



Simplifying data management with low-code



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Introduction

MTN, Africa's leading telecom operator, was founded in 1994 and has its headquarters in Johannesburg, South Africa. The multinational telecommunication firm is the seventh largest in the world, and operates in 24 different countries with over 223 million subscribers. Owing to its extensive user base, they have a large amount of data to be processed.

During a conversation with Laila Kakar, the lead data scientist at MTN's GSSC division, we discussed how consumer patterns have changed due to the recent pandemic, and how the firm has experienced many challenges: Chief among them that the lockdown forced many users to work from home, causing an increase in traffic.

We also talked about how digital transformation revolves around data, and how the pandemic triggered a rapid rise in the use of phones, causing an increase in the volume of data—big data.

The challenge

MTN was collecting procure-to-pay (P2P) data from 24 different stakeholders by manually sending out Excel files over email and asking users to input the data.



The spreadsheets included dropdowns, but since there were no workflows or controls in place, customers could enter random data. For example, they would enter dates in different formats and the firm would have to sort it out.



The data collected was full of inconsistencies—it was formatted and structured differently and companies varied greatly in terms of complexity and language.



So the procured data wasn't smart, and employees of the firm would have to spend time double-checking and clarifying the information.



Consequently, the firm wasn't able to focus on acquiring real-time insights, which they needed in order to advance and grow as a business.



A lot of time and effort went into data mining and translating and then following up on emails sent, reminding users to get back to them on time.

And by the time the firm had the correct data, the next batch would come in, and the insights would no longer be relevant. It was inefficient, time consuming, and a waste of resources.

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“One of the biggest problems was that there were no controls, audit trails, or workflows in place. That’s why we wanted to find a solution to change that.”



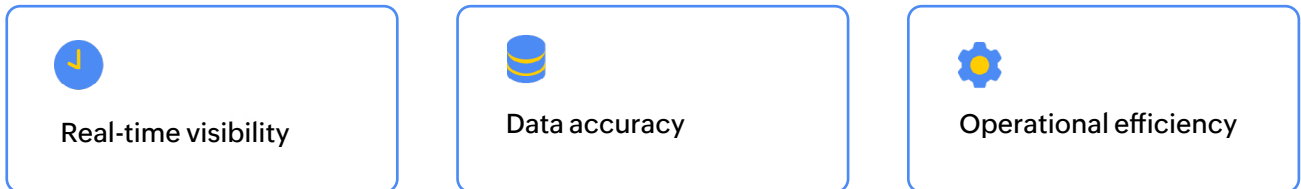
Laila Kakar, Lead Data Scientist, MTN

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The solution

MTN knew that the perfect solution to this problem was a low-code platform, which would be agile and provide uncomplicated solutions—allowing them to go live quickly with little hassle.

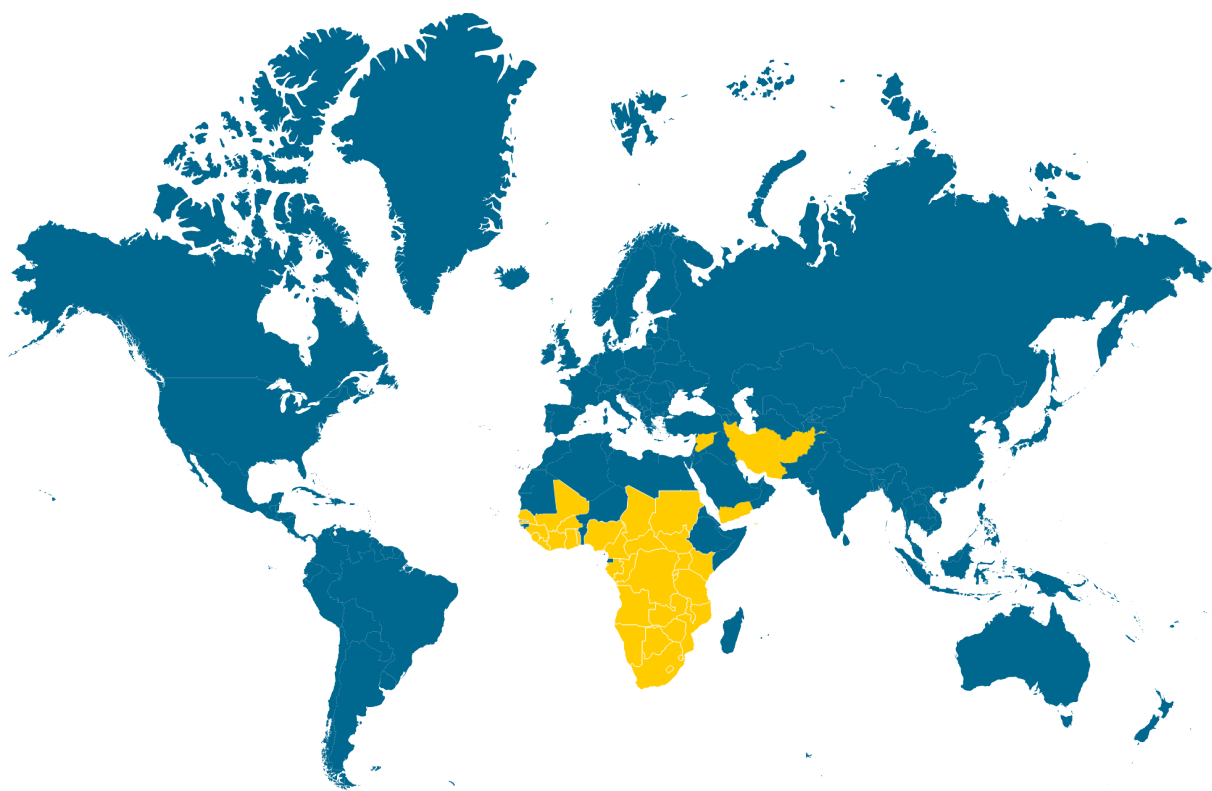
And that’s where Zoho Creator came in. According to Laila, Zoho Creator benefited MTN in three important ways. The platform provided the firm with:



Through Zoho Creator, MTN developed an app called BooM (Business Process Management)—a procure-to-pay cloud-based process automation tool.

The firm had specific needs from the app, like clear workflows and controls, so they created the blueprint while the actual development was done by the Zoho team. It was also easy to maintain, as the firm received dedicated technical support from Zoho throughout the process.

In three months, the app was live and now has around 400 active users across Middle East and Africa.



“[Zoho Creator] is a really easy solution that you can customize for whatever specific case you have. What it actually does is allow us to have end-to-end visibility of all our sourcing projects,”



Laila Kakar, Lead Data Scientist, MTN



The results



“It’s very agile, so whenever we were in a new situation or came across something like a new workflow element within our process, we could easily edit it ourselves in the existing application. In that sense, it’s very user friendly, and you don’t need to have a lot of knowledge of technology or programming.”



Laila Kakar, Lead Data Scientist, MTN



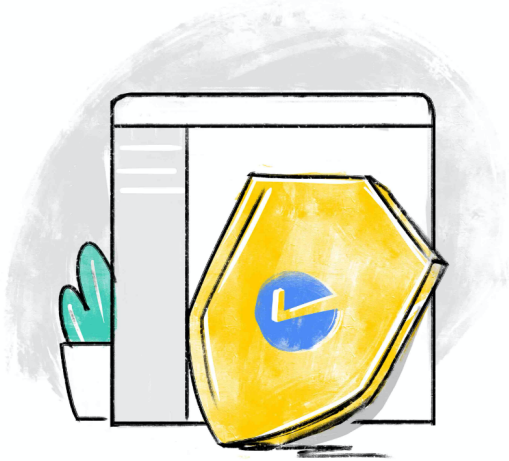
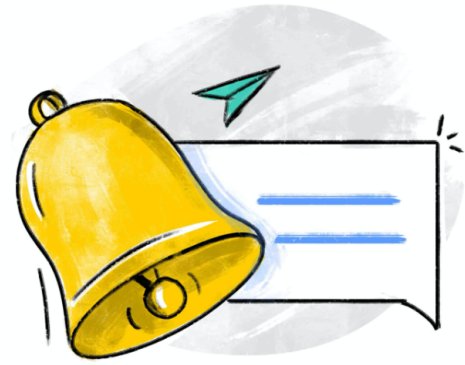
Artificial intelligence

With the help of Zoho Creator’s built-in AI, the Excel sheets sent to users were restricted, forcing them to input only the data that would make sense to the firm—leaving them with accurate information.



Notifications

The app also handles sending automatic notifications to users—reminding them to respond on time—and keeps track of everything through audit trails.



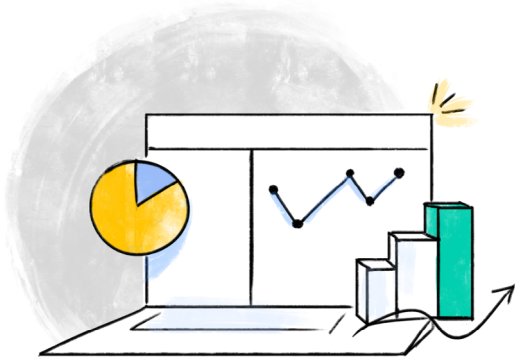
Security

This way, the firm has better security and can keep a record of when users logged in, when they entered data, and what changes they made. The audit trails in place also ensures the firm can trust the data provided.

Accessibility

On the user end, since the app is web-based, it's easy to access.



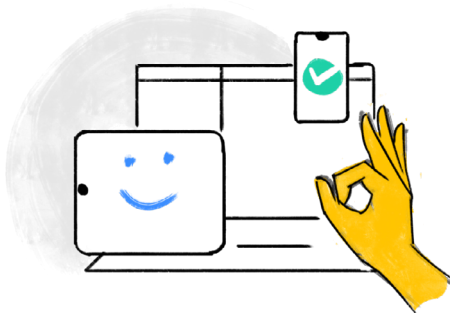


Dashboard

Once they were comfortable with the app, new data points were added and then translated into real-time dashboards.

Transparency

Users no longer had to email requests, and could directly log in and see for themselves what was going on with their data.

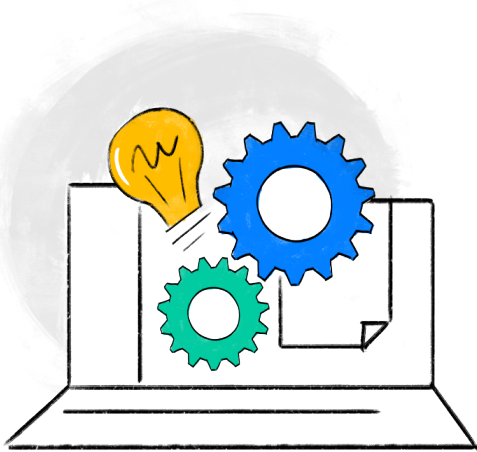
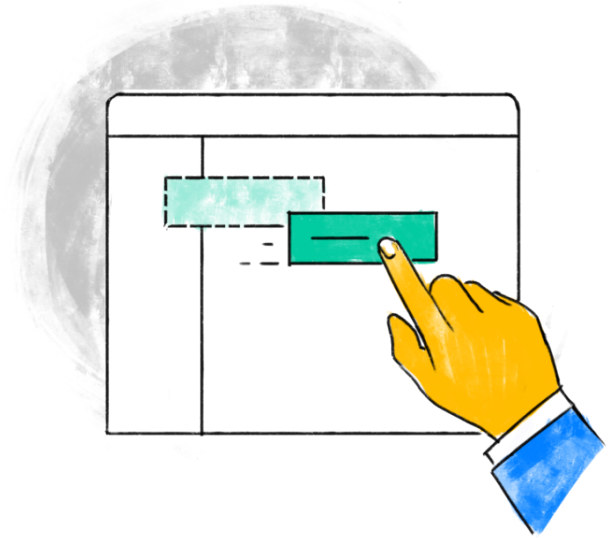


User Friendly

The app's user friendliness also added to its adoption rate.

Drag & Drop

Whenever the firm needed to make tweaks or minor adjustments according to user feedback, they could easily do it themselves, as it was just a matter of dragging and dropping.



Insights

The app takes care of automatically cleaning, sorting, and translating the data received into real-time insights.

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“We also made sure that the data was harmonized, smart, and ready for analysis whenever we received it in our application. We’re now confident that the data is of good quality and ready to use.”



Laila Kakar, Lead Data Scientist, MTN

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MTN's future with low-code

Currently, MTN is working on launching a new app through Zoho Creator—one that's very different from BooM and still in the design phase. They're hoping to take it further than just these two, though, and are looking forward to ensuring they evolve and improve over time.

When asked what she'd say when recommending Zoho Creator to others, Laila said,

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“If you want to be agile, have a non-complex solution, and go live quickly without having integration and implementation complexities, then Zoho Creator is the perfect solution.”



Laila Kakar, Lead Data Scientist, MTN

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About us

At Zoho Creator, we study the past, observe the present, and envision the future of how software communicates with businesses. To empower business owners, we've infused Zoho Creator with modern functionality like low-code and rapid development. With Zoho Creator, users can cater to custom requirements, with apps that automate day-to-day tasks, and let them tackle tomorrow's problems. Just sign up, pick a plan, and start building!





www.zoho.com/creator/

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

hello@zohocreator.com

