50+ billion wedding industry in India is highly unorganized, and most photography companies and freelancers aren't able to provide a hassle-free experience throughout their customer's journey. Weddings are a once-in-a-lifetime event and therefore a high stakes environment where one cannot mess anything up.

Studio 31 had the first-mover advantage back in 2010. Started with zero capital, Studio 31 has seen tremendous growth and has been able to consistently maintain it. Their unique zero-inventory model enables them to capture over 400 weddings every year, thereby generating employment for over 3,000+ creative artists from Tier II, III, and non-metros across South India, on a contractual basis.

While the creative aspect of the profession has seen a huge revolution, the actual business process at its core remains unorganized. Several players who start off well struggle to keep the momentum going, owing to the nature of running an actual production house. There is a fine line that differentiates the other players and Studio 31.

Studio 31 has managed to create an **organized business in an unorganized industry**, by investing in the right technology and focusing on world-class customer experience since its inception.

Being a part of this emotionally driven services industry, the company forecasted well in advance that **weddings** are a serious business in India, and any human error would be costly. This realization was a major turning point in deciding to steer the business and seek refuge with technology. Besides this, sustainability in the long run would be possible only if the business process was scalable, automated, and tech-driven.

THE CHALLENGE

It's always perceived that wedding photographers have the best job and it's all fun. However, in reality, it's the most complex service offering in the whole wedding industry because it's the only service that has a very long customer lifecycle—90+ days—and also the riskiest.

For the first few years, Studio 31 was busy building a strong foundation, and it solely focused on the creative aspect of the business, along with great customer service.

From inquiry to delivery, there were more than 37 processes that had to be diligently followed to provide a hassle-free experience for its customers. For Studio 31, everything was smooth initially, when they captured a limited number of weddings. However, as they grew, they lost control over what was happening, and a creative profession turned into an administrative one, with all the hassles that entails.



Data management and accuracy



Expensive human error due to business complexity



Dependency on spreadsheets that had to be manually updated



Updating customers manually resulted in over 46 email threads per customer and staff having to invest over four hours every day in replying to emails



Lack of analytics and reporting

In 2017, they decided to figure out a long-term solution to meet these challenges, and decided that implementing the right technology was the best and only option.

THE SOLUTION

Introducing Zoho Creator

Studio 31 has been a bootstrapped business since inception, and clearly could not afford a custom software service. Initially, they assumed that they could implement one of those readily available CRM solutions on the market, and experimented with over 20 popular CRMs for over six months.

In reality, they couldn't make any of the CRM's on the market work, as their business process was quite unique, and the only solution was to build an ERP or CRM solution from scratch.

This is where Zoho Creator, as a platform, gave them an opportunity to literally build whatever they had in mind, without any restrictions. Studio 31 narrowed down the search to Zoho Creator for a few reasons.



Zoho's motto—"Made in India. Made for the world."—aligned 100% with the company's values.



Creator was extremely affordable and flexible.



Their founder, Pranesh, comes up with random unique ideas every single day, and his developers have always been able to bring his ideas to life with Zoho Creator.



His developers always say, "There's nothing you can't do in Zoho Creator. You just need clarity on what you need."

Zoho Creator has helped us bring clarity and structure to our company's workflow. Our data is now organized across different stages, and fetching real-time reports on the work status of each department has become effortless. As a company, we've saved time because of the use of Zoho Creator. Assigning and managing tasks has never been easier than this.

Aswini Srinivasan

Chief Strategist & Management Consultant

ABOUT STUDIO 31'S APPLICATION

Studio 31 crafted an app that created an online version of its offline processes.

This was essential to achieve growth and scale up business. The application was designed to eliminate emails, ensure fool-proof delivery, have a well-knit customer experience, create a collaborative platform for all the staff and most importantly to save time.

They built numerous modules that are all synced with each other:



FOR SALES AND BUSINESS MANAGERS



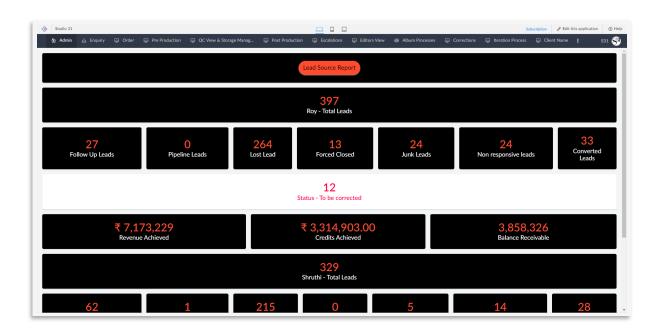
Lead management

- » Automatic lead capturing from various digital channels
- » Assignment; leads are allocated to business managers automatically on a round-robin basis
- » Manual lead scoring with closed-ended metrics
- » Lead prioritization and planning
- » Reports, tracking, and analytics
- » Foolproof lead leakage system
- » Client profile, margin calculator, and approval system
- » Advanced analytics and dashboards



Order management

- » An advanced order form that captures every requirement of the client
 - a) Events
 - b) Locations/venues
 - c) Finalized pricing
 - d) Margin and profits
- » Reports, tracking, and analytics
- » Advanced analytics and dashboards



FOR PRODUCTION MANAGERS



Event details form

- » An advanced form with prefilled details for clients to provide more accurate information about their events
- » Form is synced with the order form, so that there's no discrepancy between the sales and production teams and the client.
- » Options to provide the production team with decor photos, client photos, and more.



Crew member profile and budgeting

- » Pricing, experience, and profile of each crew member is kept in the system, helping the production team allocate the right crew members to each client.
- » Calculation between margin during order conversion and real margin is visible, to assist in making the right decisions.



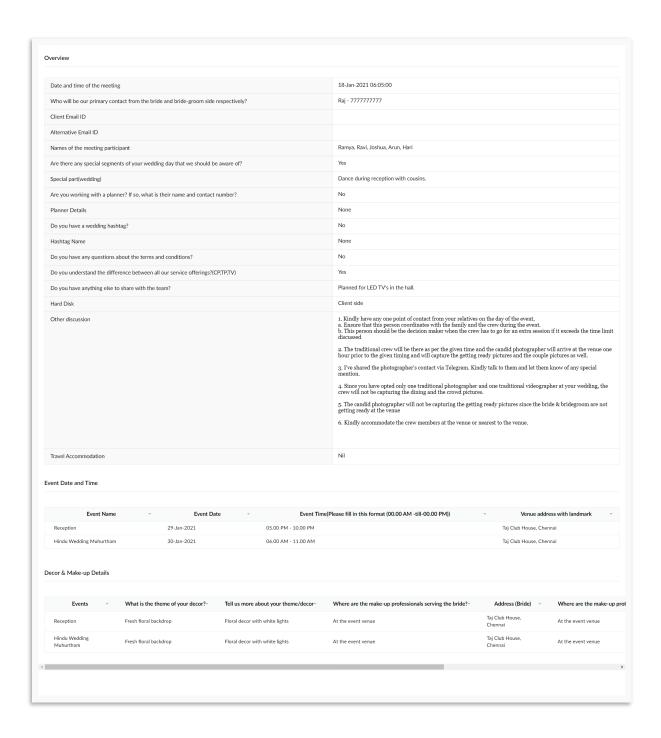


- » Date availability/calendar and scheduling of shoots for each crew member and team
- » Automatic date allocation based on Muhurtham/auspicious dates
- » Built-in limitations for each Muhurtham/auspicious date that keeps managers informed on the number of available slots
- » Export as PDF or print file



Organize meetings and document information

- » Easily provide clients with an appointment calendar for virtually meeting crew members via Zoho Meetings.
- » Create meeting minutes and send them to clients for acknowledgement.



FOR CREW MEMBERS (PHOTOGRAPHERS, CINEMATOGRAPHERS, AND VENDORS)

- » Dashboard to access all event dates with full schedule and client information
- » Export as PDF or print file
- » Accept or reject date(s)/shoots, within a predefined timeline
- » Upload invoices and send for approval
- » Update pricing and send for approval

FOR POST PRODUCTION AND ACCOUNT MANAGERS



Order management

- » Forecast and plan the post-production process for all clients
- » Auto-assign editors based on availability and work schedule
- » Set deadlines and provide feedback
- » Track, manage, and analyze work progress
- » Get alerts and timely information to avoid delays and escalations.
- » Predictive analysis helps plan busy wedding seasons proactively



File management

- » Assign tasks and set deadlines for the server team to provide files to the editors
- » Track, manage, and analyze work progress
- » Get alerts and timely information to avoid delays and escalations
- » Predictive analysis to help proactively plan very busy wedding seasons



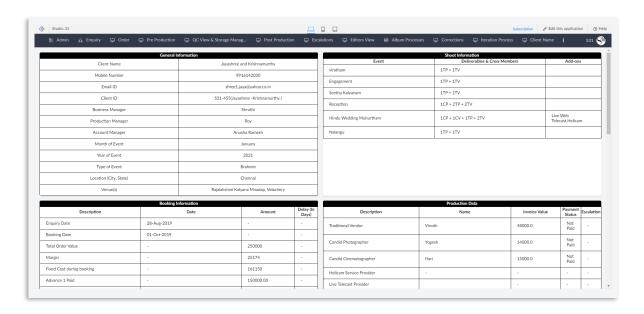
Client interactions

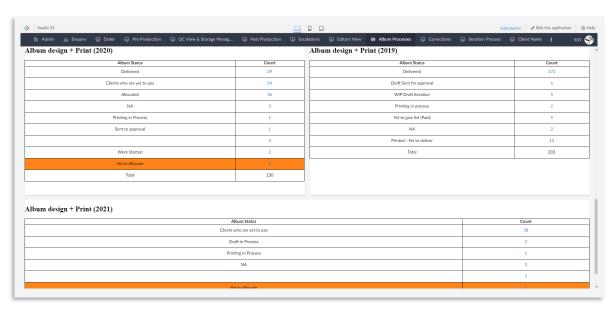
- » Easily update all information directly to client dashboard
- » Automatically or manually trigger reminders to clients for cooperating with editors
- » Capture all offline communications onto the dashboard via a simple interface



Advanced analytics and reporting

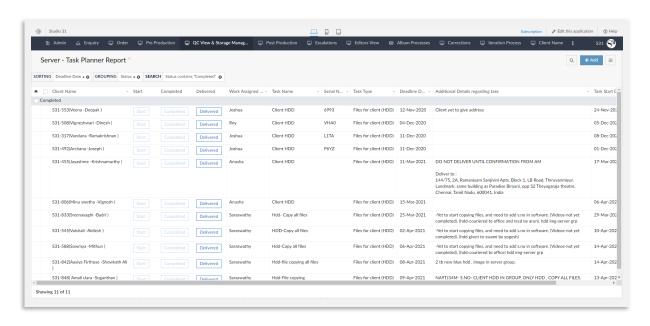
- Powerful dashboards to track and measure over ten key performance indicators
- » Automated error reporting tools
- » Measure performance and client history in a single click

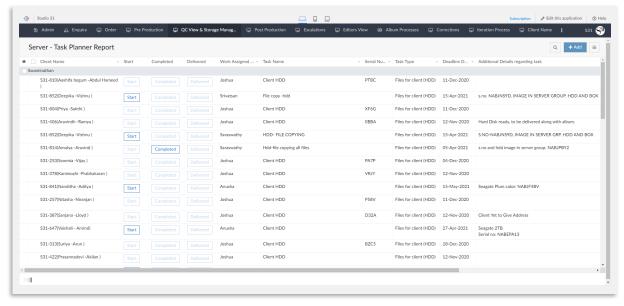


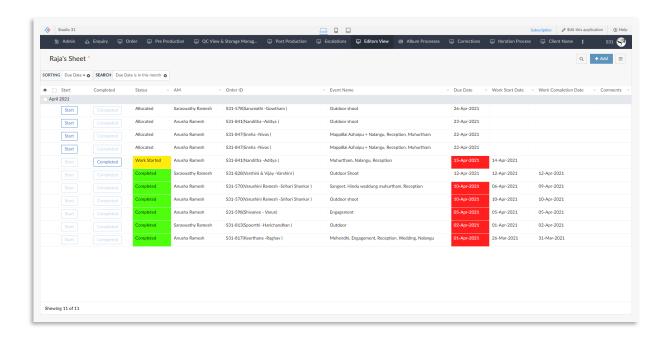


FOR EDITORS, COLORISTS, DESIGNERS AND SERVER MANAGERS

- » View work schedules 30 days in advance
- » Mark statuses for tasks
- » Provide feedback about file quality and scope for improvement
- » Log time and activity on a daily basis
- » Request additional time from account manager
- » Escalate challenging tasks to account managers
- » Automatically or manually trigger reminders to clients for cooperating with editors
- » Track, manage, and analyze work progress







FOR FINANCE TEAM

- » Generate real-time P&L data for each client
- » Real-time data on actual expenses vs projected expenses
- » Budgeting and planning functionality
- » Advanced analytics and reports

FOR MARKETING TEAM

- » Lead source dashboard
- » Advance CRM to view and analyze marketing and sales information

FOR CLIENTS

- » A web and mobile-friendly dashboard that covers all the above departments and information required for clients
- » Real-time alerts and reminders for each and every process
- » Clear information and advanced FAQs for the whole customer lifecycle

FOR MANAGEMENT

- » Advanced foolproof dashboards with error rates for every single department and employee
 - i) Lead management and source
 - ii) Sales, marketing, and revenue
 - iii) Production
 - iv) Post production, along with escalation dashboard
 - v) Server
 - vi) Finance
 - vii) Client history

Zoho Creator is our favorite low-code platform that allows us to define all our processes our own way. Basically, the software adapted to our thought process and not vice versa. The platform has been very easy for beginners like me to design and generate any report in minutes. I've been able to customize anything and everything with Zoho Creator according to me and my company's needs.

Joshua

Senior Management Consultant & Finance Head

BENEFITS AND ROI

- Eliminated emails by over 98% (average of 45 emails per client)
- 80% increase in creative and strategic productivity
- End-service delivery time decreased by 40%
- Automation helped Studio 31 stop using spreadsheets and documents
- Saved 3 hours on average per employee, per day
- Reduced human error by 95%
- Increased employee and customer happiness by more than 70%
- Employee self-assessment and performance is now automated and non-biased
- Increased profit per order by over 24%

FOOLPROOF SYSTEM FOR RUNNING A PROFITABLE BUSINESS

Business managers are able to create an order form/mark as won only if the margin details and client profile meets company guidelines. This is predefined in the system and reviewed once a quarter.

ERROR DATA ON ALL DASHBOARDS

All dashboards are provided with an error tab that indicates if there's any data mismatching.



I was researching economic alternatives to achieve this somehow, and that's when I learned about low-code tools. They're like a canvas; one can build and achieve anything, and save 90% of the actual development cost. We researched several solutions and figured out that Zoho Creator worked the best. We started building the software in 2017 and it took us about 19 months to get the entire workflow sorted. However, a boon in disguise was the time that we got during the Covid lockdown. We put all hands on deck, and in about 200 days, we had built a much-improved software solution. We'd built something outstanding, and we knew this because we were able to see the results.

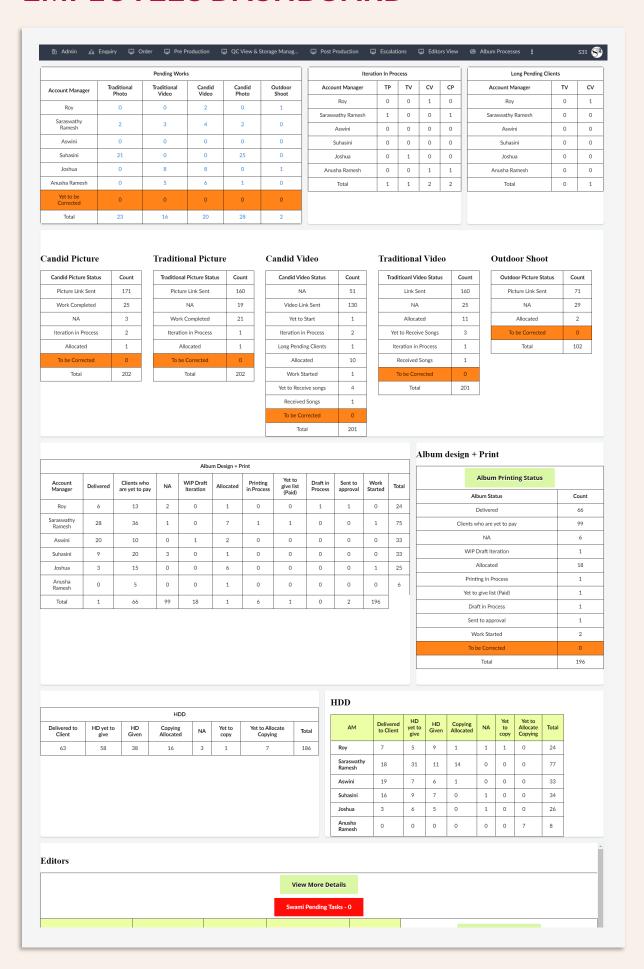
Pranesh Padmanabhan

Founder, Studio 31



- » Automation of manual and repetitive tasks; eliminated email communication by 100%
- » Proactive prediction of customer activity's health, lifecycle, and future
- » Recommendations and reminders of tasks that impact daily work routine
- » Monitoring work progress and providing assessments on business health
- » Showcasing data and analytics visually in a single dashboard, across all departments

EMPLOYEES DASHBOARD



FOR CLIENTS

- » No more following up; essential data is showcased on a dashboard with live updates
- » No more emails; intelligent sections provide feedback and access to photographs and film
- » Self-help desk that saves hours, and clear processes and policies provide a hassle-free experience

WHY CREATOR WORKS?

At Zoho, our vision has always been to build software for people to transform the way they work. More often than not, the true test is in addressing needs of every form of business. If a profession as dynamic, versatile and niche as wedding photography could automate 37 processes across seven departments, then this is a testament to the fact that Zoho Creator can help companies with even the most diverse needs and solve challenges with low-code. Digital transformation is a choice you can make.



www.zoho.com/creator

We'd love to talk! Reach out to us: hello@zohocreator.com



