

Case Study



Follow the Camino

Walking the extra mile for customer service with Zoho One



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



The Company

Pioneering Sustainable Pilgrimages

Follow the Camino is a Dublin-based travel operator specialised in walking holidays along the Camino de Santiago in Spain. The Camino de Santiago is an ancient European pilgrimage route that ends at the Santiago de Compostela Cathedral and the tomb of the apostle St James.

Founded in 2006 by Umberto di Venosa, Follow the Camino began life as a small start-up, launched and managed from his kitchen table. It has since grown into a much-loved tour agency with over 1,000 five-star reviews and a 2026 Tripadvisor "Travelers' Choice" award. "Twenty years later, we have 25 staff and customers from all around the world," beams Umberto. "Also, we are the only B Corp Camino operator worldwide - it's a measure of our commitment to sustainability and ESG initiatives."

Knowing that the Camino de Santiago is a deeply spiritual experience ("it's a lifetime adventure for most people," acknowledges Umberto), Follow the Camino strives to deliver exceptional service to its customers. Pilgrims can choose to walk or cycle, travel in groups or solo, and go with or without a guide. Plus, Camino routes can vary in length, start from almost any European country, cross diverse terrains, and often depend on seasonal considerations.

As such, Follow the Camino's agents need to handle the logistics and arrangements with skill and care to suit each explorer. "Our mission statement is to organise complex holidays that make people happy. We try to really adapt to our customers, as opposed to just selling something off the shelf. We want to provide great customer service, and that differentiates us," Umberto explains.

We dropped into Follow the Camino's HQ to discover the seamless support software and award-winning achievements that drive its heart-warming holidays.

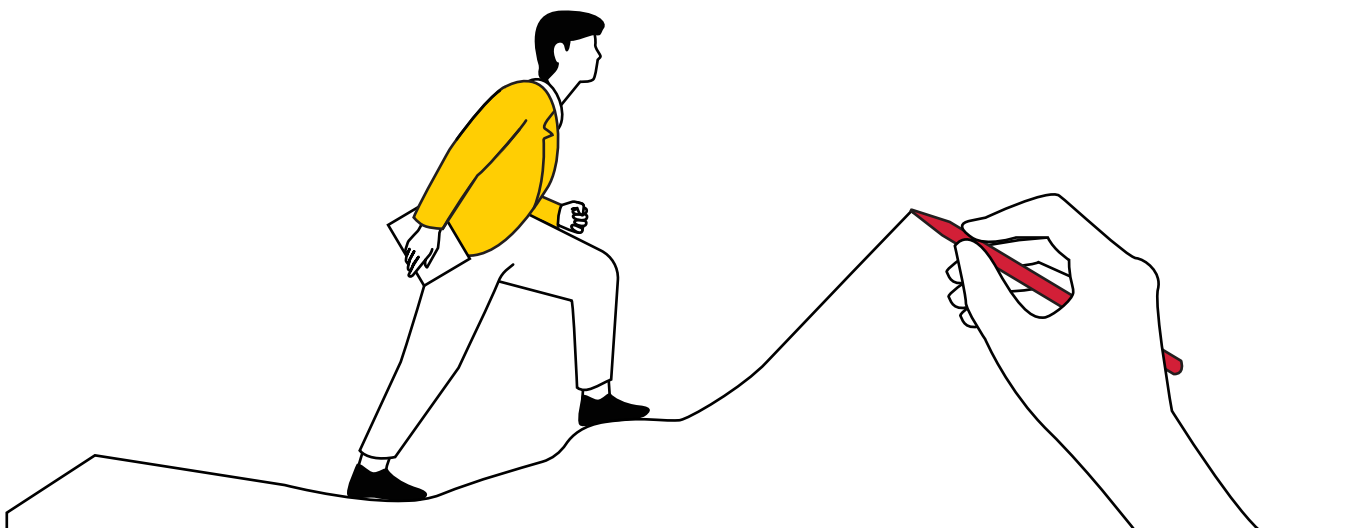
The Challenge

Implement connected tools that provision exemplary customer service



As we grew the business, we obviously needed to be in touch with our customers. To do that, we were looking for a CRM.

Umberto di Venosa,
CEO and Founder.



As Follow the Camino became more established amongst the pilgrim community, Umberto recognised that he needed a formal way to store customer details, log leads, and send out communications from a central point. Zoho CRM was the perfect budget-friendly option. "Zoho was a great product offering great value. It offered three free licences, and that was very handy for a start-up with zero revenue," he reminisces. That decision marked the start of a decades-long partnership that would see the growing business adopt multiple Zoho tools and eventually the Zoho one bundle. "As our business grew, we got to use different products at different times. We eventually signed up for the Zoho One package, which is really good for us...it offers good value, and it allows us to manage staff and teams easily, giving access to different apps."

Throughout the journey, Umberto's focus was always on delivering outstanding customer service. He sought:

- A customer-centric CRM that would integrate with its central booking engine.
- A platform to facilitate 1-1 discovery meetings between travel agents and potential holidaymakers.
- Campaign software to send timely communications to customers.
- A tool to host live pre-departure meetings and webinars.
- A structured ticketing system to handle customer and supplier enquiries.
- Automated surveys to collect customer feedback pre- and post-trip.
- A way to track KPIs and performance data across every department and team.
- Seamless data flow and management across applications and functions.

Umberto configured each tool from the Zoho One suite to ensure that every customer touchpoint would be effortless and engaging - before, during and after a trip. He also crafted a user-friendly experience to motivate and empower his team to deliver strong customer support levels. Follow the Camino believes that every journey begins long before a client takes their first step on the Camino and continues well after they return home. Today, Zoho ensures that the digital customer journey is as easily navigated as the road to Santiago de Compostela.

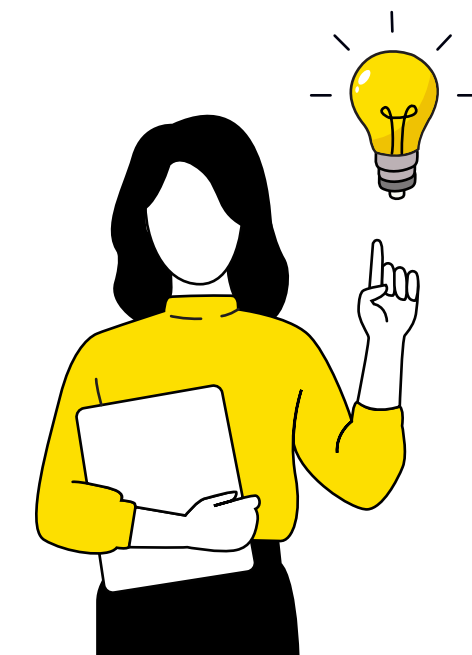
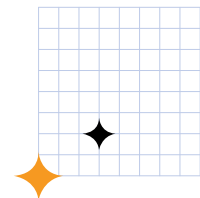
The Solution

Zoho CRM, Forms, Bookings, Meeting, Desk, Survey & Analytics build an end-to-end customer journey



All the different platforms at the different stages are enabling us to check things, deliver things, and **create a good experience for our clients.**

Umberto di Venosa,
CEO and Founder.





Zoho CRM is the central point from where Follow the Camino's activities are orchestrated, and its central source of truth. "It is the core of our interaction with our customers. It's where we track where and how they contacted us, and the full communication history with them," shares Umberto.

That contact typically begins when a pilgrim completes an enquiry form - hosted through Zoho Forms - on the organisation's website. The details sync directly with the Leads module of Zoho CRM, where Follow the Camino's sales team picks them up. Automated workflows then assign each lead to the appropriate consultant. "There is some triaging and automation happening whereby, depending on the lead's behaviour on our website, we score them differently." If a lead doesn't respond to outreach, it's added to automated communication workflows that help to keep it warm in case the enquirer wants to book later. "It helps us work efficiently," says Umberto, whose team is free to nurture the most engaged prospects.

Prospects that go on to purchase a trip are converted into contacts and then synced with the company's in-house booking software. This booking engine is where travel quotes are generated, itineraries are built, and accommodation, transfers, and tours are booked, powered by the customer data held in the CRM. "It works hand in hand with Zoho CRM, which sits at a higher level to maintain the client record and hold the travel dates and costs," he adds. Similarly, the booking engine generates a unique booking reference for each trip, and this is pushed back into the associated client record of the CRM.

Elsewhere, Zoho CRM is used to capture notes about each customer's preferences and their travel plans, as well as to schedule follow-up activities. Those activities may involve phone calls, which are triggered directly from the CRM. By integrating the RingCentral telephony platform, agents simply "click to call", with the conversation recording stored against the associated CRM account. The CRM also prompts agents to schedule subsequent calls for future trips, if required.

An additional GA Connector integration also sees Google Analytics search data pulled into Zoho CRM records to enrich those customer conversations. "During our interactions, we can see where the lead came from, which campaigns drove the conversion, and if they have come back to the website multiple times. We have a better idea of who they are," reveals Umberto.

Bookings

Due to the many possible options for Camino holidays, some clients prefer to discuss their plans directly with a consultant in a virtual appointment. To facilitate these discussions, Follow the Camino uses Zoho Bookings. Rather than relying on back-and-forth email arrangements, customers can book a convenient slot in just a few clicks. "By using Zoho Bookings, we can open our whole opening hours to the client, who can then choose a suitable appointment at their leisure, rather than on our time. It makes it easier and more flexible...it helps us provide outstanding customer service," Umberto shares.

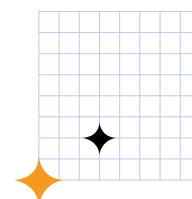
The Bookings page is hosted on Follow the Camino's website or accessed via the team's email signatures. All booked virtual appointments are then captured as leads inside Zoho CRM, with the source logged as "Zoho Booking". This helps the team accurately track demand for this service and provision a suitable number of appointments.

Desk



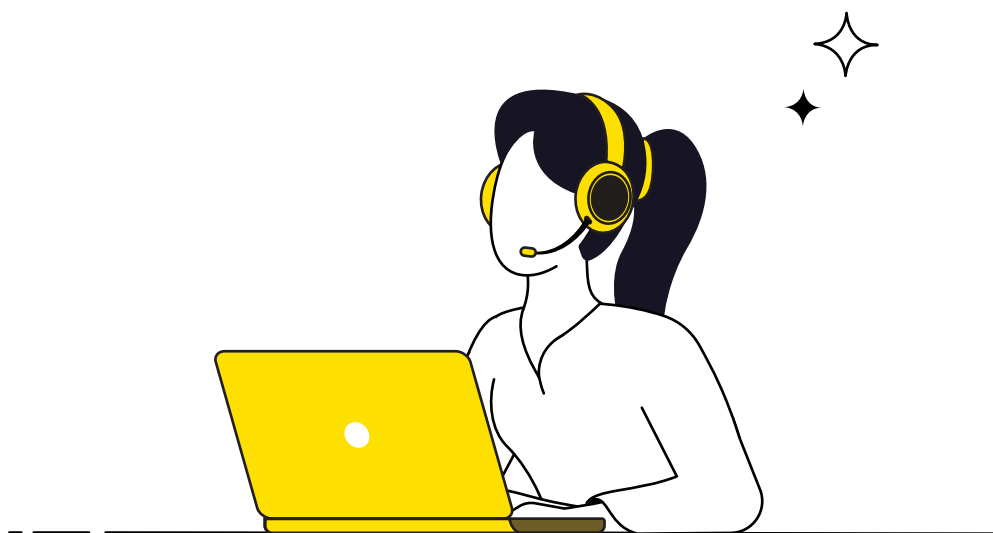
Zoho Desk has helped us step up our game, be more professional, efficient, and consistent, and given us better oversight of our teams.

Umberto di Venosa,
CEO and Founder.



Once a holidaymaker has booked a Camino adventure, most ongoing communication is handled inside the company's ticketing platform, Zoho Desk. The Customer Service team handles client conversations, while the Holiday Success team coordinates with suppliers, each working from separate Desk departments and queues.

Before Zoho, both teams relied on shared Gmail inboxes to manage customer and supplier communication. Labels, tags, and colour-coordinated flags were used to identify which agent was actioning each mail, but things still fell through the cracks. "Before, any agent would work on any booking. That created friction because they wouldn't know the history, requests, or changes...now we've moved to Desk, which was a really good move. It means that any client is linked to a dedicated consultant, so we no longer have to filter and tag people in a big inbox containing hundreds of emails. We've done the same for our reservation teams to communicate with suppliers," Umberto explains. With agents now having ownership of specific bookings and a clear view of which tickets are and aren't resolved, the client experience has become more personalised and seamless. "We were good, but now we're bulletproof," beams Umberto.



Sometimes, it's necessary for the customer support and holiday success teams to collaborate. For instance, if a hotel informs a consultant that its on-site restaurant is closed, the guest will need to be notified. Zoho Desk enables agents from each department to be discreetly pulled into the same ticket to action it together. Umberto explains, "It's a parallel communication to the customer interaction that the customer doesn't see, and they're not in the middle. It means we're not just throwing the hot potato around. It's very useful."

As part of his drive to ensure excellent customer service standards, Umberto prioritises consistency from his consultants. "If a customer asks a question to two different agents, they should get the same answer; that's very important." To this end, approved response snippets, knowledge base articles, and templates are used extensively. And whenever a frequently asked question comes in from a client, Desk surfaces relevant answers triggered by keywords, which can be very easily copied and pasted into the reply.

To enhance its customer experience further, Follow the Camino has enabled instant messaging via Zoho Desk. "Once customers are travelling, they might not have access to emails, so we have a contact line powered by WhatsApp and integrated with Desk," Umberto reveals. Should a customer be at airport arrivals and unsure where their taxi will be waiting, Follow the Camino's agents can share a live location pin via the service, or send a photo of the taxi stand.

Fantastic holiday experiences aren't just built through external interactions. Umberto recognises that happy employees, when provided with strong, user-friendly tools, deliver better quality service. "Zoho Desk's ticketing system allows our employees to feel empowered because their name is tagged to the queue, so they are more responsible. It's also enabling us to reward staff, improve their delivery, and provide better job satisfaction." The in-built reporting means that management can track ticket resolution rates, SLA performance, and customer ratings, making it easier to recognise high-performing team members and identify areas where additional training may be needed.



Customer reviews comment on how friendly and responsive we are. This comes from our company culture, yes, but also because we make the lives of our employees easier. If it is a chore to respond to clients with the same answers, your staff will get tired. **Zoho is helping us to make the whole process better and improve customer service and experience.**

Umberto di Venosa,
CEO and Founder.



Survey

Once a pilgrim returns home, Follow the Camino's team seeks their feedback in order to drive continuous improvement. To achieve this, a post-trip NPS survey was built using Zoho Survey, tied to Zoho CRM. A workflow behind a custom field named "last service date" triggers the survey to be sent three days after a holiday ends. A series of questions assesses the client's satisfaction across a range of trip elements, and the results are dissected at Follow the Camino's monthly management meetings. "It helps us get a gauge on what we do," says Umberto. Armed with customer insights, the business can implement practical enhancements that move the needle on its future scores.

One such example concerned its mobile app, which provides walkers with information, recommendations, and maps throughout their holiday. Several survey responses indicated that there was a token issue with the app, forcing users to log in every single time it was opened. "Because we got the feedback through the survey, we were able to fix that easily, making our customers happier," shares Umberto. Accordingly, since onboarding Zoho Survey, Follow the Camino has seen its post-trip NPS score rise from 58 to 64.

The company also assesses clients' experiences of its sales process through a post-sale NPS survey - triggered three days after the "booking date" recorded in CRM. By identifying areas where consultants could better meet client expectations, and then incentivising these activities, Follow the Camino's post-sales NPS rating has also soared from 73 to 84.

One survey question in particular has helped the business shape and tailor its offerings: "Where next?". "It's a great opportunity unravelled by a simple question," reveals Umberto. "It helps us decide on trips or itineraries we want to create in the future. Previously, our sales team had to contact all past customers manually and ask them this question...now we've automated it."



Campaigns

At various points in the end-to-end customer journey, Follow the Camino uses Zoho Campaigns to nurture, inform, and delight its pilgrims by email.

Firstly, the marketing team sends regular newsletters to its audience, curated through a simple sign-up form on its website. Newsletter recipients receive helpful Camino-themed blogs, travel news, and holiday promo offers, which are useful for engaging potential holiday makers over longer time periods.

In parallel, Campaigns is used to send specific communications to customers who have already booked a trip. "An email address is not just an email address for us. It's a customer status or a booking. When we are communicating, we can be contextual, using the last trip date from Zoho CRM, which we have plugged in," explains Umberto. These communications range from booking confirmations, reminders, and invitations to pre-departure meetings.



Meeting

Those very same pre-departure meetings are hosted using Zoho Meeting, a video conferencing platform included in the Zoho One suite. These are weekly meetings where a Camino expert delivers an insightful presentation about the journey that its pilgrims are about to embark on, before inviting attendees' questions and encouraging them to network with others on the same tour. "This forum is a good opportunity for people to meet in a friendly way," Umberto smiles. "The pre-departure meeting is part of the reason our reviews and customer satisfaction have improved."

"We also use Meeting to do webinars, which are more on the pre-sale side. We invite all our leads, advertise it on Facebook, and run a presentation about the product, gather questions and answers. Again, it's a very friendly and dynamic way of interacting, so Meeting is really good for that," he adds.



Analytics

The final Zoho application in Follow the Camino's toolkit is Zoho Analytics. Integrated seamlessly with each individual platform, it provides an overall picture of the health of the business in real-time. "Zoho Analytics has been a game-changer for me as a manager," confirms Umberto. He uses the tool to check current enquiry volumes, conversion rates, progress against sales team KPIs, marketing performance, and revenue tracking, all displayed in handy dashboards and visual charts. Analytics also enables Umberto to compare data sets across timeframes, regions, and channels.

Historically, business reporting was conducted inside Excel spreadsheets, a time-consuming, clunky process. "It was a bit of a nightmare," admits Umberto. "Thanks to Zoho Analytics, now I have reports that are updated live. I don't have to do exports, V-lookups, or table insertions. That to me is amazing!"

Because Analytics also connects with third-party platforms, it's become a one-stop shop. By connecting Google Adwords, Umberto can see at a glance which campaigns are driving which leads, without navigating out of Analytics. "It gives us a monthly ROI on how much a booking costs us. We don't have to go into our bids and our accounts; this is all automated inside Analytics."

Awarding Inspirational Customer Service



We entered the Zoho Customer Service Champion award and were Highly Commended. We are delighted. It is good for us to be recognised by other professionals and be in the top category. It's a great source of pride.

Umberto di Venosa,
CEO and Founder.

It's clear that Follow the Camino considers the customer at every turn and fork in the road. By adopting the Zoho One suite, the organisation can converse with customers where they are comfortable - whether that's in WhatsApp, webinars, telephone calls, virtual consultations, or emails - and speak a language of care and consideration. That proactive and personalised standard of service is mirrored in its reviews and climbing NPS scores - all enabled via Zoho. Reflecting on the impact, Umberto says: "Our customer journey is quite complex. The booking has five or six hotels and multiple transfers. Different people appreciate different things, and those things, we can't know. But what we do know is that by being consistent, efficient, and responsive, there is no more we can do."

As such, in 2025, Follow the Camino was nominated for Zoho's 'Customer Service Champion' award, with the results announced at the Zoholics UK conference. So impressed were the judges with the firm's dedication to quality service, demonstrated not just in its customer-facing operations, but also in its software implementation, that the company scooped the Highly Commended accolade.

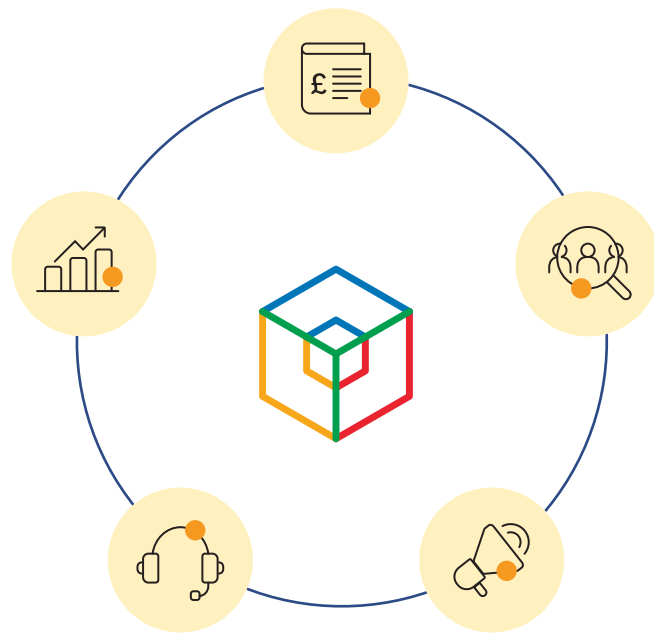
Not content with a full trophy cabinet, Follow the Camino's team strives to keep building on its customer service foundations. Next, Umberto plans to publish their Zoho Desk knowledge base on the company website so that travellers can self-serve their queries in an instant. He is also looking to utilise Desk's multi-lingual features, ensuring consultants can deliver quality service to even more intrepid pilgrims across the globe.



If any travel agency came to me, I would say Zoho is a very capable software, offering great value at a great price point. **It's a great software for any business.**

Umberto di Venosa,
CEO and Founder.

About Zoho One



Developed as the ultimate "operating system for business", the Zoho One bundle is a collection of 45+ integrated applications that cater to every diverse need of a modern business. From Sales to Marketing, Customer Support, HR, Operations, Finance, and Legal, Zoho One's powerful suite of tools can be relied upon by every department to improve performance, enhance collaboration, and streamline processes. An unrivalled yet affordable solution, Zoho One's cloud-based apps bring extraordinary value to any organisation.

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



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