

Case Study



Black Ox

# Media & events business stands strong with Zoho One

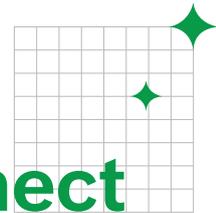


[zoho.com](https://www.zoho.com)



# The Company

## To inform, promote & connect business communities



Black Ox is a growing media and events business headquartered in Camberley, United Kingdom. Established in 2021 but with three successful acquisitions already under its belt, Black Ox owns four separate companies including ***The Business Magazine, Business and Innovation Magazine, biznews.co.uk*** and a video production company called ***Sightline***. With a strong print and digital presence, Black Ox's channels have become the go-to news outlets for corporate decision-makers in the South-East and South-West regions. The company also hosts a popular series of industry award events that champion the very best in local business.

We spoke to the Black Ox team to understand how they amalgamated the disparate tech of four companies using Zoho One's powerful suite of integrated tools. Furthermore, we discover how Black Ox has also leveraged Zoho applications to revolutionise its award nomination processes and streamline the capture of journalistic content.

# The Challenge

Service multiple businesses from one CRM platform



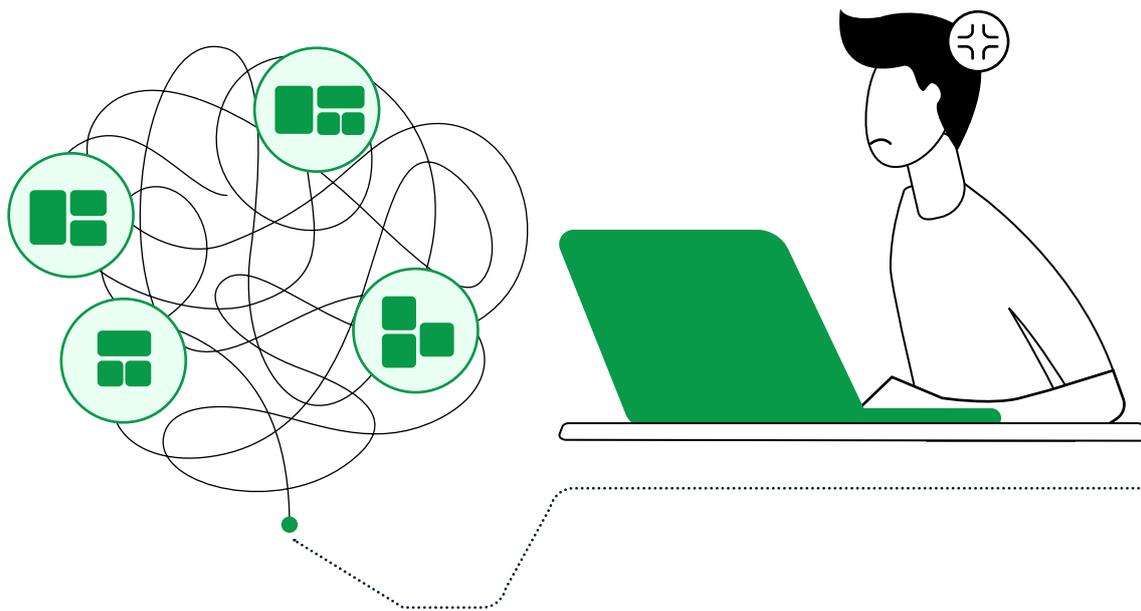
As the business keeps growing we've inherited a number of different CRMs...  
**they fell short in what we were doing**



**Alan Lindstrom**

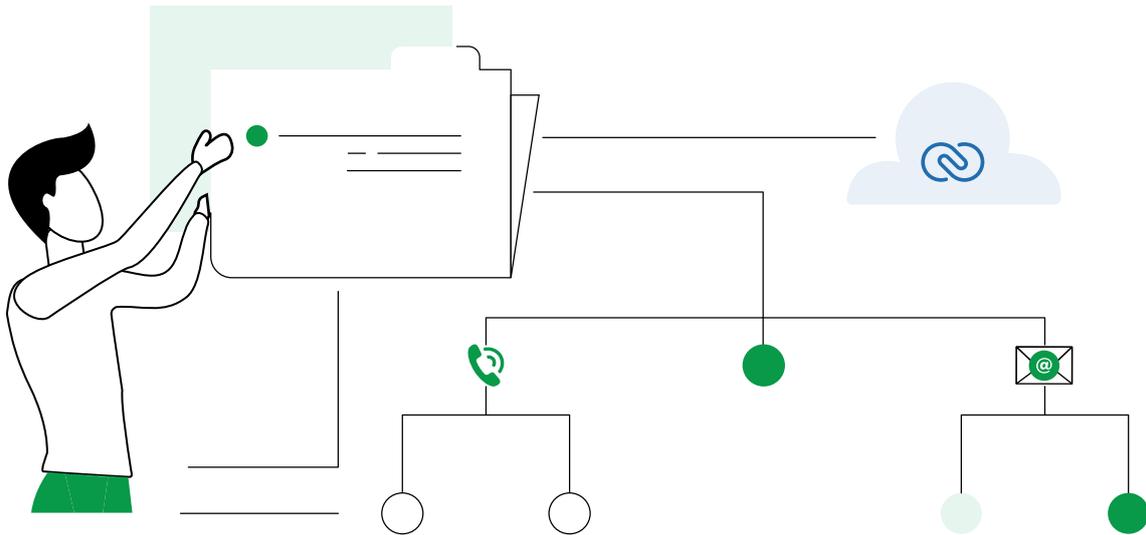
Regional Business Manager

When Alan first joined Black Ox - before any of its subsequent acquisitions - the team were using Maximiser CRM. "When I went into this tool, nothing was easy" he recounts. His frustration was amplified by a constant struggle to secure technical help, which was not forthcoming without a dedicated support contract with Maximiser. And after each acquisition, Alan's problems were exacerbated by the influx of competing CRMs that each new business brought into the mix. The result was siloed data that was hard to access, manage and measure, and an inconsistent user experience across each application.



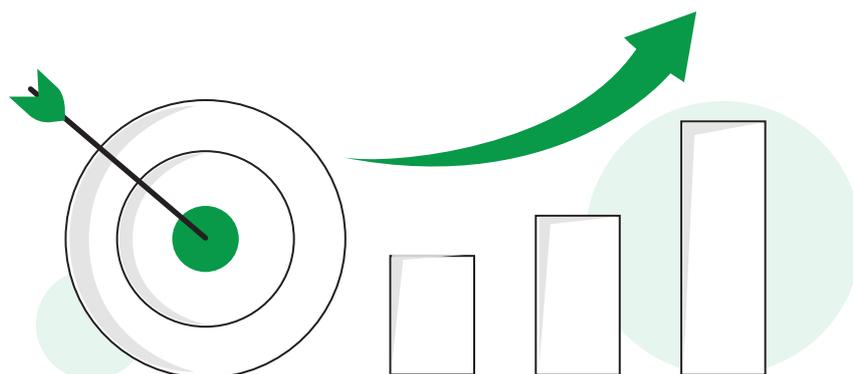
In fact, across the whole group of companies, the roll call of software was so fragmented that it made every business function much harder to manage. Rory Hinton, Marketing Manager, felt this very keenly. On each occasion that he planned to send out an email campaign, he needed to mine contacts from each CRM before pooling them into his mailing platform. "There was a lot of importing and exporting of data, finding data in different sources, looking around different websites and platforms to find the information we needed", he explains. To solve their CRM woes, Alan searched for a platform that could host all four businesses' data in one unified but compartmentalised way. Black Ox investigated a number of options before choosing Zoho CRM. It was to be the start of a much more extensive software overhaul with far-reaching benefits.

Zoho CRM can easily accommodate the needs of multiple businesses in one group with features such as custom layouts, custom deal stages and tags. However, it also allows for a holistic side-by-side overview of those businesses too. "It's an absolute lifesaver for us because we can see the different segments of our companies and then we can also see them as a combined unit as well," says Alan.



But Zoho CRM's sales-friendly attributes don't stop there. Its reporting, forecasting and pipeline features provide visibility of Alan's progress against targets to help focus his efforts across each growing business. It can auto-transcribe his customer phone calls to keep his files up to date with ease. And its native integration with Zoho Sign allows Alan to track the approval of advertising and events contracts by his customers and push notifications to each relevant Black Ox department upon completion. Critically, Zoho CRM's mobile app lets Alan work from anywhere whilst updating records on the fly. "I can be working on my desktop at home...get in my car, go off to a client, open up the app, it's all synced."

Over and above its power to combine Black Ox's data sets and slicken its sales processes, Zoho CRM has had impressive results on the media group's growth and performance. "As a sales team, our efficiency has improved considerably...it just makes life easier as a salesperson. Our productivity, our knowledge and our business in general, our sales pipelines have all increased", shares Alan.



# The Solution

Zoho One combines a multi-enterprise CRM with much, much more



Zoho was able to meet  
**many of our needs**

**Richard Thompson**

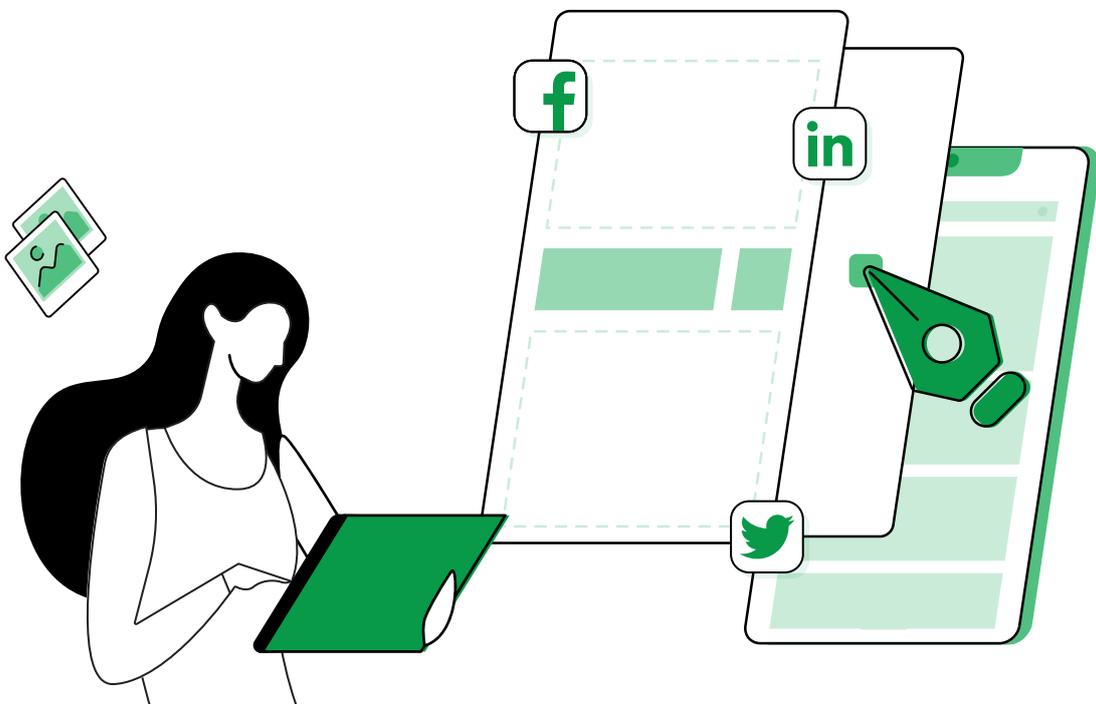
CEO



Once the Black Ox team had onboarded Zoho CRM, they quickly discovered that there were many other products in the Zoho ecosystem that could help them. "We started with the CRM and then we realised we would like to be able to send documents so we bolted on Zoho Sign..and then we would find another app that we would want to use", Alan recalls. It soon made sense to upgrade their subscription to the Zoho One bundle, a cost-effective collection of over 55 integrated apps that cater to every business function.

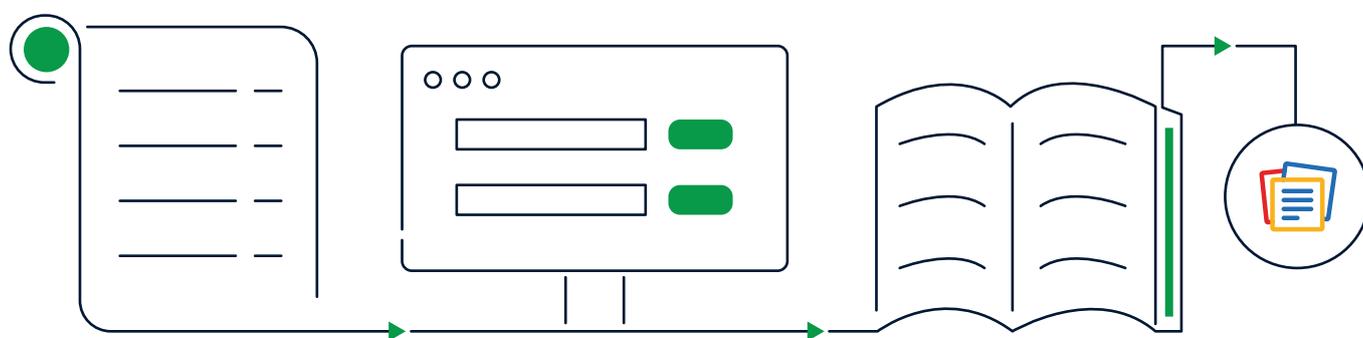
With Zoho One in place, Black Ox's marketing technology was next in line for a facelift. The business transitioned to Zoho Campaigns from MailChimp and to Zoho Social from Hootsuite. There were immediate and significant cost savings as a result of these migrations, to the tune of over £500 per month, but the primary benefit was the now seamless movement of data across apps.

"Using Zoho Campaigns we're able to pull data through from the CRM and easily and automatically segment it into different pots that we can send out information to", explains Rory. As a result, the group's 7,000 daily newsletter subscribers benefit from hyper-personalised content tailored to their interests and preferences. Meanwhile, Zoho Social provides Black Ox with a 360° view of each business's social media resonance and engagement, as well as that of their competitors. Its central dashboard also helps Rory plan out all of his posts across each publication's handles in advance, easily adapting the content for each platform and avoiding any clashes.



Black Ox also looked to Zoho Forms to overhaul its award nomination process. Under its ***The Business Magazine*** title the Black Ox Events team run twelve award events annually, each with twelve categories, to champion local businesses in the property, tech, and finance spaces. Historically the award nominations were collected via Evessio's award management software but Black Ox wanted to streamline the process. Where Evessio required the creation of a separate form for each category in each event, Zoho Forms allowed the team to build just one form that would respond dynamically to the chosen category using conditional logic, surfacing only relevant questions.

"Just one single form manages all nominations...we can process the data very easily and send it out for judging in a very seamless system", says Philip Cooper, Digital Strategist at Black Ox's sister company, SixTwo. Not only has this move created a better user experience for nominees, who no longer have to search high and low for the right form, but it has significantly cut down the amount of administration and maintenance required by the Events team. What's more, Zoho Forms delivers automatic submission notifications, boasts highly customisable designs, integrates with the CRM and has saved significant costs on an Evesio subscription. "Forms has saved us thousands of pounds every year compared to what we were paying", Philip explains.



Last but not least, Black Ox's Managing Editor Stephen Emerson has also tapped into the power of Zoho One's tools, switching from Evernote to Zoho Notebook after he felt the former had become outdated and unreliable. He originally migrated around 10,000 personal notes ("a seamless process" he assures), and then his team followed suit. "The whole Editorial team at Black Ox use Zoho Notebook...to write interviews in, to record audio and to write news items." The platform is ideal not just for collaboration, but also for Stephen's frequent periods of travel, during which he can access Notebook's repository of content even without an internet connection. And he credits its fast search function, colour coordination, clear layout and 'favourites' button for making him more productive on a daily basis. "It's invaluable when you're working in a fast-paced editorial environment" Stephen asserts.

# The whole is greater than the sum of its parts

A number of Zoho apps within the One bundle have combined to transform the way that Black Ox, its employees and its four businesses work and interact. But CEO Richard Thompson views One's legacy on a macro scale. Reflecting on the ways that it has allowed the company to streamline its software, costs and supplier relationships, Richard says "It's quite easy to see a cost saving as a business when we can rationalise from multiple vendors and suppliers and platforms to a single solution." He also lauds Zoho's limitless scope for customisation, intuitive user experience, rich security features and privacy-first designs. Plus the visibility of data that One's tightly integrated tech stack provides across every publication, department and deal gives Richard the at-a-glance overview he needs to steer the group at the helm. "For me personally, I use it as an instant snapshot of how the business is performing... it's hugely important for our business and business planning." But perhaps the most reassuring aspect of the Zoho One product for Richard is his confidence in it as a long-term solution. "We have ambitious plans to adapt, to evolve, to innovate...it's really good to know that we can work with Zoho and Zoho grows with us."

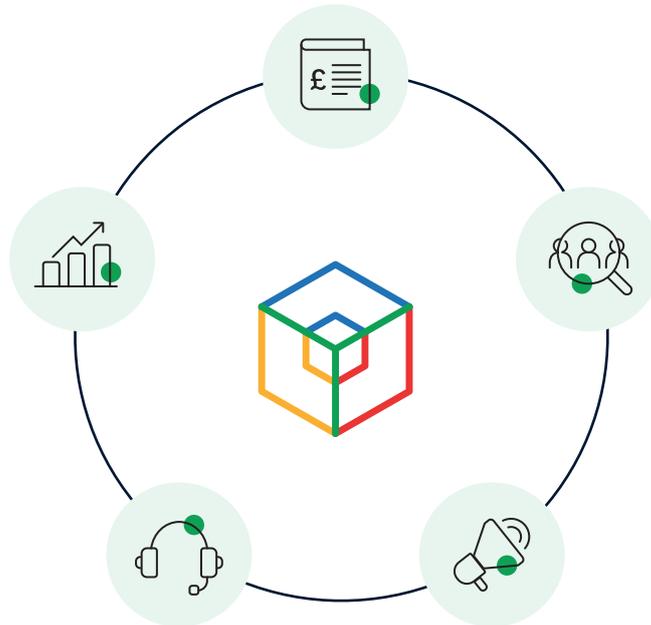




## Black Ox's transformation by numbers:

- ◆ Consolidated 4 CRM platforms into 1 with Zoho CRM
- ◆ Reduced 12 static nomination forms down to 1 dynamic alternative with Zoho Forms
- ◆ Achieved a saving of £6,000 per year on an Eversio subscription by switching to Zoho Forms
- ◆ Have saved £500 per month on a Hootsuite subscription by migrating to Zoho Social
- ◆ Seamlessly transferred 10,000 notes from Evernote to Zoho Notebook
- ◆ 7,000 Black Ox subscribers receive a daily local news fix via Zoho Campaigns

# About Zoho One:



Developed as the ultimate "operating system for business", the Zoho One bundle is a collection of 55+ 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: <https://www.zoho.com/one/>



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Zoho One



CRM



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Forms



Campaigns



Social



Notebook