Why the logistics industry needs custom applications

The need for business process automation in logistics

Any enterprise striving for success in the logistics industry needs to effectively coordinate the many complex processes involved in its day-to-day activities. While it used to be handled manually, this approach lacked both efficiency and flexibility. Fortunately, advancements in software have made automation accessible to almost any business with the desire to implement it.

Custom applications provide the best means to facilitate business process automation in a logistics enterprise, as it allows the complexities of its operations to be more efficiently dealt with.

However, the path to software automation is not always easy when it comes to the logistics industry.

The inadequacies of traditional software solutions

For years — and even today — logistics enterprises used spreadsheets for their everyday needs. Unfortunately, spreadsheets can't handle large volumes of data efficiently, nor can they generate insightful reports. A replacement was needed.

Enter ERP — Enterprise Resource Planning. ERP software was touted as the alternative to spreadsheets for logistics enterprises, and its adoption rapidly grew.

However, ERP turned out inadequate for several reasons:

- It could only be used as a generic solution, and any customization required the expenditure of enormous capital and labor.

- They required technical consultants with a mixture of IT and logistics domain knowledge, which became a challenge, as such subject matter experts were hard to find.

- ERP software and licenses were expensive and thus were outside the reach of small and medium operations.

- The costs of implementation and maintenance were several times higher in magnitude than the price of the software itself

- Finally, the software was not user-friendly — it was complex and difficult to use

All this resulted in a poor return on investment for the organizations that implemented it.

One stellar example concerns SAP — an ERP major — and Aurizon — Australia's largest rail freight operator. In 2017, Aurizon's $91 million SAP systems overhaul was canceled, as it was deemed to be unviable for the enterprise. Implementation had become protracted and had greatly magnified its risk of overspending. Aurizon had already spent $79 million on this project, and the cancellation incurred another $64 million impairment charge. This is a painful example of how efforts to customize ERP software can result in catastrophic outcomes for logistics enterprises.

Then came the alternative to ERP software—generic logistics software. While a step in the right direction, it offered only a limited solution to all the operational necessities of a logistics enterprise. It was domain-specific and failed to apply itself to enterprises operating in the different subfields and domains of the industry.

It had become apparent, finally, that tailor-made software was needed for the continued efficiency and sustainability of any logistics enterprise.

Why does the logistics industry need custom applications?

Given its complex combination of interconnected processes, the logistics industry has several particular requirements which need to be met for effective, efficient, and profitable sustainability. Each of them needs to be addressed, preferably using a single unified software solution — and this is the mandate for custom applications.

These applications need to include features for:

Digitization of all operations

Gauging of demand

Fabrication of commodities

Warehousing

Workforce management

Navigation and routing

Truck, freighter, and cargo tracking

Fleet maintenance

Machinery maintenance and tackling wear and tear

Managing shipping requirements

A definitive software solution

As consumer expectation grows, so does the need for unique ways to address the problems posed by the logistics industry. Generic software solutions are inadequate to address these challenges.

What's needed is a custom software solution which consists of different modules, each targeted towards addressing individual processes, but integrated into a cohesive whole.

This custom solution should:

Automatically scale to guarantee performance

Offer application programming interface support for custom development purposes

Include integration with other software products and modules

Have high availability

Be secure and standards-compliant

The demand for low-code development platforms

The development of this custom logistics software solution should be accomplished using technologies that assist in rapid application development. Only when software features can be quickly iterated upon can an enterprise have constant access to an updated version of the software for effective operations. This renders traditional software development approaches and technologies unsuitable for engineering a custom logistics application.

Such rapid application development platforms should also be friendly towards stakeholders with no computer programming knowledge — permitting both its use and engineering with minimal technical know-how.

These boons for logistics industry personnel are called low-code application builders. They facilitate the engineering of software by providing methods, such as drag and drop application development and customization that requires minimal coding, in simple scripting languages that require little effort to learn.

Forrester reports that low-code platforms make software development ten times faster than traditional methods.

Zoho Creator, for example, is an industry pioneer that offers a low-code drag and drop application development platform. The UI of any app can be rapidly built with a user-friendly interface, allowing applications to be designed and built in minutes rather than days. This platform also offers support to professional programmers via its simple, but powerful, scripting language—Deluge. Custom extensions using other popular programming and scripting languages are also supported.

Applications engineered on Zoho Creator have their full life cycle managed automatically by the platform itself. They are, by default, secure, scalable, and extremely reliable. This platform also provides one-click methods to deploy applications onto multiple platforms, like iOS, Android, and the web, simultaneously.

Stakeholders in the logistics industry can easily harness these powerful features to develop, deploy, and maintain their applications, and scale their businesses indefinitely.

Zoho Creator also offers a proprietary, **highly customizable application** specifically engineered for the logistics industry.

Oh, and all that's required to access Zoho Creator is a web browser.

The mandate for custom applications in logistics

The logistics industry is incredibly complex, and the success of any enterprise depends on the cohesion and execution of all these moving parts in unison. With the complexities of development and implementation of operational software being taken care of by Zoho Creator, a logistics enterprise can devote the majority of its attention and resources towards improving its operational efficiency. This user-friendly low-code application development platform provides logistics industry players the opportunity to transform their operations dramatically.

Leverage **Zoho Creator** and explore a world of limitless possibilities for logistics.

ZOHO Creator

zoho.com/creator/

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

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