



# Bridging the digital divide with Zoho Creator

A Greater Chennai Corporation initiative



Greater  
Chennai  
Corporation

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# Overview

In January 2021, the Indian government launched a booking portal for COVID vaccinations, called COWIN. It was started as a way to control the crowds at walk-in vaccination centers, as many people reported getting infected from the centers themselves. While this platform worked well for many, it didn't satisfy the demands of the city of Chennai.

With a population of over ten million, Chennai needed more vaccination slots than listed on the COWIN portal. Moreover, the portal didn't list many local centers—and even getting them listed was a hassle, as most of them were controlled by the central government.

**The lack of Tamil/regional language support, limited booking centers, and a fairly complex registration process** were some of the other reasons that drove MP Azhagu Pandia Raja, India's first City Innovation Officer and the Greater Corporation of Chennai (GCC) to build a custom solution.

Shyam Sundar, CEO and founder of [GoFloaters](#), and Vikram Ravi, founding member of Unmetric, along with outside developers Radhakrishnan and Deepak, volunteered to build the solution. They leveraged Zoho Creator's low-code capabilities to build a fully functional citizen-centric booking portal in **48 hours**, and as publishing, almost **300,000 people** have booked their slots using the app.



# Challenges

Besides the existing vaccination drives across Chennai, the GCC was launching vaccination camps all over the city, in places like government schools and public health centers, to make vaccination accessible to more people. But these spaces could not be listed on the COWIN platform, as it was controlled by the central government team.

The GCC wanted complete visibility of all the vaccination centers, so they could be on top of things and open up/close slots based on demand. They wanted a simpler, quicker, real-time system with:

- 1) An application accessible to everyone, despite technological and language barriers, to ensure more people get vaccinated quicker.
- 2) Better control over data, to allow changes, like updating/modifying vaccination slots, according to dynamic conditions.



# Solution

When the second wave of COVID hit India, finding hospital beds was extremely challenging.

Shyam Sundar and Vikram Ravi worked together on building an app for finding hospital beds—a help desk system and a workflow ticket management system—on Zoho Creator. They built and deployed this app in just 48 hours.

Over 80+ volunteers came together and utilized this application to help people find hospital beds, ventilators, ICU beds, and more.

**MP Azhagu Pandia Raja**, who also runs the Chennai Innovation Hub, and the GCC team came across this solution and were impressed with what they had created—and that's how Sundar and Ravi came onboard to build the GCC's Covid Vaccination Booking app.



Since they were working with government bodies, they had a strict timeline to adhere to. One evening, they got a brief about the needs for the app—different zones, wards, phone numbers, data collection, making it bilingual, and more. By the next evening, they showed the GCC a functioning prototype. From logo branding to UI, **50%** of the system was ready in just **24 hours**.

The rest of the application and performance testing was done in the remaining time—and within 48 hours, the application was live, with **80,000 visitors**. The ability to be able to quickly iterate is what helped them launch the solution quickly.



*I chose Zoho Creator due to its speed to market. It's a renowned brand, with software that has stood the test of time. Thanks to Zoho Creator, in 48 hours we were able to show a solid running app with real data, which convinced the GCC to take this forward.*



**Shyam Sundar**  
CEO and founder, GoFloaters



# Process

Booking a slot on the GCC Vaccination portal is a fairly simple process. It doesn't ask you to register upfront or add your ID number. All you have to do is:



Choose a zone



Book a slot based on availability



Enter your details



Validate with an OTP

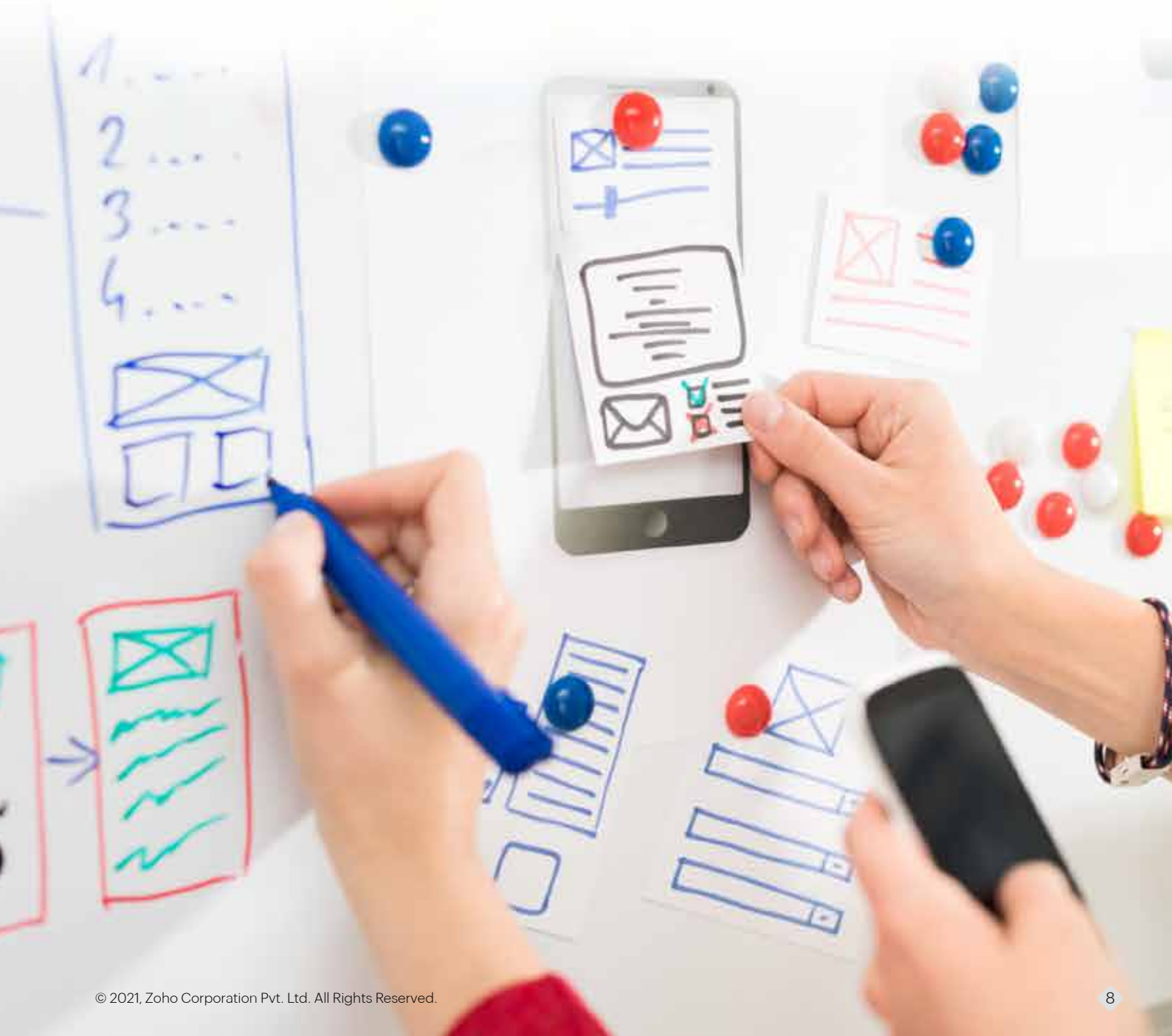
On the back-end, though, it's a bit more extensive. Every day, the slots open up around noon for booking, and go on until early next morning. By 7am, the bookings are disabled. A button is clicked on the Zoho Creator app and the portal goes offline to the public. The data dump of all the bookings is taken, reports are generated and then sent to the coordinators of the respective zones via email or WhatsApp. By exactly 9am, the centers have all the data in hand and begin the vaccination process.

They used the **Page Builder** to create their dashboards, which are used by the commissioners, assistant commissioners, and other government authorities to keep tabs on the wards, zones, gender, age groups, and more, so that they can get all the stats they want. They also have a couple of other dashboards to ensure their data is in sync and reflecting correctly.

In order to build the logic behind the application, they had to create a lot of workflows. This included workflows for processes like total availability of slots based on bookings, which needed to be set up and synchronized in real time with the front-end system.

Whenever a new slot is added or uploaded, they use the import functionality, with the data in a spreadsheet. Ravi validates it and imports it to Zoho Creator using the **Import data functionality**—and then, once the import is done, it's taken and synchronized to the front-end system using invoke URL.

All of this runs like a well-oiled machine since, in low-code, the data, sorting, filtering, and input logic are wired correctly.





# Results

**In under 30 seconds users can book a slot**—and if you want to cancel it, all you have to do is enter your mobile number, verify the OTP, and voila, it's cancelled. The entire process is simple and fast, especially since you don't have to remember any passwords or have any other credentials in place. A confirmation SMS is also sent, and a downloadable PDF of the vaccination booking is available on the portal.

Initially, GCC expected 500 slots per day, but then, seeing the portal's outcome, they increased it to 3,000 slots on the day of launch itself. **On average, 5,000 slots are booked every day.** Within 2 hours, the core zones in Chennai are already booked up.

Earlier, only one third of vaccination bookings were online, but now more people are increasingly comfortable booking online than at walk-in centers. And this has helped more people get vaccinated and reduced the unnecessary spread caused



# Benefits

According to the team, quicker development time, zero defects, faster deployment, and ease of use were the four biggest advantages they gathered.

## Faster development



*The first prototype was built within 24 hours. Not just a wireframe but an actual working back-end with real data and forms. In terms of development speed, Zoho Creator shined, which was the biggest plus for us.*



**Vikram Ravi**  
Founding team, Unmetric



## Error-free



*A scalable reliable solution that we could build quickly, without bugs, is why we went for low-code. We had zero defects after we launched the Vaccination App—and that is only because of low-code.*



**Shyam Sundar**  
CEO and founder, GoFloaters



## Ease of use



*In essence, it looks like you're working with a spreadsheet, but in reality it's being done on a powerful database that works on something as seamless as the Vaccination Portal, which is doing such an important task. That is where it's really easy!*



**Vikram Ravi**

Founding team, Unmetric



## Quick deployment



*In 24 hours we were able to show a solid running app with real data, which convinced the Greater Chennai Corporation to take this forward. We then ran a performance test, all of which happened in 48 hours.*



**Shyam Sundar**

CEO and founder, GoFloaters



The GCC also has a WhatsApp chat bot, which they've integrated with the vaccination app. When someone requests a vaccination, they'll be redirected to the booking portal link.

## Conclusion

The [Vaccination Booking Portal](#) has helped in bridging the digital divide, with its local language support and simple interface, and has helped hundreds of thousands of people get vaccinated. And there's plenty more the GCC is planning, to help make vaccination a hassle-free experience for everyone in the city.



*The Greater Chennai Corporation has a separate platform for vaccination, and that was entirely built on Zoho Creator. We're very happy with the performance. Around 300,000 vaccines have been booked via this application, and it's user-friendly and has a faster processing time. Tools like Zoho Creator help create positive social impact and we will definitely recommend the product for other projects, as well.*



**Azhagu Pandia Raja MP**  
City Innovation Officer, GCC



# About Zoho Creator

At Zoho Creator, we've always worked towards a single purpose—empowering users to build functional apps with minimal coding expertise. We've helped 13,000+ brands create bespoke solutions and improve their end-to-end operations across a variety of industries. With over 25 years of experience in catering to 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 the [sign-up page](#). You can also check out our [prebuilt workflow templates](#) to get started right away.

## Great brands trust us:





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