



Zoho One: Increasing the Return on Investment for Business Transformation

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Joshua Greenbaum, Principal
Enterprise Applications Consulting
www.eaconsult.com

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Introduction: Technology, Complexity, and Productivity

The ability of a company to innovate and thrive in the dynamic global economy is a matter of both overcoming barriers to innovation and capitalizing on new opportunities. For many companies, these requirements have given a green light to the idea that success in the 21st century can be measured by how much leading-edge technology a company can deploy in the hope of innovating and competing. To a certain extent that is true, but technology deployment is only a small part of the overall story of innovation and productivity improvement. For most companies, large and small, global and local, success is measured by how well people – employees, partners, and customers – are empowered by new technology, rather than how much raw technology a company deploys.

Indeed, complexity can be a major barrier to success, and the change management that comes with excess complexity can have an additional negative impact on success. Importantly, the barriers that

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complexity creates aren't just a matter of how easy it is to learn how to use a new piece of software or a new business process. Complexity also becomes a factor in how technology is acquired, deployed, and distributed in an organization. The effort needed to acquire new technology – how much time and effort it takes to deploy, how long it takes for users to get comfortable with the new technology, and, of course, how much that new technology costs – all must be considered when judging the efficacy of a particular solution and its potential impact on a company's innovation efforts. (See sidebar: *Complexity, Productivity, and the “Solow Paradox,”* below.)

This more complex view of the ways in which productivity is influenced by how well technology can be deployed is at the center of how Zoho Corporation's flagship product suite, Zoho

One, defines its value across a broad customer base. Offering Zoho One's over 45 individual, integrated products for a single per user per month price of \$35 has the potential to upend the myth that “you get what you pay for” in enterprise software. While no one can transform a company for free, Zoho's position is that the cost of the software needed to support that transformation and the new, complex business processes that are required need only be a fraction of the total cost of transformation, both in terms of capital and change management complexity.

This speaks to a unique value proposition for Zoho One: As the total cost of the software is fixed – the \$35/user/month price applies as long as every employee in the company is outfitted with a license – each time a new app is used or a new user accesses Zoho One, the total return on investment increases proportionally. That increase comes largely without any additional cost.

As the total per user per month cost is fixed, each time a new app is used or a new user accesses Zoho One, ROI increases proportionally.

Zoho has asked Enterprise Applications Consulting (EAC) to investigate the impact that Zoho One can have on helping companies transform their businesses to be more productive without incurring the massive costs in budget and effort that typify the rest of the enterprise software market. To this end EAC has interviewed Zoho customers and stakeholders and researched the ways in which Zoho One's broad palette of functionality can be used to support a broad range of business transformation needs. The results of that research show how Zoho One's combination of standardized data and process models, combined with its almost shockingly low price, can create significant value for a wide range of companies and industries.

Zoho One Overview

Zoho One is a suite of over 45 products that cover over ten major functional areas: among them are analytics, sales, marketing, support, human resources, accounting, communications, productivity, finance, and operations. (See sidebar below for a full list.) The suite also includes a set of tools that allow

Complexity, Productivity, and the “Solow Paradox”

The relationship between technology and complexity can be seen in the lack of direct correlation between companies' growth in spending on technology and their growth in productivity. Spending more on technology doesn't necessarily mean a company becomes more productive. Despite a perpetually churning enterprise software market and solid, continuous growth in IT spending, overall productivity growth in the global economy has lingered in the vicinity of two percent for the entire 21st century. This phenomenon, called the Solow Paradox, named after Robert Solow, the Nobel Prize winning economist who first observed this phenomenon in 1987, implies that true, measurable productivity and value come not from how much technology is deployed, but how well that technology is put to use, and what is the total cost of that use.

customers to create, manage, and orchestrate business processes and workflows, use artificial intelligence technology, and integrate telephony services. Zoho One also provides single sign-on access management, unified messaging and search, a broad range of low-code and no-code development services, and full mobile deployment, among other services. In addition, Zoho One runs on the company's own cloud infrastructure and provides a set of tools optimized for the Zoho

cloud, a departure from the growing momentum towards public cloud hyperscalers like Azure, Google Cloud Platform, and AWS.

The only major functional categories not covered by Zoho One today are enterprise resource planning (ERP) and supply chain management (SCM) – though many adjacent functions are available in Zoho Inventory and Zoho Finance. This places some limits on the ability of Zoho One to be used in a

Major Functional Areas of Zoho One

- Access management
- Accounting
- AI
- Analytics
- Communications
- Finance
- Human resources
- Marketing
- Operations
- Productivity
- Sales
- Single sign-on
- Support
- Workflow orchestration

A full list of all apps and services can be found here:

www.zoho.com/one/business-software.html

manufacturing intensive company, though in reality many SME manufacturing companies are focused more on transforming their front-end, user-facing processes than their backend ERP systems. Zoho has indicated that some ERP capabilities are currently under development and are expected to be released in the first half of 2021.

The unified user experience provided by Zoho One is an important part of the suite's ROI and is a major contributor to the ability of customers to expand their use of the suite. A user of any of the major apps in Zoho One can easily shift to another app without extensive training in a new user experience. EAC's conversations with customers show that this greatly lowers change management costs and increases user acceptance significantly.

Integration, internal as well as external, is a major selling point for Zoho One. For the most part, the applications are based on a single data model and can be used completely seamlessly from the moment of sign-on. Some functions, like invoicing, are provided directly in Zoho CRM by changing settings in a user-accessible menu, but the more robust capabilities of Zoho Invoice can also be fully integrated into a CRM process. This robust integration allows customers to mix and match applications in order to build process flows that are closely tailored to their specific needs.

External integrations abound. The company provides over 450 pre-built integrations to a wide range of

applications including Outlook, Salesforce.com, Google Docs and Forms, Dropbox, Zendesk, and others. Many of these applications can be accessed via Zoho One's single sign-on capability, and third party application user provisioning can also be managed within Zoho One's Admin Panel. Direct support for third party mobile apps will be added to Zoho One in a forthcoming release. Zoho One also connects

directly to a range of telephony services from providers such as RingCentral and Vonage, and can connect its order management capabilities directly to over 40 shipping and logistics companies.

This broad palette of applications begs the question of whether Zoho One customers are sacrificing important functionality that they could get by using best-of-breed applications in some of these categories. While each customer's needs are different, and some may find specific functions they need are lacking in apps like Zoho CRM, Zoho Books, or Zoho People, EAC believes that for the most part the 80/20 rule of software usage favors Zoho One. This somewhat loosely defined rule – 80 percent of the users of a given product access only 20 percent of its features – is particularly true for customers using multiple Zoho One apps to cover end-to-end business processes. End-to-end processes that span different applications in traditional, siloed enterprises are extremely costly to build and maintain due to the lack of integration and orchestration between applications from different vendors. The fact that Zoho One can overcome those limitations out of the box potentially removes a far larger barrier than might possibly occur through the lack of a specific piece of functionality offered by a best of breed product. (See ONE Inc.'s user story, below, for a customer's take on this concept.)

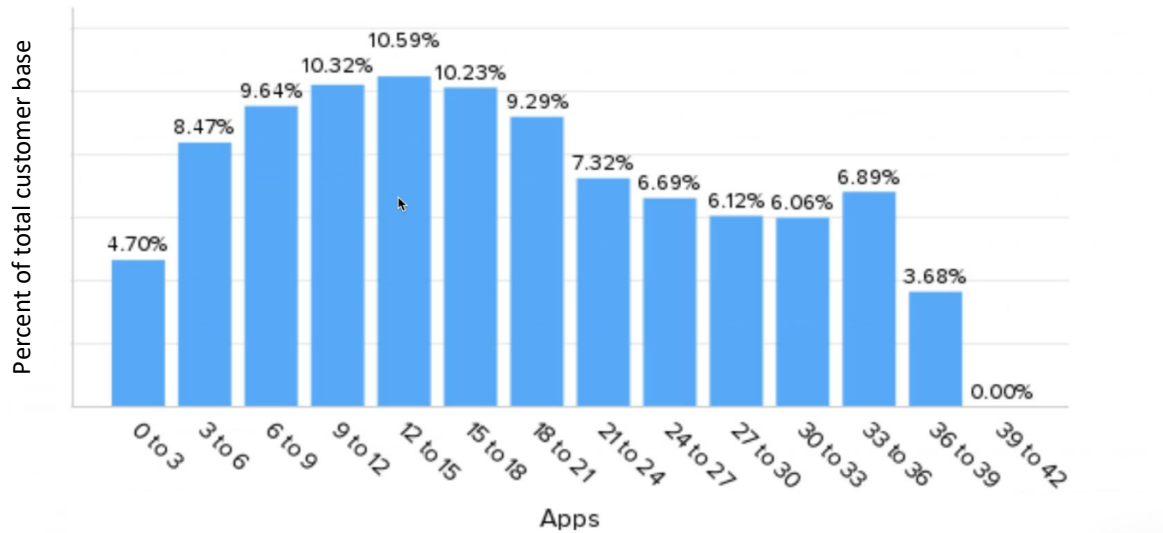
The Zoho One Adoption Process

While the sheer quantity of apps under the Zoho One umbrella might make it seem that adoption patterns would be as numerous as the selection of apps, the reality is that there are important commonalities as to how Zoho One is rolled out by customers.

The fact that Zoho CRM is the company's dominant product makes it the starting point for most Zoho One customers. According to an analysis of user uptake provided by Zoho, with Zoho CRM as the main entry point, Zoho Analytics, Zoho Books, Zoho Desk, Zoho Invoice, and Zoho Projects are the top six products used by most Zoho One customers.

Importantly, who uses these apps is variable, a reflection of the fact that, particularly in small and medium-sized businesses, user roles are often fluid, and many individuals play multiple roles in their companies. Also worth noting is the rate of uptake of new apps. Most customers start with between six and ten apps when they first begin using Zoho One. Over the course of the first year, customers tend to adopt an average of 10 to 14 apps, depending on their business requirements. Many mature customers use 20 or more. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: Average Number of Apps Used by Zoho's Customers

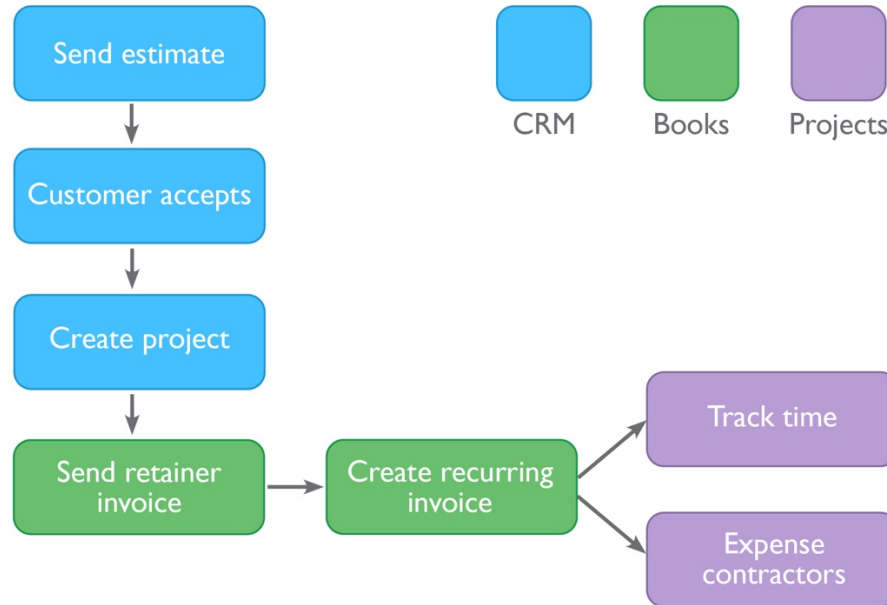


Source: Zoho

With CRM leading the way, most initial engagements with Zoho One are based on three main business functions that effectively help companies begin to implement a basic *lead to cash* process. These business functions are lead generation, lead management, and reporting. Lead generation is typically accomplished using Zoho Campaigns and Sales IQ; Zoho CRM and Marketing Hub are used for lead management; and Zoho Analytics for reporting. Customers then typically round out the lead to cash process by using Zoho One's bookkeeping and invoice management capabilities. This includes using Zoho Books, Zoho Invoice, and Zoho Checkout to manage the cash side of lead to cash, with Zoho Expense deployed for tracking sales executives' costs.

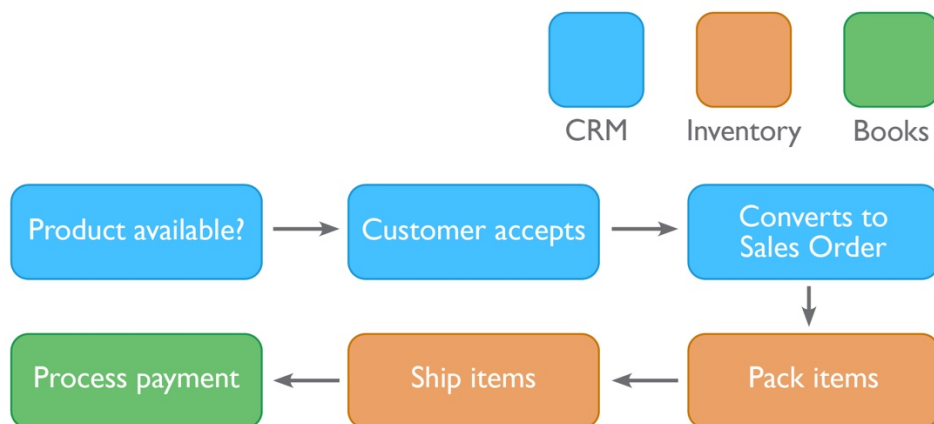
Customers then typically use the breadth of functionality in Zoho One to expand on the basics of lead to cash. For companies that are in a more project-based line of business, like construction, Zoho Projects can be added in order to track the time and expense side of a project. (See Figure 2.) Companies that deliver post-sales services use the ticket handling functionality in Zoho Desk to track service calls. And companies looking to expand their social media presence as part of their marketing and services efforts often deploy Zoho Social.

Figure 2: Blending CRM, Books, and Projects for a construction or other project-based service

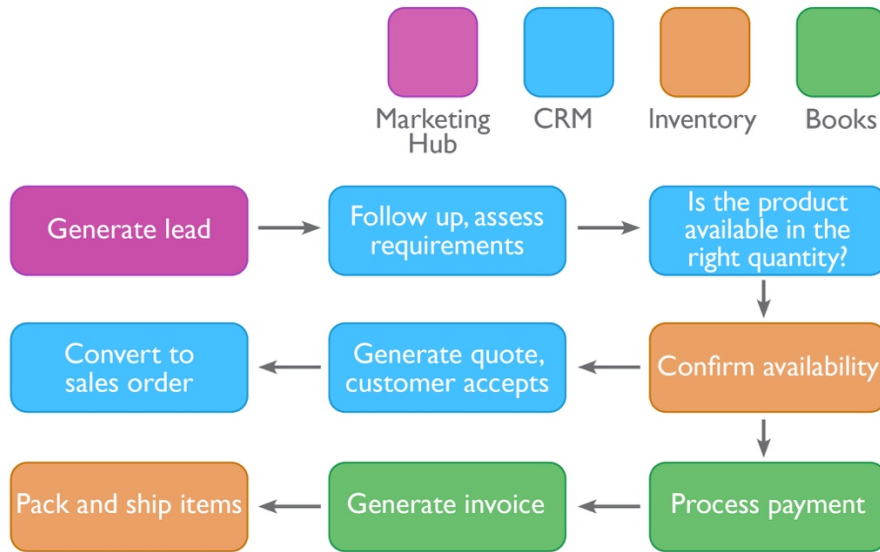


While there is some consistency in the apps that customers deploy first, the mix of apps in Zoho One allows considerable variation in order to match specific business needs. A company that sells in a *make-to-order* or *available-to-promise* model might use a mix of Zoho One apps that moves from Zoho CRM, to Zoho Inventory, to Zoho Books. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3: Zoho One configured to support make to order or available to promise



A customer can also use Zoho One to directly tie its marketing efforts to its sales pipeline. A lead generated in Zoho Marketing Hub can be used directly inside Zoho CRM in order to drive the sales process through to a sales order. That sales order can then be used by Zoho Inventory to pack and ship the items sold, which then triggers a payment process in Zoho Books. (See Figure 4.) This is similar to how Zoho customer Purolite uses Zoho One. (See Purolite user story, below.)

Figure 4: Lead generation to payment processing with Zoho One

The process of deployment is tied to a process of discovery. As customers familiarize themselves with the scope of Zoho One, they tap into its broad palette of functionality in order to enable new processes and extend existing ones.

The myriad combinations of apps available in Zoho One allow customers to add on functionality specific to their industries as well. Zoho One customers in media and internet service industries use Zoho Subscription to manage the recurring subscriptions typical of those customers. Other companies will deploy Zoho Forms and Zoho Sign to help manage contract creation and signing, and use Zoho Survey as part of their customer satisfaction processes. Cliq, Zoho One's team communications and collaboration tool, is also popular, and is used in conjunction with Zoho CRM and other processes.

Customer relations and sales force automation aren't the only functions widely supported by Zoho One. Zoho Finance isn't just a component of lead to cash, it's also a standalone function used by finance departments. Likewise, Zoho People is commonly deployed in a variety of industries, and Zoho Sprints is used by software development companies to manage their agile sprint processes.

As we shall see in the customer section below, the process of deployment is tied to a process of discovery. As customers familiarize themselves with the scope of Zoho One, they tap into its broad palette of functionality in order to enable new processes and extend existing ones. One customer interviewed by EAC has given a Zoho One license to a partner in order to streamline that company's fulfillment processes, providing a unique extension of Zoho One's ROI outside the company's user base. (See C.A.R.S. Protection Plus user story, below.)

A Guide to the Zoho One Applications in this Report

-  **Analytics:** BI and analytics tool
-  **Assist:** Remote support software
-  **Books:** Smart way to do your small business accounting
-  **Campaigns:** E-mail marketing and campaign automation tool
-  **Cliq:** Team communications and collaboration platform
-  **Connect:** Intranet Portal
-  **CRM:** Customer Relationship Management system
-  **Desk:** Business helpdesk support solution
-  **Expense:** Expense report management
-  **Forms:** Interactive online forms creator
-  **Inventory:** Stock management and inventory control software
-  **Invoice:** Billing and invoicing software
-  **MarketingHub:** Marketing automation software
-  **Meeting:** Web-conferencing solution
-  **Motivator:** Gamification service
-  **People:** Human resource management
-  **Projects:** Project management
-  **Recruit:** Recruitment software with applicant tracking system
-  **SalesIQ:** Real-time website tracking solution
-  **Sign:** Digital signature app
-  **Sites:** Website building tool
-  **Social:** Social media management tool
-  **Sprints:** Agile project management
-  **Subscriptions:** Recurring subscription management
-  **Survey:** Online surveys

The Customer Journey: “Zoho One is Integral to Everything I’m Doing”

While CRM is the common starting point for Zoho One, it’s important to understand that many small and mid-sized companies don’t adhere to a strict separation of roles as defined by three-letter acronyms, such as CRM. Functional silos are often collapsed or non-existent, and business users often straddle different functional areas and are thus exposed to challenges and opportunities outside a narrow line of business or other domain.

This is where Zoho One’s pricing and availability come into play. Zoho One’s most cost-effective per user price (\$35/user/month when every employee in the company is licensed) makes it only slightly more expensive on a per user basis than Zoho CRM’s Professional Edition (\$30/user/month) and much cheaper than Zoho CRM’s Enterprise Edition (\$45/user/month). At first glance, it looks like the total customer cost for a Zoho CRM would be much less than a company-wide Zoho One deployment, as the minimum total user threshold for Zoho CRM is only four users. But in companies where employees wear multiple hats, the difference in cost could be significantly offset by the value of deploying the full Zoho One suite, including Zoho CRM, for every employee.

These low prices – compared with Salesforce.com, that charges \$300/user/per month for its full sales and service product, with additional charges depending on how much storage and data integration are required – and the low incremental cost of extending Zoho One to an entire company, have an important effect on customers’ innovation strategy. With the cost of new functionality or adding new users basically set to zero, customers find it easy to use Zoho One as a platform for process innovation and expansion. As customers unpack the value of Zoho One, particularly customers who have experience with the relatively complex pricing models of Salesforce.com or other “top tier” SaaS vendors, it becomes obvious that the typical hidden costs regarding API calls, integration tools, and database charges are non-existent in Zoho One.

This exceptional value proposition combined with the incremental expansion of Zoho One’s use characterize the experience of the users interviewed by EAC.

C.A.R.S. Protection Plus: Using Zoho One to Extend Business Processes to Partners

The journey to Zoho One at C.A.R.S. Protection Plus, Inc., an automobile warranty provider to car dealerships across the US, started with the need for a new CRM and back office administration system following the company’s acquisition by a private equity firm in 2015.

At the time of the acquisition, the company was using homegrown software to manage the sale and service of warranties to over 6500 dealerships. The system was “rudimentary” and functional but inadequate for supporting the growth targets set by the company’s new owners, Rick Tudor, director of operations at C.A.R.S., told EAC. The search for a new system was compounded by the need to support an active sales effort as well as manage the process of contracting and distributing warranty forms to dealers. Tudor’s search uncovered software that was well-tailored to the warranty management process, but support for CRM was limited or non-existent.

Tudor decided to start with CRM, and after looking at a short list of competitors, he chose Zoho CRM. “Zoho most closely fit how we look at the customer and manage the relationship,” Tudor said. “It was similar to what we had built for ourselves.”

When Tudor later saw an announcement of Zoho One at a Zoholics user conference, he was intrigued. “We saw that it didn’t cost much more incrementally than what we were already paying [for Zoho CRM],” Tudor explained. “Knowing up front something about what was in the suite was a huge draw.”

For Tudor, the broad portfolio was a great starting point, and the built-in integration within Zoho One was the icing on the cake. “Not only could I fulfill my needs, the apps were going to integrate with each other,” Tudor realized. “I won’t have to spend time integrating.”

Zoho One was able to adapt nicely to C.A.R.S.’ specific warranty management process, allowing the company to track the sales efforts of its 110-strong sales team as well as help manage its dealer relationships, and the warranty contracts provided by C.A.R.S. that dealers would enter into with their car-buying customers. While the contracts themselves are managed by a separate ERP system, and the claim processing is handled by a different third party system, Zoho One receives a daily extract of the over 30 fields worth of data captured in the claims processing system in order to support management of the sales reps and the company’s dealer relationships.

The integration of claims information with Zoho One allows the company to use Zoho Analytics to track the details of each dealer’s claims and help the company’s representatives manage the dealers. Zoho Analytics is also used to track sales efforts, as well as the efforts of the dealerships to upsell C.A.R.S. warranties, and, it is used to flag dealers that may be abusing the C.A.R.S. warranty process. Communications within the company and between its claims adjusters is handled using Cliq.

Zoho Forms is another important component of the use of Zoho One at C.A.R.S. Once a dealer is signed up, the sales rep has to provision them with contracts, brochures, pens and other collateral to use in signing up new customers for a C.A.R.S. warranty. The sales reps have a form – built in Zoho Forms – that they use to request supplies in order to provision dealers directly as well as ensure they are sufficiently stocked with collateral as they make their rounds to new prospective dealers.

The way these requests are fulfilled shows a particularly inventive way to improve a business process by extending it, using Zoho One, to an outside partner. The original fulfillment process for shipping forms and other collateral involved stocking a warehouse with printed materials and shipping them on demand. Once Tudor familiarized himself with Zoho One, he realized that he could effectively outsource fulfillment to the company C.A.R.S. was using to do its direct mail marketing, and shut down the warehouse.

That company, CC Mailing, in Gibsonia, PA, was given a Zoho One license that allows it to take an inbound request – via Zoho Mail – to ship materials to a dealer, verify that the request meets certain criteria (has the dealer sent in the required tax reporting information, for example), and then, if all is well, send out the shipment.

The user experience in Zoho One made it easy for Molly Wawrzynski, CC Mailing’s owner, to open up the request (see Figure 5), check for the required information, and then process the request. Importantly, Zoho One’s security settings allow Tudor to limit Wawrzynski’s access to the dealer record. “When I open up Zoho there’s a lot I can’t see,” Wawrzynski said. “That’s convenient for them and for me – I only need limited access.”

Figure 5: C.A.R.S. Sales Request Form used by sales reps and fulfilled by CC Mailing

The screenshot shows a web form titled "Sales Rep Supply Request". It is divided into several sections: "Rep Info", "Contracts", and "Brochures".

- Rep Info:** Contains fields for "Your Name" (split into "First" and "Last"), "Email", and "Shipping State" (a dropdown menu).
- Contracts:** Includes a note "GAP not available through this form." and two sections: "Value Protect" and "Independence". Each section has radio button options for "1 Case", "2 Cases", and "None". Below these are two more sections: "Flex Sample Contracts/25" and "Power Train Limited Sample Contracts/25", each with a "Select" option.
- Brochures:** Includes a section for "Value Brochure/500" with an "English" option.

Source: C.A.R.S. Protection Plus

The result is a win/win for C.A.R.S. and CC Mailing. C.A.R.S. was able to get rid of a warehouse full of inventory, and CC Mailing was able to better service its customer as well as derive more revenue by working more closely with C.A.R.S. “It’s nice to be able to fulfill a dependable customer’s needs,” Wawrzynski said.

Tudor has a wide range of plans to extend C.A.R.S.’ use of Zoho One. Zoho Motivator is already being used for running a gamified sales incentive program; Zoho Meeting is used for collaboration among regional managers; Zoho Assist is used for training; and Zoho Expense is being used to track expenses in the sales organization. Next up is to deploy Zoho Recruit and Zoho People to manage human resources, Zoho Sign for document signature management, and Zoho CRM’s pipeline management to support the sales cycle, among others.

The bottom line for C.A.R.S. is that Zoho One is an essential part of its current and future business planning, one that has already had a huge impact on the company's process transformation. "We look at Zoho One as an investment," Tudor told EAC. "And return on it is huge."

Purolite: Usability Positions Zoho One as a Platform for Change

The use of Zoho CRM as the starting point for a broader expansion into Zoho One can be seen at Purolite, Inc., a high-performance resin manufacturer and supplier to a broad range of industries. The company's initial foray into Zoho CRM was relatively modest, with approximately 50 users. That began to change when the company's marketing department decided to upgrade the internal intranet used by Purolite's employees.

Amanda Dolan-Riddle, CRM integration manager at Purolite, sat down with her counterparts in marketing to spec out required functionality of the new internal website. As the list grew, and the potential cost grew with it, Dolan-Riddle proposed looking into Zoho One as a more cost-effective approach.

The end result was a win/win. Marketing got a new, very cost-effective way to meet its needs, and the roll-out of Zoho One company-wide meant that Dolan-Riddle's Zoho CRM use would be able to expand from the US across the entirety of Purolite. "Marketing had a laundry list of functions they wanted, including many things we didn't have in place at the time," Dolan-Riddle explained. Going to Zoho One "solved a high price-tag problem."

That initial conversation set Purolite on the Zoho One trajectory, and within a matter of months the expansion to Zoho One had begun. The usability of Zoho One was a major factor in that expansion. "When we did our global CRM launch, we introduced it to everybody" at two sales meetings. The introduction included giving access to Cliq and Zoho Connect to everyone in the meetings. "It was almost instantaneous – they were using it to interact with one another. It literally happened in a day," said Dolan-Riddle.

Once Zoho One began to take hold, the company was able to begin reimagining some of its core processes, such as providing sales reps with an accurate product lead time – an important part of the sales effort that requires information about product availability not typically stored in a CRM system. At Purolite, availability information was scattered amongst its different manufacturing sites: "Depending on where you were, you would get a different answer," Dolan-Riddle explained.

Using Zoho One, sales reps can now use the quote module in Zoho CRM to send a request to the logistics team to check product availability in Zoho Inventory. Responses can be sent in real time using Cliq. If the product is available, a quote can be generated in Zoho CRM. This process flow is one of the reasons Purolite has seen sales team productivity increase upwards of five and ten percent, according to Dolan-Riddle.

This value doesn't just accrue to the sales side, however. The logistics team has realized that Zoho One works as a valuable two-way communications channel with sales. "They can coordinate and shift

product back and forth” between locations, Dolan-Riddle said, which allows them to better understand what products are being requested more than others. “They’re seeing the benefits,” she added.

Other departments are also seeing the impact of a using a single suite with a single data model across the company. One example is Purolite’s finance department, which “is having a field day” with Zoho Analytics, according to Dolan-Riddle. “It’s all about making the information accessible to the people who need it. Pulling information out of our internal systems isn’t easy, but by putting the data into Zoho Analytics, everyone has reports they can use and reference.”

In all, Purolite is actively using 20 of the 45 Zoho One applications. The management team uses Zoho Projects to manage its project-based efforts; Zoho Expense is used company-wide for expense management; Zoho Connect has become a searchable repository for information that was formerly scattered among thousands of emails; and an R&D team in China uses Zoho Projects and Zoho Connect to collaborate on research efforts. Taken together, Zoho One has helped Purolite achieve an ROI of 271% from the modernization of analytics, reporting, and expense management.

That ROI will only expand, Dolan-Riddle agrees, as the use of Zoho One increases department by department. “I do a meeting about Zoho One and then I start hearing from people. Each department has that lightbulb moment” when they realize “I have a Zoho App for that and it can make my life so much easier,” Dolan-Riddle said. “The spread of use tends to happen on its own.”

ONE Business Solutions: Zoho One Supports a Fast Rate of Change

A major business transformation was in the works at ONE Business Solutions — an answering service and business process outsourcing specialist — based in Seymour, TN. The company was looking to consolidate a collection of call centers it had acquired into a single, over-arching brand, and they were looking to replace a “loosely duct-taped network of tools and products” with an integrated set of applications and services to fit the company’s consolidation and growth plans, according to Marc Fishman, Director of Marketing and Sales at ONE Business Solutions. Their search lead them to Zoho One.

The search eventually positioned Zoho One as the go-to platform for the new technology ONE Business Solutions needed to transform the company. “Zoho One is the supporting infrastructure for the company’s transformation,” Fishman told EAC. “Zoho One is integral to everything I do inside the company. It’s very aligned to the company’s vision of restructuring and rebranding.”

One of the key priorities was to improve the sales process at ONE Business Solutions. “I wanted to use Zoho One to digitize the entire sales process to make it easier for customers and the sales team,” Fishman explained. “Anything we can do to be ahead in that place is vital.” In particular, the company uses Cliq to help the sales team and management work together to identify “at-risk” accounts and improve retention.

The plan, currently underway at ONE, is to use a combination of Zoho One apps to replace that “duct-taped network” the company had been using in the past, by combining Zoho CRM, Zoho Sign, and Zoho

Mail, among others, to enable the process from first contact to signed contract. In addition, Fishman wants to create a self-service sales portal that offers a prospective customer a quote, customized automatically for their needs, and then “signs, seals, and delivers” a fully-executed contract.

The initial forays into the new sales process are going well, and Fishman’s team has transitioned easily to using Zoho Mail, Zoho Connect, and Cliq. Transitioning the rest of the team to Zoho Sites, Zoho Campaign, and Zoho Social “will take a little more time to get through,” Fishman acknowledged. But not too much time: An initial foray into using Sites, Forms, and CRM to run a gamified trade show booth experience was easy to set up and both engaged prospects at the booth and captured leads for the sales team. The gamified experience involved having the prospects interact with a live “call center” rep, using CRM, in a game of *two truths and a lie*. “This showed our senior management how detailed and deep the platform was for creating meaningful action,” Fishman added.

The fact that his team is familiar with products like Marketo and HubSpot means he’s confident that the change management side of the project will go well. “Most of us know what we want to do, it’s a matter of finding where the capabilities are.” In Zoho One, Fishman said “it’s all there.”

One of the major selling points for Zoho One has been its ability to support the back office processes that in turn support the company’s money-making call center, answering service, and business process outsourcing lines of business. Keeping the back office running well doesn’t necessarily require “sexy” products from major software brands, Fishman says. “I need things to be functional, I don’t need sexy products.”

That makes the price of Zoho One even more attractive. “Zoho One is so aggressively priced that were I to compare it in an app vs. app battle, where some product would have a deeper feature bench or UI, it wouldn’t matter,” Fishman said. “I don’t need to pay more for pretty.”

The deep functionality in Zoho One not only makes it possible to dream big, it also helps put practical boundaries around those dreams, Fishman explained. “Zoho One forces me to assess what I want out of my business because I can centralize it all in Zoho One.”

With the company’s senior management pushing a far-reaching and ambitious business transformation, Fishman’s plans for Zoho One are equally ambitious. In addition to the current apps he is using in sales, Fishman is making plans to use Zoho Project, Zoho Social, Zoho Campaign, MarketingHub, Zoho Sites, and SalesIQ as the company’s use of Zoho One grows.

The fit between Zoho One and ONE Business Solutions’ ambitious growth plans is making that planning a lot easier for Fishman. “This is a very deep toolbox,” Fishman said. “Zoho One supports the fast pace of our business.”

Conclusion: Transforming Businesses by Transforming Software

The story of Zoho One is the story of the transformation of customer choice and the enterprise software industry as a whole. The ways in which companies can use Zoho One to completely change their core processes without the burden of continuous software acquisition, deployment, and integration, remove a barrier so well-entrenched that companies have become inured to its existence. That barrier is the complexity of choice: with so many products being sold by so many vendors as the *unique* technology for business transformation, customers are forced to run a gauntlet of claims and hype in order to find the solution to their business and technical problems. This process of discovery is time-consuming, costly, and fraught with danger: high-pressure sales tactics, gotcha contract terms and conditions, and the burden of supporting the complex integration of “must-have” best of breed software are all tolerated in the rush to find the most theoretically perfect technical solution. In the end, a customer trying hard to solve a particular problem all too often ends up solving one and creating many more. This cascading complexity is a major reason why the Solow Paradox is still in force three decades after it was first described.

This complexity is compounded by the often false impression that what really makes a difference in business transformation is the minutiae of specific software feature/functionality that increasingly becomes the only point of differentiation between two or more products. While companies can and should ensure that the business processes that define their specific competitive advantage can be realized in their enterprise software, the price of that differentiation should not result in an excessively complex and costly system and the risk that kind of system entails. On the contrary, as Zoho’s customers have illustrated, Zoho One proves that it’s possible to start a deployment of advanced software, and reap the benefits of a continuously growing ROI as usage expands across an organization.

This is why Zoho’s approach has the potential to transform the very industry in which it operates. The ability to deploy pre-integrated functionality from a single vendor that covers a majority of business requirements is already a hard requirement to fill. There is no vendor on the market today that can provide the breadth of functionality available in Zoho One, much less offer it at a price point lower than many products with an order of magnitude less functionality.

Successfully running the headquarter operations of very large, global companies with complex business processes, regulatory requirements, and extensive supply chains requires a functional scope and scale that is currently beyond the capabilities of Zoho One. The suite is already playing a major role in global enterprises today, however, and the company is making major investments in manufacturing and supply chain functionality that will expand its addressable market considerably in the near future.

With the vast majority of the world’s economy run by small and medium-sized companies, the market for Zoho One’s offerings is enormous. It may not be sexy, as Marc Fishman of ONE Business Solutions put it, but getting the job done at a fraction of the typical cost and without excessive complexity, definitely has its own distinct appeal. It may soon be time to rewrite the story of productivity in the 21st century and send the Solow Paradox back to the 20th century where it belongs.