

# How Zoho Creator helped NCT increase their revenue by 48% YOY, with over 80% reduction in error shipments



# Index

The company	03
The challenge	05
The solution	08
NCT during COVID	11
Benefits and ROI	12
Looking forward	13
About us	14



# The company

---

Industry:

Wholesale Sector  
Grain and field beans

Employees: (All sites) 6

Year started: 2007

---

New Coast Trading (NCT) is a **digital agricultural trading company** that wholesales and distributes grains from North and South America to retail food outlets and supermarkets throughout the Americas, Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. Employees work from four different countries across the world.

NCT was founded in 2007 by Franliz Medina, Anabella Medina, and Omaria Vielma in Columbus, OH as a digital agricultural trading company. Each co-founder brought with them decades of experience in areas such as import/export, agricultural trading, international customs, and more.

Having scaled profits for traditional enterprises operating in the import/export industry before, the co-founders wanted to make a lean and efficient organization with minimal operational costs.

To stay true to that, they made NCT a digital-first organization.



We started this way due to necessity. It wasn't the result of strategy, nor was the founder chasing digital as a new trend. This was simply a matter of survival, and a way to keep costs down. That's the way that we have been operating since 2007: as a digital company.



Santiago Medina  
CTO, New Coast Trading



This meant that from day 1 their team – which was spread across North and South America – **heavily relied on digital tools** such as email, office productivity software, and more.



The whole company is run digitally. We don't have any physical offices anywhere in the world. We have six employees spread across the US, Venezuela, Panama, and Spain. They all work from their home offices, in their local timezones. We collaborate using digital tools.

Being lean allowed NCT's management to keep the costs low, which is crucial for startups. With lower costs, they were able to reinvest profits back into the company, thus helping the company grow quickly.



# The Challenge



NCT is a global grain trader, we buy and sell grains and pulses worldwide. Our sales team is based out of the US, and are responsible for getting us new customers; our back office logistics managers are spread across countries, and are responsible for logistics operations.

NCT has two main business verticals:



1. Logistics services



2. Agricultural produce

NCT provides import and export services for all types of products throughout the Americas, Europe, Middle East, and Asia. They do this with the help of a team of experts in customs procedures related to land and maritime transportation.



When we get an order, we buy the requested products from locations including the United States, Canada, Argentina, and Brazil. We then ship the order to our customers via land and maritime transportation. Our logistics teams are the ones who actually take care of taking the product (which is generally in containers) from point A to point B to our customers all across the globe.

New Coast Trading (NCT) is a digital agricultural trading company that wholesales and distributes grains from North and South America to retail food outlets and supermarkets throughout the Americas, Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. Employees work from four different countries across the world.

NCT was founded in 2007 by Franliz Medina, Anabella Medina, and Omaria Vielma in Columbus, OH as a digital agricultural trading company. Each co-founder brought with them decades of experience in areas such as import/export, agricultural trading, international customs, and more.

Having scaled profits for traditional enterprises operating in the import/export industry before, the co-founders wanted to make a lean and efficient organization with minimal operational costs.

To stay true to that, they made NCT a **digital-first organization**.



We bring with us expertise and knowledge of import and export customs procedures for both land and maritime transport. This allows us to provide a customized experience to our clients in the global agricultural marketplace.

As established earlier, NCT used digital tools to run their operations from day one. **The whole company basically ran on email and office suite software.** They used traditional spreadsheet software to engage in activities such as building a list of products they were shipping, keeping track of expenses, managing their contractor's fees, and more. They shared these sheets with their colleagues and customers via email.

As the number of orders, product variety, and shipments grew, employees at NCT found it difficult to manage day-to-day operations.

**Each employee spent a good chunk of their time in admin tasks**, such as checking email, making sure that the data in the spreadsheet was accurate and up to date, and making reports.

The only solution at the time was to **hire more employees** to manage the growing volume of data. However, more employees meant more expenses.



We operated using email and spreadsheets for about a year-and-a-half. We're in a very nimble industry, where speed and agility is very important. However, with spreadsheets, we lost a great deal of productivity. Due to the way its designed, anyone can tamper with it, and can customize it without any sort of control. The original template that we used grew out of control, becoming a Frankensteinian monster with different parts from from from different people. There was no sort of or organization, and it just created all kinds of messes..

These kinds traditional software caused a lot of problems for NCT.



Manual work



Data error



Revenue

Using these tools meant that **employees always had to go through emails to find the latest spreadsheet**; even then, there was a chance that these sheets would be out-of-date. The sheets had to be harmonized every time someone added data to them. These tools simply couldn't scale up quickly enough. Since there were multiple copies of the same spreadsheet, there was a high possibility of error due to someone overlooking certain details.

**Incorrect data and manual work** meant that NCT's operational managers had to spend a good chunk of their time doing admin work—time they could've spent on doing actual work they were onboarded for. Plus, sometimes things would just fall through the cracks – missing shipments, payments, and more. This meant increased operational costs – aka decreased revenue.

With traditional software, NCT was always behind the curve trying to catch up with the problem reactively, instead of proactively creating solutions to solve the problem. This harmed NCT's growth.

**NCT needed a solution that would grow as fast as their business volumes.**



# The Solution

NCT used traditional spreadsheet software with email until 2015 when they pivoted to an **cloud based spreadsheet software**.



We started with traditional spreadsheets, and then migrated to online spreadsheets. This was a big jump in productivity for us because the online spreadsheets were more collaborative, and every shared sheet was always up-to-date. So that was a big help.

This change was helpful, but still didn't entirely cover their needs.

The online spreadsheet software still had some of the major challenges from the traditional software. They still didn't have proper data structure or enough automation functionality to really streamline their processes.



The data was passive. You have all this data here, but you cannot do anything with it. You cannot use it to guide you to make decisions. You need to dig out insights from it.

**NCT used this tool until early 2020, when their CTO – Santiago Medina came across Zoho Creator.**

## The Solution

NCT needed a cloud-based solution that could handle a large amount of data, offer a high degree of control, be customizable per their business processes, and have automation capabilities.

Zoho Creator checked all these boxes, and more.



This application really helped us be more proactive in understanding what shipments were arriving late, what the data was saying, and how to talk to our clients better.



Each shipment that we do has a product, vendor, and client attached to it. Because we are a trading company, we act as an intermediary between the customer and the vendor.

The app has three main modules.



Logistics module



Finance module



Logistics documentation module

It helps them understand the workflow that a logistic for a specific contract goes through. Workflows are triggered to automatically move a logistic throughout the process as the user confirms certain things.



We use the Creator app to manage shipments—where we assign each shipment a number, a person responsible, its content, documentation, and a stage. Each shipment shows up as an element in the Kanban report, and it moves between the different stages based on where it is in the process.

The **finance module** helps them have a better control over their accounts payables and receivables. They've developed various workflows that constantly sweep through the contracts, validate against credit terms that they've been given or have given out and help them manage these payments. For accounts receivables, they're creating a system in order to communicate to customer's account statements automatically, helping them manage their overhead cost.

The **logistics documentation module** is important in keeping customers up to date. Throughout the process, they gather various data points from various sources and this data feeds multiple document templates which helps create the necessary shipping documents.



The idea with this module is to help us offer credit to our customers in a smooth way. The module tracks all the credit we've given to our customers, and matches them with their contracts. It sends out periodic updates to the customers, and shows a daily report to us.

They have scheduled **daily workflows** that run through the data and verify different conditions to determine whether their logistics data points are up to date and following the parameters set in the contracts. This allows their team to be more precise in their interaction with suppliers and clients and forces them to be more proactive in order to provide better customer service.



One of the things that I really loved about Creator is the workflows. The workflows have really helped us stay up to date with the data, because we know we have daily workflows just running through the data. Each workflow that we program is like a person that we don't have to hire to exactly do that. And they do it more efficiently and cheaply.

# NCT during COVID

COVID lockdowns were an interesting time for NCT. Unlike most businesses that suffered losses during COVID, NCT actually grew by over 30% over the period.



2020 lockdown starts, everyone goes home. Entertainment industries close, there are no concerts, no restaurants, nothing. Everything's closed, everybody's at home. What do people do? People start eating more. That's it.

With people staying at home, paired with social distancing and a general paranoia around touching surfaces, led to a surge in people cooking at home. That led to a spike in demand for the products NCT sells, including such staples as grains.

That said, it wasn't all rosy for NCT.



We had various problems because of the spike in demand for certain products. The spike created a lot of bottlenecks in international traffic.

Since NCT had just launched their Creator app a few weeks prior to the sudden spike in demand, this became easier to manage. This eased the sudden data surge they faced between shipping delays, cancellations, and constant change in product demand.



# Benefits and ROI

After introducing Creator, NCT saw a 48% increase in revenue, 80% drop in shipping documentation errors, and a 50% drop in claims



The company is much more organized. There's a lot more structure now, and having more structure helps put our processes in a place where they can manage more volume with the same number of people.



The conversations in the company have switched from "how do we put out fires constantly" towards "what can we do now, and how can we provide better service to our customers," because we know that the system can handle it.

# Looking forward

**After introducing Creator, NCT saw a 48% increase in revenue, 80% drop in shipping documentation errors, and a 50% drop in claims.**



We like Creator because it is a platform where we can scale up, and we can scale up very fast. And that's our goal for 2021, to grow faster than before.



In terms of the app, we plan to introduce a customer portal where our customers can visit and have the information, they want to get about their order in one place. The portal is WIP, and we plan to release it soon.



Other than this, we want to explore using Creator's AI fields to use. The AI can help predict various things, such as when to place an order, when to follow up on a payment, and more. I feel that this will really help our teams be more proactive in their work, and will help us improve our customer service.

**NCT is set up with Creator to grow and manage any new needs that pop up.**



# About Us

Running a business is no mean feat, and we believe we can help. Rapidly build custom applications that are a perfect fit for your business, or choose from our extensive range of prebuilt apps and modify them. The best part? You don't have to be a programmer. Just sign up, pick a plan, and start building!





[www.zoho.com/creator](http://www.zoho.com/creator)

We'd love to talk! Reach out to us:  
[hello@zohocreator.com](mailto:hello@zohocreator.com)