Snowbility and Zoho Creator: Skiing fuelled by low code

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About the company

Snowbility and its charity The Snow Sports Foundation's objective is to empower those with special needs and mental health challenges, as well as those who care for them. It accomplishes this through the power of snow sports—skiing and snowboarding—on real snow.

Richard Fetherston founded Snowbility with the aim of bringing joy to the hearts of special individuals and their families by providing personalized snow-based activity sessions adapted to each student's unique needs.

Located at the Snow Centre in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, England, Snowbility provides a conducive environment for its students to experience the joy of discovering their inherent potential through snow-themed activities.

About the partner

BEACON Cloud Technology Ltd is a UK-based Zoho partner, and has been a Zoho Creator authorized solution provider since 2016. The BEACON CloudTech team applies many years of business experience and Zoho technical expertise to resolve clients' real-world challenges. They build long term customer relationships by taking the time to understand the challenges fully, designing optimized Zoho solutions, and providing ongoing support services.

The challenge

Snowbility started with a written notebook of student details and spreadsheets to manage its business processes. This approach simply did not scale. Information needed to be accessible, shared, and searchable. As skiing sessions always take place at a Snow Centre, it was also imperative to be able to read and update records from smartphones and tablets, too. Finally, much of this data is private and sensitive, so a rigorous roles and access permissions infrastructure was required. A unified solution, integrating business operations, finance, instructors, and management was needed.

Snowbility approached BEACON CloudTech with this challenge. After completing an extensive discovery process, including interviews with key Snowbility team members, BEACON CloudTech recommended a Zoho Creator solution. The reasons were clear. Zoho Creator, besides addressing Snowbility's immediate needs, offered a platform that would scale and grow as the company expanded.

The solution

To understand why Zoho Creator was the perfect solution for Snowbility it is useful to review the various "interfaces" of this business and how each needed to be supported.

Parents, guardians, and schools need to apply to Snowbility and submit logistical and contact details. In some cases, they may be entitled to funding support and this always necessitates additional details. Parents receive automated email updates and SMS messages to remind them of upcoming Snow Centre sessions.

Each student has a personal profile record. This contains personal details of any additional needs, plus logistical information such as ski size or preferred instructor. In addition, there is a sophisticated multi-level grading system to track each student's progress, award merit badges, and similar metrics. The grading system and the expertise to work with these student are, to a large extent, the "secret sauce" of Snowbility. This model was developed by Fetherston over many years based on his vast experience in this space.

Ski instructors are also tracked by the Zoho Creator application. Each instructor must complete government checks prior to working with young people, including instructor competency certifications and ongoing professional development. Instructors use the Zoho Creator app to schedule their availability, and are automatically notified of upcoming sessions.

The booking management team is responsible for session scheduling, instructor assignments, and payments. Zoho Creator puts the information they need at their fingertips including, calendar views, instructor rosters, parent and school contact details, and other relevant information. Snowbility offers a range of sessions like skiing and snowboarding, individual and group lessons, and on-slope and off-slope experiences. All of these, along with automated confirmations and notifications, is readily managed using Zoho Creator.

Students are graded in real time during and after each session. An instructor, using the Zoho Creator smartphone app, can easily record a student's grade while ascending the slope on the tow bar. This is a huge win, something that was not even imagined before discovering this solution.

Then, there are the productivity features. Equipment and clothing requirements for each session are auto-generated so everything is ready when the students arrive and slope time is booked weeks in advance. Cancellations and rescheduling are easily managed, too.

Zoho Creator was the clear and obvious solution and BEACON CloudTech was the ideal partner to implement it since they're local, fully embracing of the business and it's objectives, and committed for the long haul.

All of the pieces of this puzzle were not in place on day one, though. Like any growing business, Snowbility's model evolved as client needs changed, as new regulations came into play, and as new funding options became available. Plus, there were shocks to the system. The COVID-19 outbreak in early 2020 closed down the Snow Centre; with almost no warning, skiing lessons were replaced by virtual sessions and classroom teaching. The software had to adapt, and the partner had to understand the challenge and implement the required changes. Luckily, Zoho Creator could stretch, morph, and scale to support this evolution. This is probably the greatest value it provided.

As Fetherston needed to implement the solution as soon as possible, he discovered the availability of authorized Zoho Creator partners who would do all the heavy lifting for him. This is where BEACON Cloud-Tech became invaluable.

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We needed one, single tool working on Mac, PC, and mobile phones that would serve as the process structure for the whole business, and manage our additional needs such as students information, initial assessment information, their booking details, invoicing, finance information, and their snow sports progression information. This is basically the lifeblood of our business.

— Richard Fetherston, Founder, Snowbility

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BEACON CloudTech set about transforming Snowbility's unique requirements into Creator modules.

The solution engineered consists of the following features:

| Employee management | Student registration | Customer service management | Financial management |
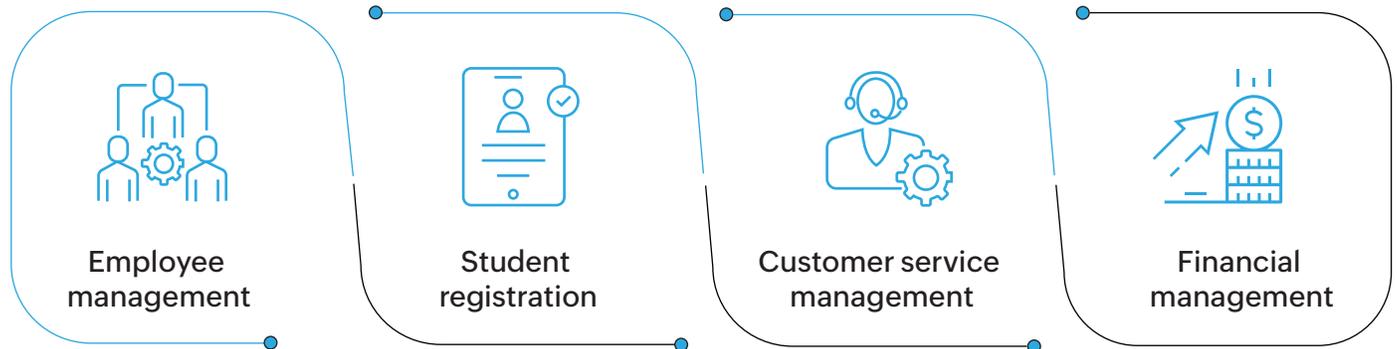
Aside from this, the solution also has modules to:

- Make the information required during lessons immediately accessible to instructors for review at the beginning of a session and updatable within two minutes from the end of a session.

- Provide SMS, text, and email reminders to both students and instructors, and integrate with payment software for invoicing and financial needs.

- Help with funding activities. It's a charity module for The Snow Sports Foundation covering funding applications and management, and a funders database, as people with disabilities usually need help with funding.

> This application built on Zoho Creator is now the soul of Snowbility. All instructors, administrators, and students (with the support of our instructors) use it. We use it for everything that makes the business work and function effectively.
>
> — Richard Fetherston, Founder, Snowbility

Snowbility also has a unique solution supported by the Zoho Creator application: The Ski and Snowboard Pass program.

The Student Ski and Snowboard Pass program

This is the flagship program of Snowbility. It helps:

- Assign specialized, highly qualified, and dedicated teachers to participants.

- Gradually and incrementally build the confidence of participants in the activities.

- Record and review the progression of the students through the program with a particular focus on improving their confidence and mental preparedness.

- Use a scoring system based on their progression within a session both on and off the slope.

- Award accolades to students based on their performance and independence within an activity, and also award certificates in recognition for their achievements in the sessions at all levels of activity.

Benefits and ROI

After transitioning to Zoho Creator solutions, Snowbility has realized many tangible benefits and a positive shift in multiple facets of their business. Fetherston finds the Zoho Creator application to be user friendly, and intuitively operable, too.

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> We have designed the Creator application to mirror our minute to minute activity and how we require information within a busy day—so I don't have to remember anything. If a mother comes in with our student, and we suddenly find out that for the previous lesson the student came with their father, I need to be able to look at the app on my phone and see what the mother's name is, as I am walking towards them, so I can welcome them to the centre. If I need something like a name, its just always in front of me in the app dashboard, whenever I need it in a hurry.
>
> — Richard Fetherston, Founder, Snowbility
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The following are the other benefits enjoyed by Snowbility via the Zoho Creator solution:

| Increased operational efficiency | Improved customer experience | Enhanced employee satisfaction |
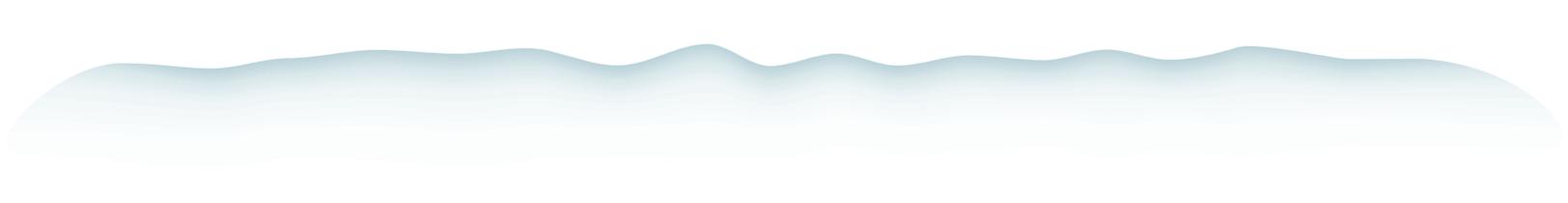
> **"**
>
> Zoho Creator has provided Snowbility and our charity, The Snow Sports Foundation, with total operational efficiency, administrative effectiveness, and world-class customer communication services.
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> — Richard Fetherston, Founder, Snowbility
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Looking forward

Fetherston has ongoing plans to augment and improve the Ski and Snowboard Pass program with additional features to enhance the student experience and the parents' involvement in their children's progress. There are many components of the Zoho Creator platform that could make a real difference to Snowbility's business and the charity, and Fetherston intends to leverage them further in the near future.

About Us

At Zoho Creator, we've always worked towards a single purpose—empowering users to build functional apps with minimal coding expertise. We've helped **14,000+** brands create bespoke solutions and improve their end-to-end operations across a variety of industries. With over **16 years of experience** in catering to **B2B and B2C organizations**, we have the best tools in the trade to help you improve your business.

You can get started with Creator by visiting our signup page. You can also check out our prebuilt apps to get started right away.

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