



## Delivering Data-driven and AI-powered Business Outcomes Through Democratization

*How Zoho's New Democratized, End-to-End Data Platform  
Can Unlock Data and AI for the Enterprises*

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It's easy to get swept up in the hype. Today, it's all about the transformative power of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Before that, we were talking about data being the "new oil."

The hyperbole flows freely.

But it's just as easy to miss the truth in the hype. In this case, both of these statements are completely true — they're just a little incomplete.

AI does have the power to truly transform the way an organization works, interacts with its customers, and creates value. And data is the lifeblood of every enterprise today and the primary means by which it creates competitive differentiation.

But what the hype leaves out is that executing and delivering on those promises is hard — and they're both hard because of the same underlying challenge: the complexity and cost of harnessing enterprise data.

This common root challenge is something that's particularly easy to gloss over amid the hype around AI. Everyone wants to leverage AI to transform business processes, decision making, customer and employee experiences, and nearly every other facet of enterprise workflows. But underlying each of these use cases is copious amounts of data.

Therefore, delivering on the AI promise means addressing the same issues of cost and complexity you need to deliver on the data-as-oil promise: you need to build and sustain a data pipeline that you can trust before you can do anything else.

And therein, as the saying goes, lies the rub.

Managing the enterprise data architecture has historically been a complex and costly process — a process that only the largest enterprises could afford the resources to tackle. So, for most organizations, the promise of data and AI lied just beyond reach. They could see it, but had little hope of doing the heavy lifting required to transform the promise into value.

What was necessary was a way to transform data from a problem that an elite group of data analysts handled, into an ethos in which data belonged to everyone and could be managed collectively — the so-called democratization of data to power data-driven and AI-powered business outcomes.

That's the promise of Zoho's latest Analytics release.

# Data's Complexity and Cost Problem

Before we get into how Zoho is trying to enable data democratization to unleash the potential of data and AI, we need to first have a clear understanding of why developing and maintaining data pipelines has been so complex and costly, especially for mid-sized enterprises.

Tackling the data challenges has been difficult, in part, because it sounds like it should be easy.

After all, the average enterprise is awash in data. It's everywhere. We have small armies of knowledge workers who are already employed to capture, process, enrich, and leverage data in various ways. So, how hard can it be to activate that data and transform it into business outcomes?

But anyone who has dug even an inch deep into the data landscape knows that it's a lot harder than it sounds. There are a number of issues which make harnessing data a significant challenge:

- **Human Error.** First, there's the human-error challenge. Vast amounts of the enterprise data estate are generated by humans. Whether by employees, partners, or customers, all of this human-generated data is error prone. It could be that someone simply has the wrong information. Or there may be typos. Or people are simply leaving fields blank or worse, putting in bad data to just get around a mandatory field. The net-net is that the enterprise data landscape is riddled with bad data.
- **Context.** Even if the data is accurate in the abstract, it's also imperative that you understand the context of that data to be able to use it properly. A piece of data on its own rarely means much — you need to understand it in the context of other data and the business processes it supports to convert it into meaning.
- **Governance and Lineage.** Finally, even if you have accurate, contextual data, you need to be assured that you can trust it to be willing to take business-impactful actions based on it. Throw in compliance and regulatory demands and lineage and governance becomes a significant challenge.

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Put it all together and it becomes pretty clear that it's nowhere near as simple as simply "accessing the data." This fact is why the largest organizations have massive teams dedicated to managing their data pipelines and putting all of that data into data lakes (and warehouses and lake houses) so that data science and business intelligence teams can access it.

But what if you're not one of those massive enterprises? What do you do?

For most organizations, the answer has been to cobble things together. It was just too complex and too costly, so you

made due with spreadsheets and data dumps and did the best you could.

But there is another approach: enlist all those teams that are already collecting, massaging, and leveraging the data to participate in its management. That's what Zoho and its latest Analytics release is seeking to do — and then helping those same stakeholders to leverage it to create those data-driven and AI-powered business outcomes.

Let's explore how.

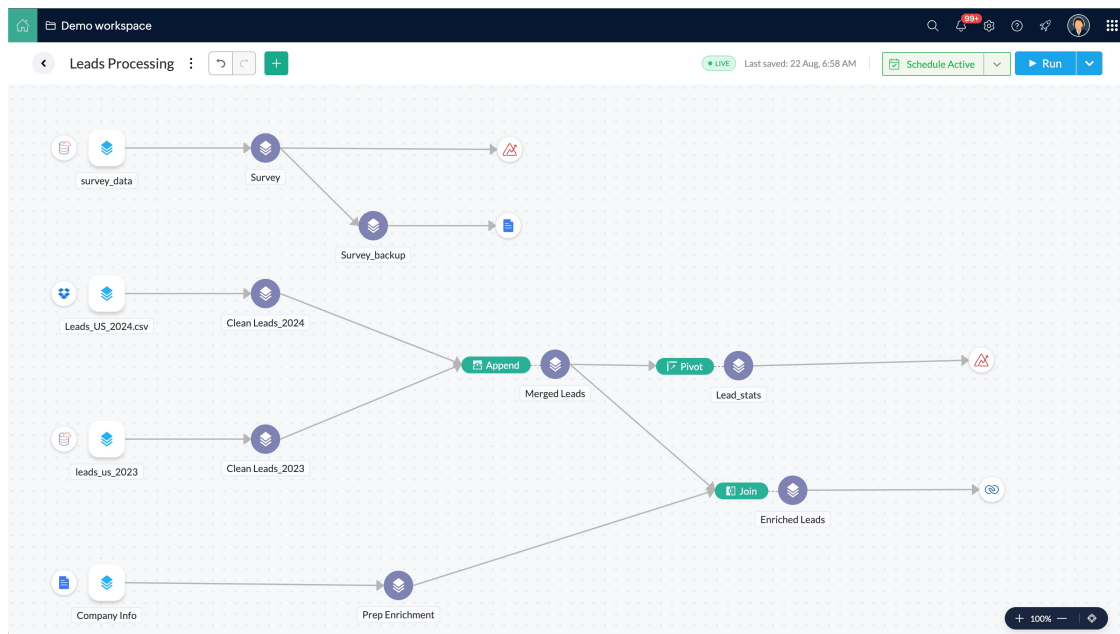
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# Zoho's End-to-End Democratized Data Platform Approach Flips the Paradigm Upside Down

If you're not already familiar with Zoho, its organizing ethos has been to make everything that a business needs to run, easier to manage and operate. Its approach to data, business intelligence, analytics, and AI is the same.

Its Analytics suite has been in the market for fifteen years and has been focused on traditional business intelligence (BI) use cases for most of that time. But from the very beginning, it was focused on putting the power of data into the hands of those that could create the most value from it.

However, culminating with this release, the Analytics suite now enables the enterprise to extend this democratization throughout the entire end-to-end data pipeline and connect it with the power of AI, data science and machine learning.

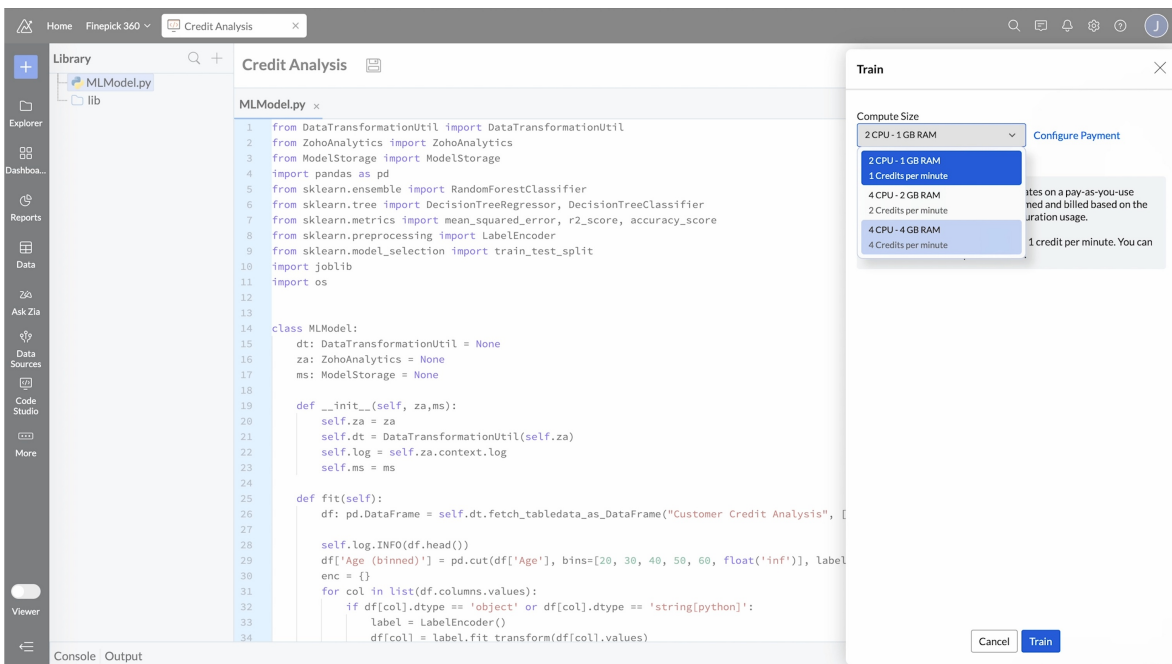


## End-to-End Data Pipeline Management

Over the last several years, Zoho has been adding elements such as data preparation and management to enable the complete, end-to-end management of the data pipeline. This latest release extends this capability by enabling drag-and-drop data visualization while building pipelines. This drag-and-drop simplicity is further extended to pipeline orchestration using its embedded version of Zoho Flow. Moreover, the company has now embedded various forms of AI into the data pipeline management process to enable natural-language data preparation, analysis, and transformation.

## Democratization of the Data Management Process

The company further enhanced its commitment to democratization of the data management process through the use of generative and conversational AI elements to streamline and speed data interactions. For instance, this release includes automated and contextual insights when viewing dashboards and reports. Likewise, a new copilot functionality combined with auto analysis capabilities enables users to rapidly interact with and interrogate data to get outputs and insights needed for both data management and decision making.



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## Opening the AI and ML Door

As we stated at the beginning of this analysis, the ability to harness the power of AI rests with the veracity of the data. The end-to-end pipeline management and democratization of data management and consumption sets the stage, but you still need the ability to transform that data into models that operationalizes AI use cases. This release includes the Data Science and Machine Learning (DSML) Studio designed to do so. Leveraging AutoML, which enables the no-code creation of new machine learning models, and a built-in code studio, the platform now enables a full end-to-end data-to-AI management pipeline.

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# A Data-fueled Future for the Taking

Data is tricky. It seems easy on the surface. But truly harnessing its power requires a commitment to managing it on an end-to-end basis and leveraging it with a steadfast eye on the business outcomes you hope to achieve.

The challenge is that the tools available to help you do so have historically been complex, costly, and required an investment in a dedicated data management function.

It's an investment that few enterprises were really able to make, and why so few have truly been able to leverage data — or AI — for competitive advantage.

Zoho's Analytics Suites, particularly with its latest release, stands to change this paradigm. The company's long commitment to and focus on simplicity, ease-of-use, and the democratization of complex systems are all manifested in this release.

The company's goal seems straightforward. By democratizing the complete end-to-end process and making data management, business intelligence, and data insights all available in a self-service format, it is freeing data from the exclusive confines and restrictions of a data management function that cannot help but serve as a bottleneck.

By enabling those closest to the data to manage and leverage it, it seeks to make it easier for enterprises to realize the business outcomes they demand from their data and AI investments. The reality is that every enterprise will need to find a path that leads to the ability to leverage data and AI to create competitive advantage.

The only question will be how they do it.

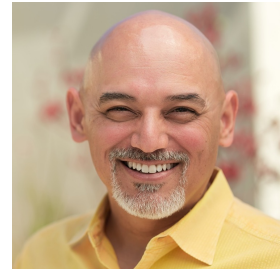
Zoho is betting that given the choice between massive investments to overcome the cost and complexity of the existing data management paradigm, or investing in its democratized approach, the choice will be simple.



## About This Report

### Charles Araujo, The DX Institute and The DX Report

Charles Araujo is a technology analyst and internationally recognized authority on Digital Transformation, the Digital Enterprise, the Digital Experience, and the Future of Work. Researching Digital Transformation for over 10 years, he is now focused on helping leaders transform their organizations around the digital experience and to reimagine the future of work. Publisher and principal analyst of The DX Report, founder of The DX Institute, founder of The Institute for Digital Transformation, co-founder of The MAPS Institute, and author of three books, he is a sought-after keynote speaker and advisor to technology companies and enterprise leaders.



### About Zoho

With 55+ apps in nearly every major business category, Zoho Corporation is one of the world's most prolific technology companies. Headquartered in Austin, Texas, with international headquarters in Chennai, India, Zoho is privately held and profitable with more than 15,000 employees. For more information, please visit: [www.zoho.com](http://www.zoho.com)

