

Case Study



Alight Media

The future of out-of-home lives in Zoho CRM



[zoho.com](https://www.zoho.com)



The Company

Positively different out-of-home

Alight Media is the UK's fastest-growing out-of-home (OOH) and place-based media business. In 2019, its founders, Matthew Dearden and Dave Huckerby, set out to challenge the conventions of out-of-home advertising. Drawing on their experience working at legacy media companies, the pair recognised how oversaturated major cities like London, Manchester, and Birmingham had become with billboards and outdoor advertisements. Spotting a gap in the market, they formed Alight Media to extend OOH opportunities to overlooked locations and smaller towns.

From the outset, they were equally committed to building a business that people want to work for: one that's inclusive, gives back to local communities, and champions sustainability, picking up several "Best Company" awards along the way. What's more, the duo wanted to embrace cutting-edge tech internally and externally, an area where many established media giants remain behind the curve.

That combination of positioning and execution has driven rapid growth. In just a few years, Alight has scaled from a team of five to more than 90 employees, reaching £30+ million in annual revenue by 2023. Today, its coverage spans more than 190 UK towns, and more than 33 million people see one of its screens each month - that's nearly half the UK's population. Furthermore, through a partnership with Stonegate Ltd, Alight Media operates the UK's most extensive network of full-motion screens in leisure and hospitality environments. This impressive estate comprises almost 3,600 screens in around 700 venues nationwide.

We caught up with Grace Stanton, Operations Director, to discover how this ambitious, challenger brand uses multiple Zoho tools to realise its tech-forward vision; powering up its sales pipeline, managing its inventory, measuring frame ROI, and streamlining its payments processes.

The Challenge

Represent complex products and sales processes within a user-friendly CRM



We used a lot of spreadsheets, and we had separate systems for our sales, development, and operations teams. As we scaled, it became clear we needed a centralised system for all of our data.

Grace Stanton,
Operations Director



Grace is a founding member of the Alight team, having joined the business in 2019. Today, she heads up its sales, operations, and content teams. Witnessing the business scale at pace, her cross functional view quickly exposed a growing problem: disconnected systems and a heavy reliance on spreadsheets. The results were, as she recalls, "a lot of dual entry, human error and mistakes." So in late 2021, Grace and her coworkers launched a tender process to implement a central, multifunctional CRM system.

That CRM choice required careful consideration. Alight's business model, product portfolio, and sales channels are highly complex and nuanced. Its classic and digital OOH estate includes D48s (large digital units), D6s (small digital units) C6s (classic poster sites), bus shelters, and digital and paper freestanding units, with most units offering the choice of static, motion, and dynamic creatives. Plus, Alight's diverse routes to market include direct B2B, agencies, national sales, and specialist sales teams, with sizes, buying cycles, and spend varying greatly. What's more, its client bookings can be agreed on either fixed slots, share of voice, number of impressions, or on a number of plays.

Understandably, it was important that any new CRM solution offered extensive malleability and customisation potential. "There's a lot of intricacies that don't replicate themselves elsewhere, so we knew we needed the ability to shape it to our business...It's not one size fits all for the way we sell our inventory," explains Grace. "It's really important to have flexibility in terms of how we can sell, and also to have the visibility of that when the sales team are looking for the space, or when clients are using our booking form," she adds.

Alight quickly discounted several other well-known CRM platforms ("a lot offered out-of-the-box solutions without much room for movement," laments Grace), but were impressed by Zoho CRM's adaptability. "With Zoho, there was the potential to create something really custom and unique to Alight Media...it made Zoho stand out to us," she says.

Working alongside Target Cloud, an Advanced Zoho partner, Alight set about crafting a custom solution inside Zoho CRM. Quickly reaping the rewards, the team soon bolted on further Zoho apps to streamline its client data collection and contract signing, and to build a dynamic library of its inventory linked to Space, the Outdoor Industry Standards Committee's database.

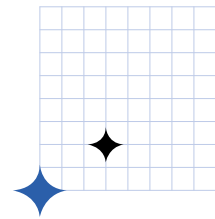
The Solution

Zoho CRM, Sign, Forms, and Creator prove the perfect OOH toolkit



We have now centralised our information in **Zoho - the CRM is our single source of truth**

Grace Stanton,
Operations Director





Inventory Management

Zoho CRM sits at the very heart of Alight's sales processes, managing its leads, opportunities, clients and contacts. To reflect the complexity involved in those processes, Target Cloud crafted multiple different order types, each determining a choice of pipeline and a record layout that best reflected the sales cycle involved.

This customisation allows each of Alight's sales teams to visualise and manage the requirements for the channel they oversee - whether that's deals with hundreds of line items for large agency clients, or smaller, more fast-paced opportunities suited to direct clients. "Zoho has given us the flexibility to reflect these different order types and pipelines," Grace smiles.

Alight also uses several custom CRM modules to track its inventory. The "Frames" module records every single frame that Alight owns, allowing the sales team to see, search, and reserve them against deals. It also details each frame's location, plus any restrictions or prohibitions, and its current status. Previously managed in spreadsheets, this inventory was difficult to maintain and made it hard for sales teams to see what was actually available. "Now we have a custom frame-picker widget in the CRM that allows us to see all our frames and...if they're saleable," beams Grace. "We also use that to make sure that we're allocating the revenue to specific panels. It gives us amazing revenue recognition on a granular level," she adds.

Meanwhile, a "Billboard" custom module hosts all the information for each billboard location, and a "Bus Shelters" module manages all of Alight's classic estate, including its static panels and scrolling units in bus shelters. An "LED Screens" module completes the inventory records, holding Alight's LED screen specifications, as well as details about the manufacturers, power requirements, and any contracts that are in place.

Like all UK media owners, Alight lists its inventory in a searchable online platform called "Space", a central database of all the OOH facilities across the country. Zoho CRM automates the process of uploading Alight's new frames to Space and keeping information about its existing frames up to date there. New frames are pushed overnight and listed as live inventory, while any changes - such as a frame going out of charge - are reflected in real time. "Through Zoho, we have an API that goes both ways into the Space system. This two-way sync ensures the CRM is our single source of truth," Grace explains. This integration also pulls unique frame IDs from Space into Zoho CRM, allowing Alight to track performance and calculate yield at an individual frame level.



Contracts & Payments

Once a B2B or direct client has agreed on a booking with Alight's sales team, a data health check tool performs a credit check on new clients from right inside the CRM using a Creditsafe API. For clients that pass credit checks, an embedded "Send with Zoho Sign" button inside the CRM opportunity helps to seal the deal. "At the confirmation stage, we can generate the document fully inside the CRM opportunity record. Then Zoho Sign ensures that we get a signature from the client to make sure that they pay for the booking," says Grace. Once the agreement is signed and returned by the client, the salesperson proceeds to book the campaigns in Alight's CMS system.

To manage its invoices and payments, Alight uses Xero accounting software. However, before moving to Zoho, the team had no easy way to link its sales and operations data to its financial platform. Every deal had to be logged in a spreadsheet and then manually fed into Xero for processing. "What we've now got with Zoho is an integrated CRM to Xero feature. We have a widget in the system that automatically allows us to see our invoices in advance. It can also split those invoices out based on the various bursts of a campaign," reveals Grace. The integration also lets Alight's sales and operations teams see if raised invoices have been paid or not, so they can effectively keep track of their clients and campaigns.



A custom "Specs" application

Using Zoho Creator, a low-code custom application builder, Alight and Target Cloud crafted a bespoke database of the company's billboards for internal and external use called "Specs". The Creator application allows the sales team to view at a glance all the information about any site, including its location, screen size, resolution, landlord, and what can and can't be played on the screen. From the application, billboard data can be seamlessly exported and shared with its clients in the right format.

The "Specs" application also interfaces with Alight's website, where it's combined with Google Maps in a dynamic "find screens near you" feature. This allows visitors to search by postcode, town, or region to see Alight's screens plotted geographically and colour-coded by type. "This allows our customers to easily search for our sites," says Grace. "It's mostly used when we get inbound queries asking us where we have screens, when we'll point them to the website."

Linked directly with Zoho CRM, "Specs" is updated from Alight's inventory records in real time, ensuring total consistency across systems. Grace explains: "When we get new billboards, they come through the CRM, push through to the app, and then the app pushes them through to our website. Our customers can see what's available in an instant."

If a visitor is interested in a specific screen or location, they can quickly and easily log an enquiry directly on the website. Zoho Forms captures the enquirer's details, and these are pushed into the CRM upon submission, ready for the sales team to follow up on. "Rather than going back and forth on email to take information, we can collect it in a Zoho Form and push it straight through to Zoho CRM in the correct format, and all of the team then has access to the data. Zoho Forms makes it really easy," Grace adds.

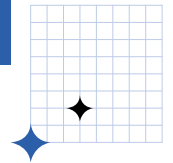


The Power of Partnership



If you're working in an industry where you have very specific ways in which you operate, or **very specific needs from your clients, you'll be able to do that with Zoho**

Grace Stanton,
Operations Director



Given the nature of Alight's non-standard processes and products, Grace and her managerial colleagues realised that the true potential of Zoho would be best unlocked with a skilled implementation partner on board. Target Cloud proved the ideal partner to realise that vision. "We've worked a lot with Craig from Target Cloud to build all our custom modules and figure out how best to use Zoho for Alight," Grace reflects. "They have really learnt about our business, and so they can make recommendations to us on how best to represent our business and all of its intricacies," she adds.

Although the groundwork is now complete, Alight is ambitious and is always looking to stay ahead of the competition. As such, the relationship with Target Cloud has been built to last. "They give us that peace of mind that if there's anything new that we need, or extra support, we can just turn to them and get it instantly."

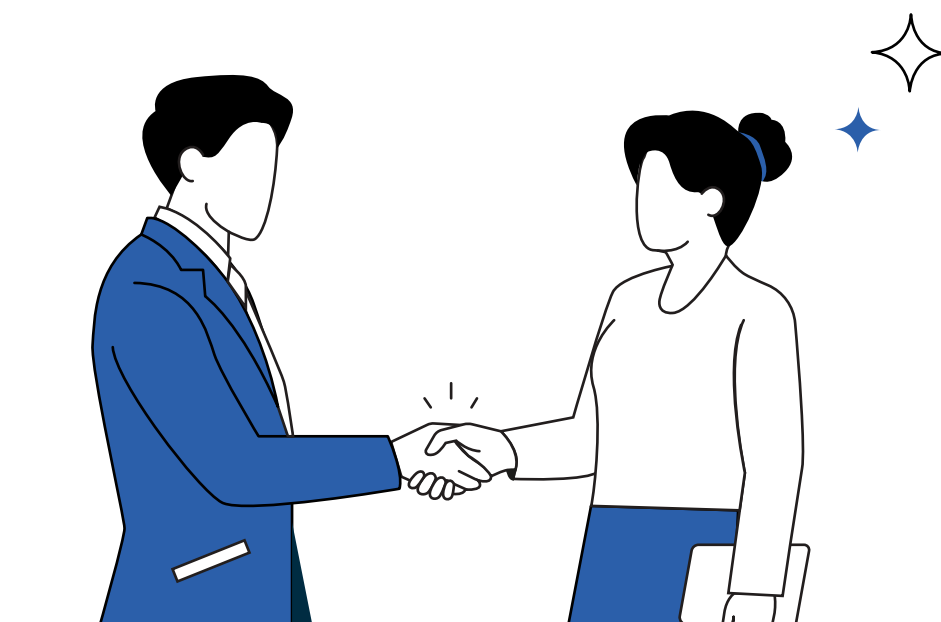
Underpinning the longevity of that partnership is the Zoho platform itself. Its deep customisation potential, extensibility, and intuitive configurations ensured it was the perfect fit for Alight's complex operations. "I would definitely recommend Zoho for any business that's looking to do something a bit more customised," says Grace. "We have used the customisation to its full extent, and it's been really great... Zoho offers a lot more flexibility than a lot of other platforms that do similar things."

About Target Cloud



Target Cloud is an Authorised Zoho partner based in Norwich, UK. Established in 2014, its team brings years of deep expertise to Zoho implementation projects across a range of sectors and sizes. Its services include setup, customisation, training, consultancy, and ongoing support for all Zoho products, especially those in the sales, marketing, and service remit.

To learn more about Target Cloud, visit: www.targetcloud.co.uk



About Zoho CRM



Zoho CRM is a cloud-based customer relationship management software that helps businesses deliver fantastic customer experiences and drive growth. The platform manages every aspect of sales, marketing and support. Offering omnichannel presence, segmentation, predictive intelligence, analytics, customisation, integration, and more, Zoho CRM empowers more than 250,000 global customers.

Please find out more via our website: www.zoho.com/CRM



zoho.com



Alight Media website:

www.alightmedia.com

Email us:

Sales@zohocorp.com

Contact us:

+44 (0)203 564 7890