

Latest Version of Zoho Creator Extends Technical Depth and Business Usability to Extend Solution Reach

By **Charles Araujo**

Low-code development platforms typically have to make a choice.

They can either opt to increase their level of sophistication and deliver a more complex difficult-to-use platform as a result. Or they can improve their level of usability, making it easier for so-called citizen developers to use their platforms, but trade technical sophistication in the process.

Rarely will a tech provider succeed at doing both.

But both is precisely what Zoho is striving for with its latest release of Zoho Creator.

The updated platform boasts improvements to usability via a new drag-and-drop builder, drag-and-drop integration, a new integrated BI and analytics engine, and the ability for business users to leverage its AI engine to more easily and safely import data.

At the same time, the release enables developers to embrace serverless functionality with reusable code blocks written in Java, Node.js, and Deluge — its proprietary scripting language, includes a new integration dashboard, data prep capabilities, and multi-environment support.



The question is, how can Zoho accomplish this balancing act when others struggle? The answer may lie within its approach to its tech stack.

Enabling End-to-End Business Solutions

The first set of big improvements with this release is in the realm of helping business users extend the reach of their apps and extend them into what the company calls “business solutions.”

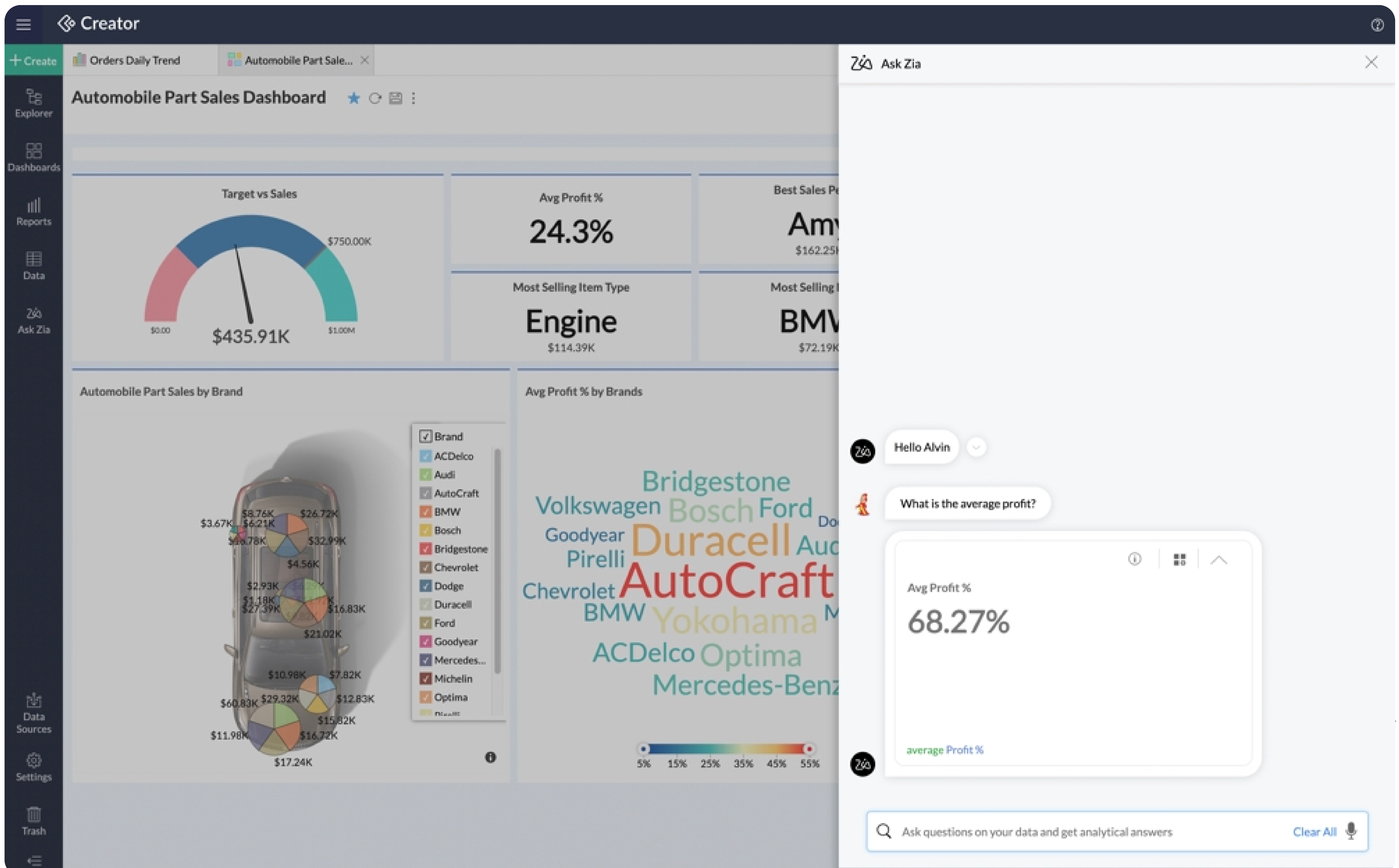
While the company is including several improvements that fall under this banner, there are four that stand out.

The first is an improved drag-and-drop process builder interface called Process Blueprints. This new interface allows business users to intuitively map out a process and automate it at the same time. The interface enables users to assign responsibilities to stakeholders and create automated actions at various stages of the defined business process.

The second is a new drag-and-drop integration interface that enables business users to leverage hundreds of pre-built connectors to easily integrate their applications with other data sources without leaving the Creator interface.

Related to data integration, this release also leverages the Zoho intelligent AI engine to enable business users to simply and safely import data from almost any source. This new functionality enables business users to automatically

import, cleanse, and transform data and then dynamically build data models and automatically detect relationships within it.



Finally, the new release includes a fully embedded and fully capable business intelligence (BI) and analytics engine. This new engine, which provides functionality like conversational analytics, predictive analytics, data alerts, what-if analysis, and so on, enables business users to not only build apps, but leverage the data those apps collect and generate to make better and more rapid business decisions — all without requiring any additional tools or instrumentation.

Increasing Technical Sophistication and IT Collaboration

While half of Zoho's efforts are about business usability, the other half is about increasing Creator's technical sophistication and enabling higher levels of collaboration between business users and their IT teams.

One significant development in this area is the ability for developers to now write, store, and execute reusable code blocks. Developers can write these pre-built functions in Zoho's proprietary scripting language, Deluge, or in industry-standard languages Java and Node.js. Business users can then leverage and deploy these pre-built functions into their business applications to extend functionality while maintaining organizational consistency.

The release also offers new, sophisticated data preparation tools. While some of this functionality is accessible to business users in the form of the AI-powered data import function, it also includes advanced cleansing and preparation capabilities that enable IT professionals to manage data at scale.

Likewise, in addition to making it easier for business users to add integrations via the new drag-and-drop interface, this release also includes an integration dashboard that enables both business users and their IT partners to see the status of all integrations and troubleshoot issues more readily.

Finally, this latest release extends the previously-existing sandbox functionality into full-fledged multi-environment support. As with traditionally developed applications, developers will now be able to deploy



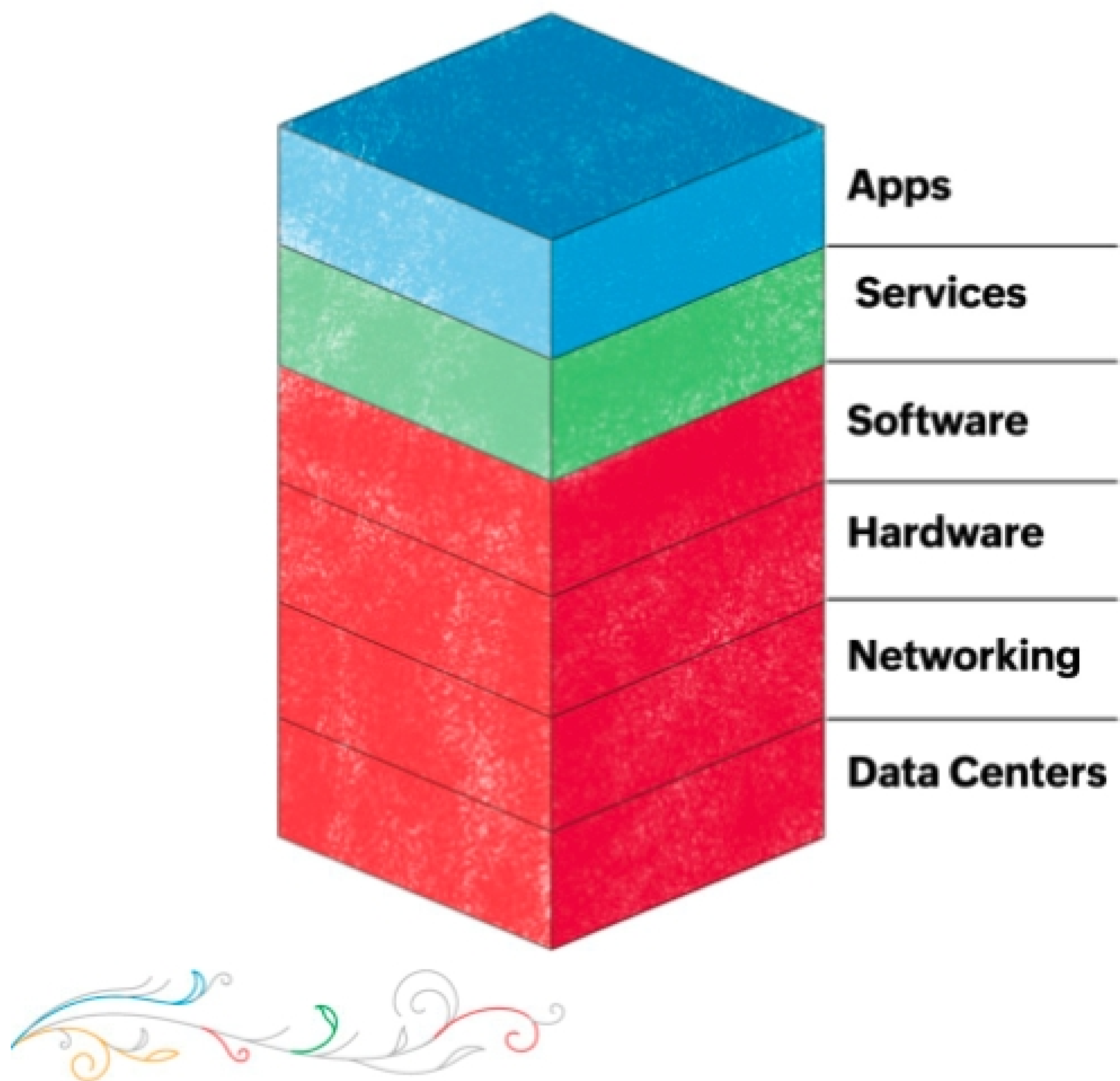
applications into development, staging, and production environments to ensure greater reliability and control of production environments.

The Intellyx Take: A Vertically Integrated Tech Stack Opens the Door for Zoho Clients to Have It All

This latest release of Creator is a big step forward for Zoho. However, it begs the question of how it can balance this growth in both business usability and technical sophistication.

I believe the answer lies in the fact that unlike most of its competitors, Zoho Creator sits in the middle of the entire Zoho ecosystem and on top of its vertically integrated tech stack.

The vertical integration and ownership of its tech stack, starting with Zoho-owned and operated data centers and continuing all the way to the application layer, means that the company has complete control of the technical direction and experience across the full spectrum of its applications and their underlying infrastructure.



Part of this tech stack is the data layer and the company's unified data model that Creator and all applications in the suite leverage. While the company easily connects to the broader ecosystem (as demonstrated by the integration advancements in this release), this unification and vertical integration make it easier for the company to extend its technical capabilities without adding unnecessary burden to the (business) user interface.

This intersection of technical depth, IT enablement, and business usability is particularly useful and meaningful to the enterprises that Zoho Creator best



serves. For these organizations, simplicity and manageability are essential. At the same time, however, they require the technical sophistication to compete against larger competitors.

It's a tricky balance, but one that the Zoho Creator team is striking admirably in this release.