

Allergy Standards

Breathing life into a certification programme with Zoho Creator





The company

We help people breathe healthier indoor air.

Allergy Standards Ltd (ASL) was established in 2000 by Dr John McKeon, an A&E doctor and the Principal of the Indoor Air Innovation and Research (iAIR) Institute. He was concerned by the number of patients requiring treatment for preventable allergic reactions and asthma attacks. "It was very difficult for people to identify products that help them remove trigger factors in the indoor environment," John recalls.



Dr John McKeon
CEO and Founder

To remedy this, John founded ASL, a TIC (Testing, Inspection, and Certification) business, which is headquartered in Ireland but serves global markets. "We developed a consumer product certification testing programme to validate products that could be a better choice for people with asthma and allergies," he explains.

To date, ASL has certified the "allergy-friendly" claims of more than 50 million products, from soft toys to paint, bedding, cleaning products, and more. Goods from some of the world's biggest brands carry its trusted mark, including Procter & Gamble, 3M, Dyson, LG, and Samsung. From an entrepreneurial vision to a life-changing enterprise, ASL's work has enabled asthma and allergy sufferers around the globe to live in trigger-free indoor environments.

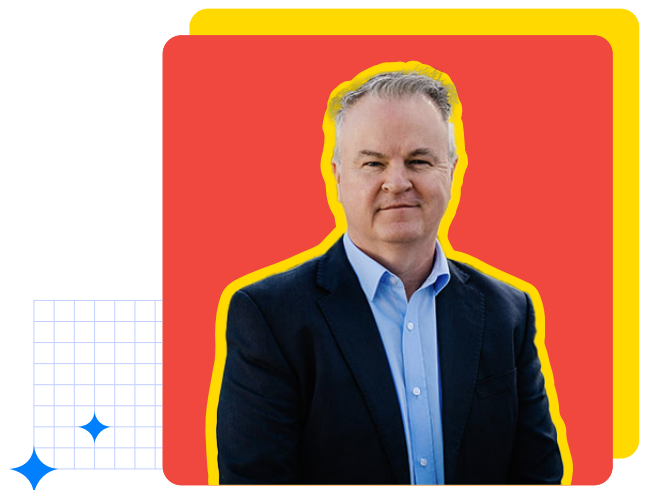
We visited ASL's HQ in Grand Canal Quay, Dublin, to discover how Zoho Creator is at the heart of its entire certification process, from testing requests to asset approvals, technical tickets, and certificate generation.

The challenge

Digitise the testing, inspection, and certification process



We had a lot of data in disparate Excel sheets.












Dave Morrissey
Chief Innovation Officer

In its formative years, ASL's operations relied on a maze of spreadsheets which made it hard to locate information and resulted in duplication. Transferring real-time data to and from its off-site laboratory, Airmid Health Group, was also a big challenge. As CEO, John recognised that ASL required a better way of working and that digital transformation would help him scale up his new business. "There comes a time where you have to scale and get discipline, reproducibility, and consistency in your processes," John explains.

John's software search introduced him to Zoho, and he travelled to the Zoholics user conference in London in 2009 to learn more. "John came back from Zoholics and said: "I've seen the light; it's Zoho Creator!"" recalls Dave Morrissey, Chief Innovation Officer. Dave was immediately tasked with building a bespoke certification application using Creator's low-code platform to streamline ASL's end-to-end TIC process.

To support ASL on its Zoho Creator journey, Dave enlisted the expertise of Bill Quinn from 1 Cloud Consultants, a well-established Zoho partner. Together, they embarked on a project that would span more than 15 years, advancing in pace with ASL's global growth and taking them from the docks of Dublin to the coast of Chennai and back again. In a quest to solve scores of key pain points during that journey, Dave and Bill turned to Creator to:

-  Enable consistent data flow between ASL's HQ and its laboratory.
-  Combine multiple data sets in one client interface behind a single sign-on.
-  Provide a personalised user interface based on Zoho CRM fields.
-  Automate and speed up the certificate-generation process.
-  Digitise asset approvals to reduce employee overload.
-  Provide a ticketing system for test and technical requests.
-  Securely store downloadable documentation in a central repository.
-  Support deal progression with sequentially-unlocked client modules.
-  Enable clients to self-service their needs in keeping with brand guidelines.

The solution

Zoho Creator portals deliver a complete, customer-centric certification experience



Creator is a one-stop shop

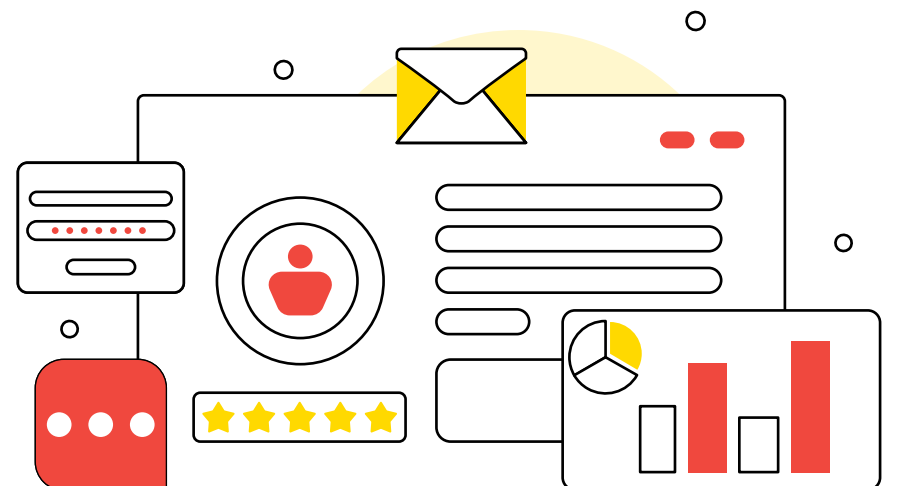
where clients can download certificates or logos, submit tickets, and view their certified products.

Dave Morrissey

Chief Innovation Officer

Certified product database

First of all, Dave used Zoho Creator to develop a "Certified Product Database", a digital catalogue of every certified product and its particulars, moving them out of a basic Excel sheet. This application listed each client product, along with related fields that detailed the standard it had been tested against, plus any technical notes from the laboratory. Dave then linked this product database to ASL's Zoho CRM account, meaning that his colleagues could perform a simple lookup from one platform to the other to understand which certified products belonged to which client. "We were able to put all the information about a product in one place...It meant that we were able to have complete oversight of the data in a way that was much more manageable," reveals Dave.



Certificate generation

Next, Dave wanted to tackle a long-standing problem that had caused both internal delays in ASL's certification process and knock-on effects on customer service. "We have our CEO and a Chairman who was a doctor, and they weren't in the office all the time. Our certificates needed to be physically signed by both of those people in order to go out to a client. That could take a long time."

With Zoho Creator on-board, Dave was able to automate the process of issuing a signed certificate and reduce the dependence on his busy signatories. Mapping out the process, he identified the point at which each product is marked as "certified" in the application, an ideal timestamp to initiate a workflow automation. "Products get a tick mark when certification is enabled, so that was a good trigger point for a workflow to create a certificate."



Dave simply drafted a templated certificate inside Creator that bore the two digital signatures and connected it to Zoho Creator with some minor cloud engine work. At the press of a button, the ASL team was able to instantly generate a signed certificate as soon as a product had achieved the required standard and share it electronically with the client.

"We took something that could take two weeks and made it possible in a couple of seconds. Last year, we did 350 to 400 certificates. To do that in a manual process, it just wouldn't have been doable," says Dave. "It's saved hundreds of hours." What's more, ASL's clients were impressed with the speed too. "The goodwill that we got back was phenomenal."

Asset approval

Another internal process that was becoming unmanageable was asset approvals. These are inbound requests from clients to use ASL's official "allergy-friendly" mark on their products, packaging, and advertising collaterals. Historically, these requests were manually handled via email by the firm's Brand Manager in the USA. "What would start as an approval would soon turn into "so, where are you going on your holidays?", and then trying to look back through the email thread to find the artwork was proving challenging for her," explains Dave.

To cut through the noise, Dave built ASL's first outward-facing Creator application, a ticketing system portal. Rather than sending an email, clients could simply log in to the dedicated portal, which was linked to their Zoho CRM record ("all their account fields would populate in the portal automatically") and raise an asset approval request along with their artwork or documentation. "The approvals got done much quicker, and everything was just in one place both for the client and our brand manager...the overwhelm that she was experiencing just went away," adds Dave.

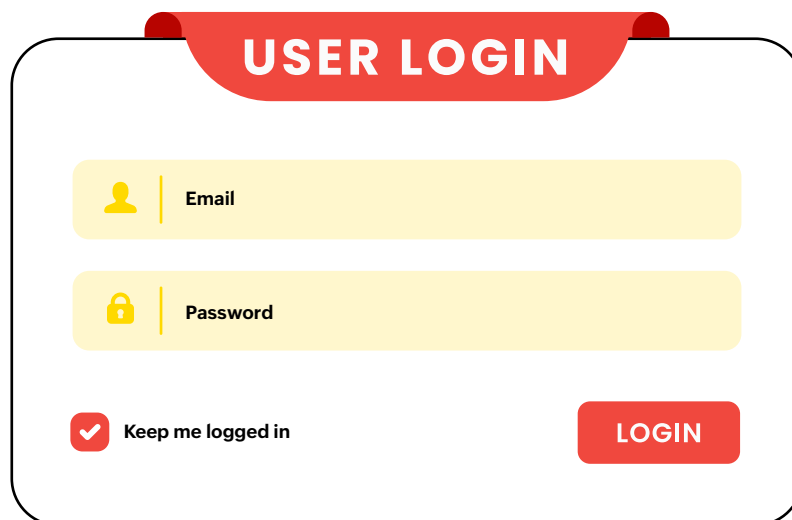


Test and technical portal

Next up, Dave developed a similar portal that allowed clients to log on and record testing requests for new products or submit renewal requests for existing certified products. "Our testing team, seeing and hearing how effective the asset approval system was working, wanted something similar for clients that were looking to test their products," he reveals.

A single sign-on solution

Although ASL was reaping the rewards of Zoho Creator's portals in each stage of the certification process, these stand-alone apps began to cause silos. "Each Creator application was a different portal," remembers Dave. This meant that clients needed to use different login credentials to submit test tickets than those they used to request asset approvals and so on. "We needed to create one single portal where we could have multiple users," says Dave.



The image shows a user login form with a red header that says "USER LOGIN". Below the header are two input fields: one for "Email" with a person icon and one for "Password" with a lock icon. At the bottom left, there is a checkbox labeled "Keep me logged in" with a checkmark. At the bottom right, there is a red button labeled "LOGIN".

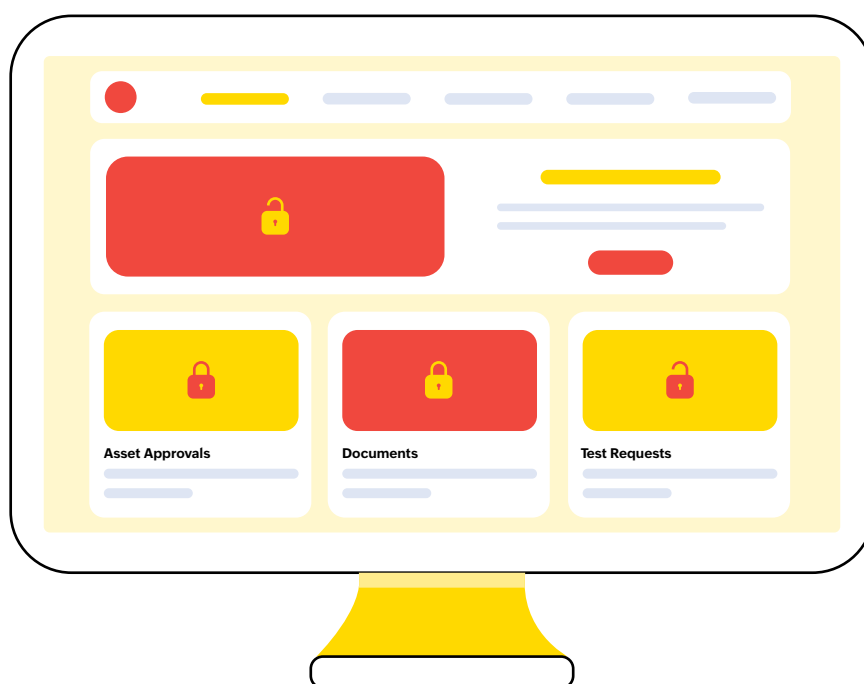
To combine each instance of Creator into a centralised hub with single sign-on (SSO) access, 1 Cloud Consultants arranged for Dave to visit Zoho HQ in Chennai, India. "We decided that a very good way forward was organising a workshop in Chennai with the Zoho product team," reveals Bill, founder and owner of 1 Cloud Consultants. "We literally sat down with the Creator team, and we were inventing," adds Dave. "Between us, we came up with a way that we could have a single sign-on system."

Document repository system

Freshly returned from India, and spurred on by his success, Dave resolved to make the amalgamated Creator portal a one-stop shop for clients. Adding a new document storage module within the same portal, he enabled every client to view and download their contracts, logos, NDAs, invoices, certificates and more with ease. "It's all fully accessible; the clients can just log in and download what they need," nods Dave.

A personalised portal

With each low-code component that was bolted onto the portal, ASL further streamlined its certification service, reduced demand on its team, and improved overall customer satisfaction. Today, the portal houses anything and everything a client could need in a highly-tailored format, whether they're a marketing manager or a product technician. "When you log into the portal, it's very customised to you as an individual. It knows your job title," says Dave. Informed by the client's designation in Zoho CRM, Creator surfaces educational content on the home page that's relevant to each visitor in turn. "If you're in marketing, it will present marketing documents. If you're technical, it will present test and technical FAQs," he continues.



Deepening this personalised user experience, Dave constructed a step-by-step customer journey within the portal that mirrored ASL's sales funnel. "As a sales tool, we can sequentially unlock sections of the portal," Dave reveals. For instance, newly onboarded clients will have access to the test requests function but will find the asset approval area out of bounds until it is relevant to their deal stage. The sales team finds that locked sections pique the interest of new clients and often spark further discussions. "From a salesperson's perspective... it encourages the forward momentum of a sale, which is great, and the salespeople love it for that," he shares. Individual module permissions are easily toggled on and off by the salespeople or the Client Success Manager on a user-by-user basis directly from the contact module of Zoho CRM. "From the CRM record, we can enable or disable anything we want for anybody in the portal," Dave adds.

Boosting customer satisfaction with creator



We've got a lot of really **positive feedback from clients on the portal.**

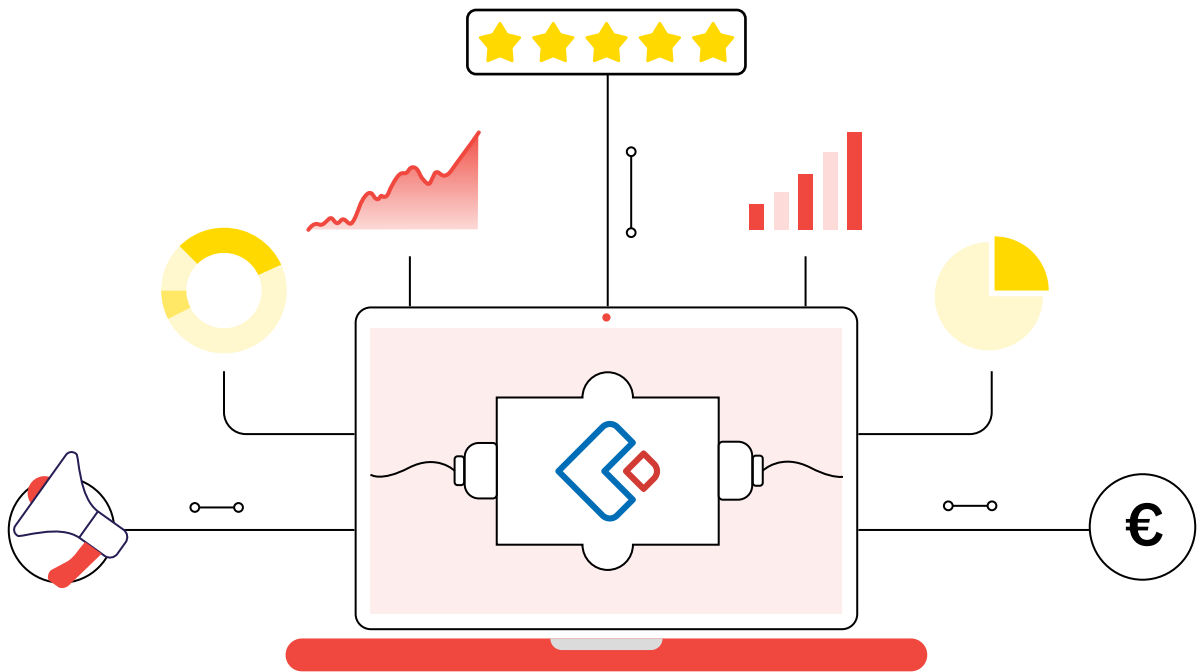


Leah McInerney

Client Success Manager

ASL's Zoho Creator implementation has driven marked improvements in its customer service offering. Client Success Manager, Leah McInerney, has seen first-hand how clients enjoy using the application throughout the entire certification process. "The front end of the portal is a very user-friendly experience. We've had a lot of really positive feedback." Leah has seen clients enthusiastically adopt the app, owing to the fact they can access information resources in a logical way at the click of a button. "It's great because it encourages them to interact with us and we get further engagement," she adds.

Allowing clients to self-serve most of their needs could have been a risky move for a life sciences business like ASL, which requires accuracy at the core of every "allergy-friendly" message and use of its mark. But Leah has found that, in fact, the app carefully regulates the way that clients apply ASL's assets and improves clarity around their usage. "The app means that the way they speak about the certification programme is within our brand guidelines."



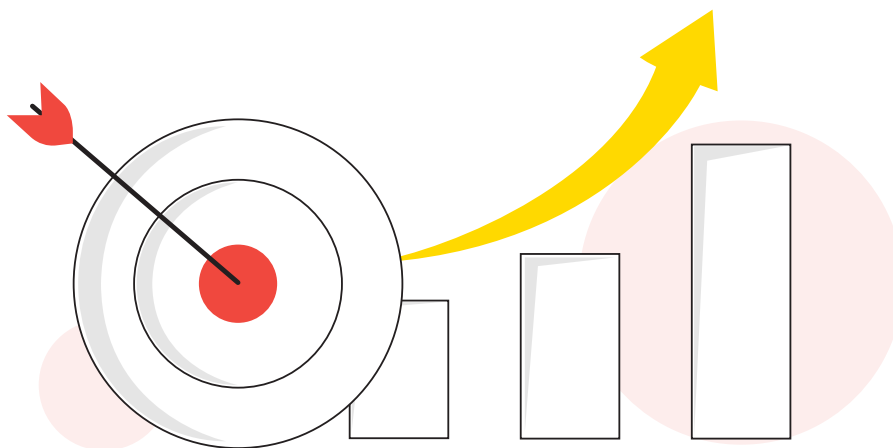
What's more, the Creator portal has also been a game-changer for Leah's day-to-day work. Managing many of the requests that come through the app from clients, she reports that it helps to keep her workload organised and structured. "From the back end, it allows me to keep track of every request that's coming in. To have this ticketed system is really beneficial. If it was coming in via email, it would be a lot to manage."

Reflecting on Zoho

Contemplating the impact of Zoho Creator over the years, John, Dave, and the wider ASL team attribute much of their success and growth to it. The platform's flexible nature has allowed it to expand as new requirements have come into play, and new features have consistently improved the user experience. "The great thing about Creator is it's a work in progress. We're always doing something with it; it's never going to stop," says Dave.

Meanwhile, John credits Creator with helping his team maintain ultimate precision and certainty over their data. "We have to be meticulous with our data, and we've used the Zoho Creator databases to help us achieve that...With Zoho, that data is no longer a burden. And while we have to be that very scientific company on the back end, we also need to be a consumer-friendly company on the front end. Zoho has enabled us to have the customer experience working alongside how we operate the testing and inspection business."

Looking to the future, John says: "We're happy to grow with Zoho; it will expand as our business expands. Bill at 1 Cloud Consultants always keeps us informed of new products and services coming down the line." And looking to the community of fellow business owners, he adds: "My gift to other early entrepreneurs is to tell them about Zoho because I feel they're going to achieve their goals a lot quicker if they adopt the system."



About 1 Cloud Consultants

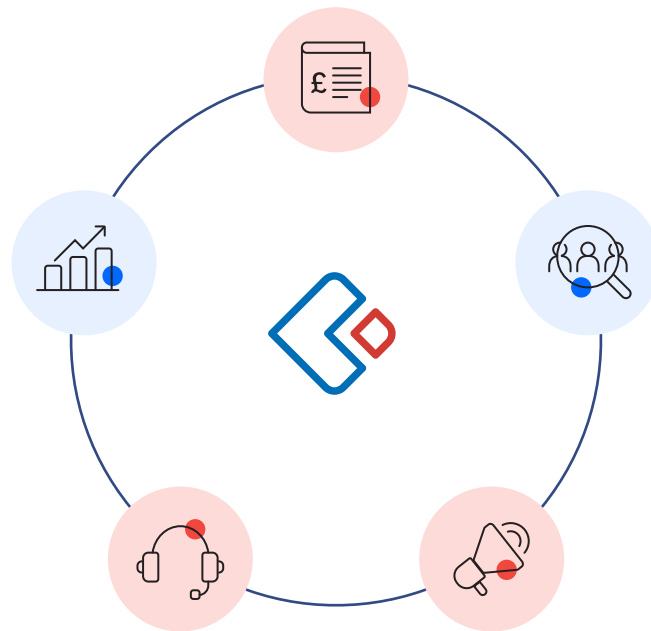


With over a decade of experience, 1 Cloud Consultants is dedicated to providing top-notch services in reselling, training, consultancy, implementation, and ongoing support for Zoho products. Its long-standing partnership with Zoho, which began in July 2012, ensures that its team bring unparalleled expertise and commitment to its clients across the UK and beyond.

To learn more about 1 Cloud Consultants.

Visit: <https://www.1cloudconsultants.com/>

About Zoho Creator



Zoho Creator is a low-code application development platform that allows users to create custom applications on their own, with minimal coding experience. The intuitive drag-and-drop interface empowers developers and business users to build web and mobile applications that satisfy all their unique requirements with ease.

Please find out more via our website: <https://www.zoho.com/creator>





zoho.com



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