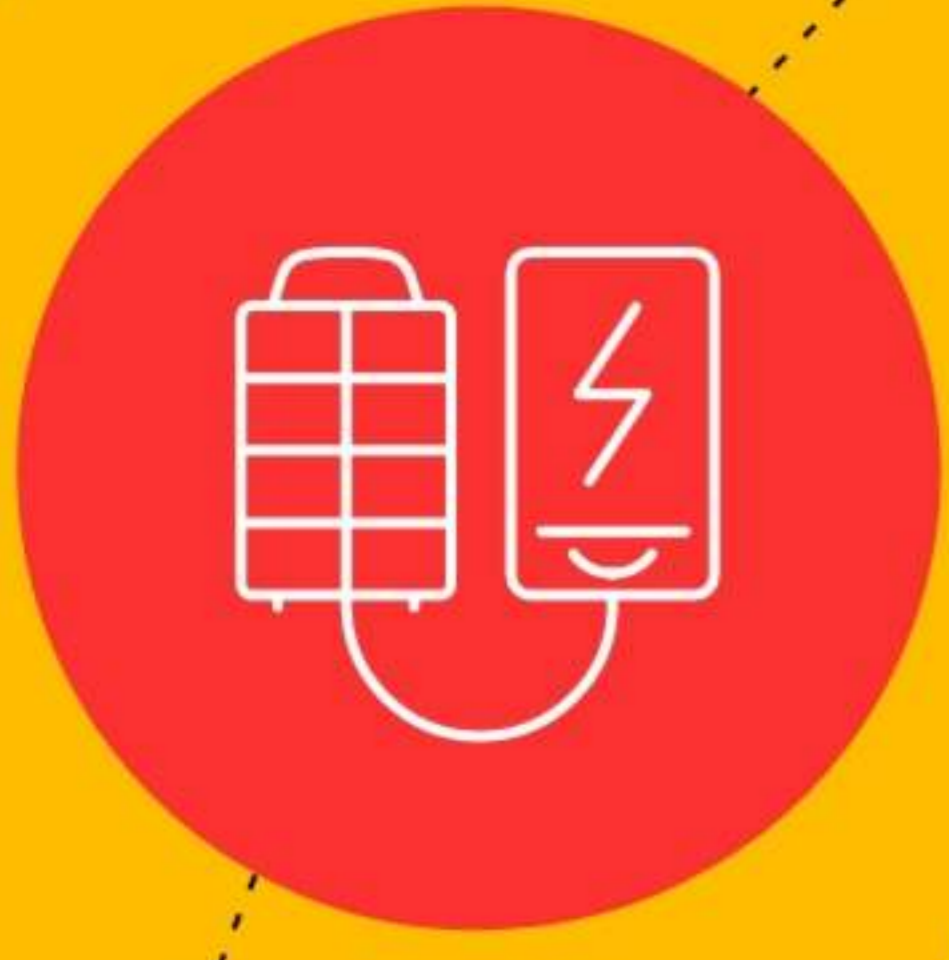



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Yellow: Lighting up lives with low-code

ZOHO Creator

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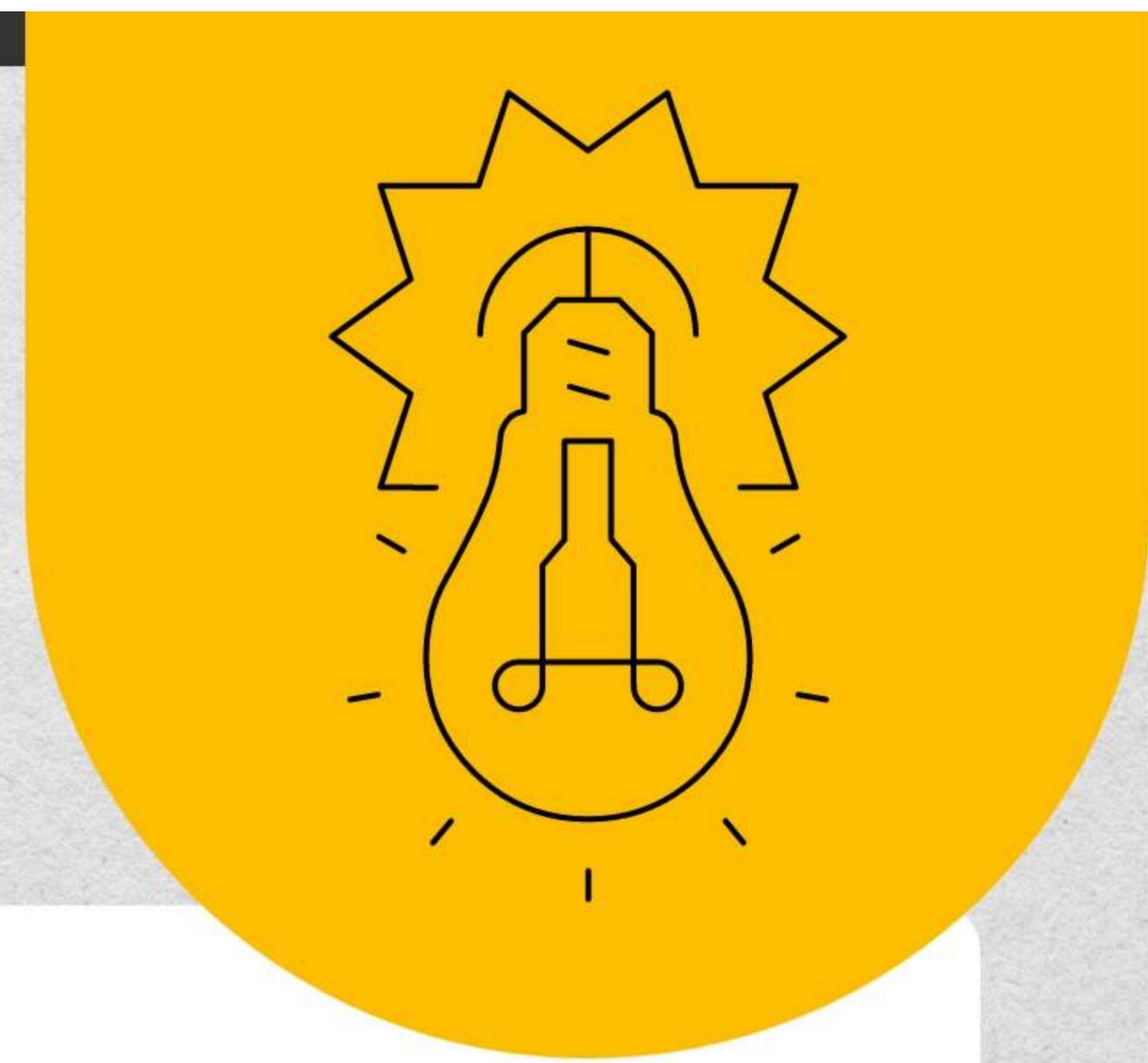
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The Yellow story

For the longest time, many of the people living in Uganda and Malawi have solely relied on candles and torches for light at night. That is when Yellow, a tech startup, came into the picture. Their goal? To provide electricity to people via solar home systems on a financed basis.

Even though solar technology has been around for decades, a good product is only half of the value proposition. Few companies were able to distribute and service customers at a price that the majority of people in this region could afford.





Yellow began its story with the same lesson. Founded in 2017 by Michael Heyink and Maya Stewart, they tried and failed to sell even a single unit in 6 months. That's when Yellow took a leap and dropped the price by half. This idea changed the future of the company and for millions of people across Africa.

Yellow set it up that solar home systems could be paid in installments, at the same monthly price as candles! And as a bonus, if the payment track record was solid, customers would qualify for more digital access through devices.

In order to remain sustainable, Yellow has built a digital ecosystem to put its products and business tools into the hands of tech-savvy African youth. It's an organization of entrepreneurs that now services over 130,000 low-income and rural households across Malawi and Uganda who live off the grid, with access to electricity via their technology. Their mission is to use their business as a commercial machine to make life better. And their motto? Live better!

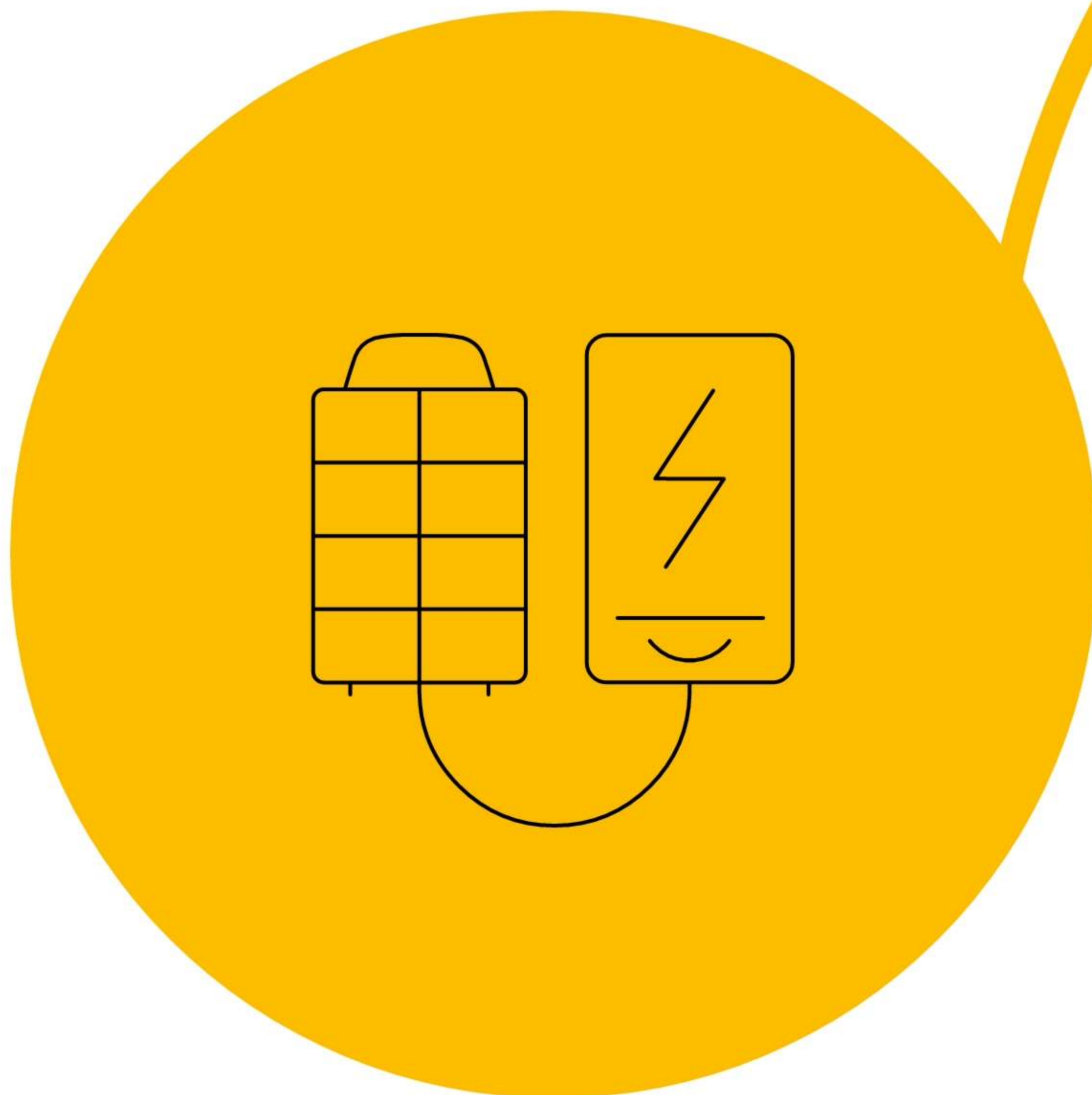
Business model

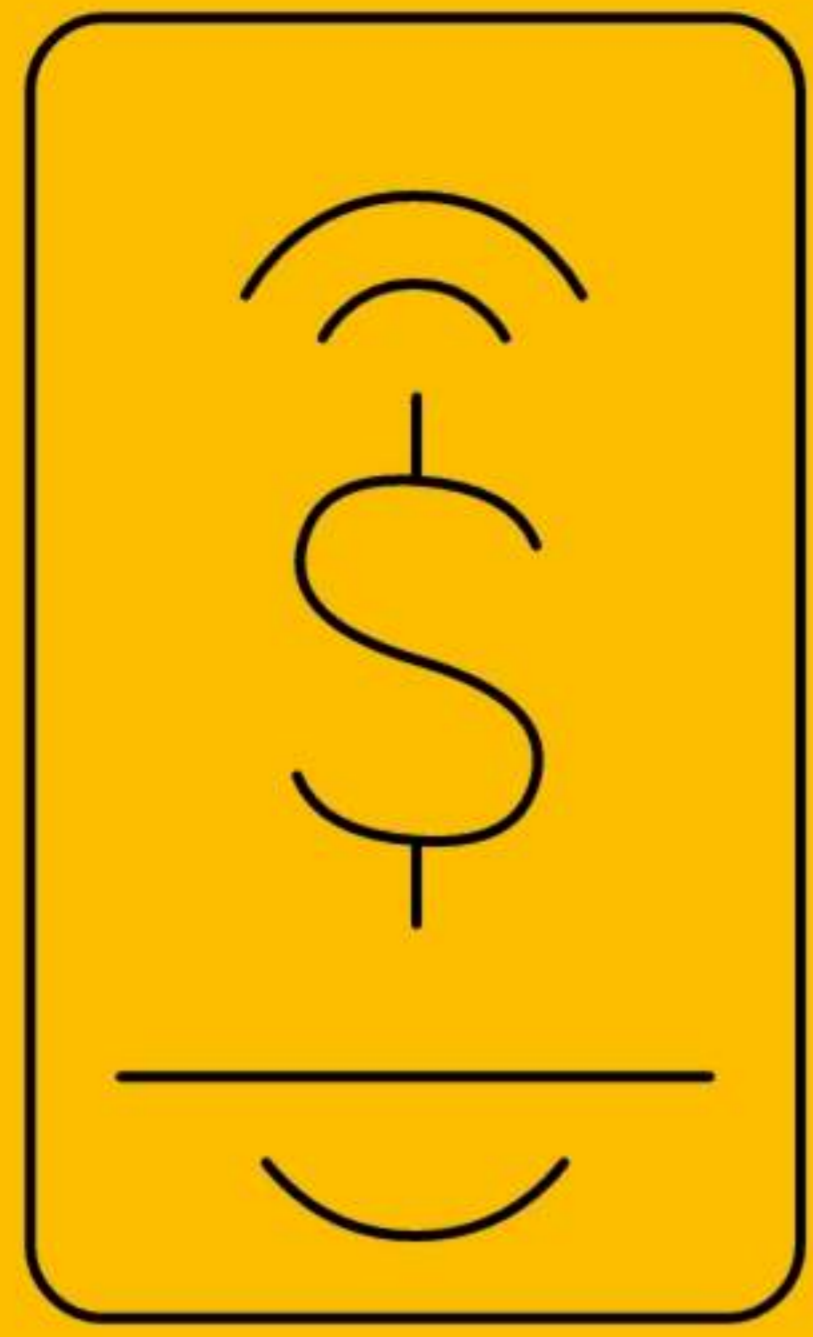
Yellow distributes solar and smartphone products to customers in areas without formal logistics and retail channels, helping them to “live better.”



Product

Their main product is a small solar home system. An all-in-one setup the size of a shoe box, it comes with a small solar panel about the size of a piece of paper, very high efficiency LED lights that are installed around the house, and a console which charges phones and has a radio. Each of them are about 6 watts, sits on the roof and powers the control units in the homes. The solar battery can run the lights for four hours on high, or eight to twelve hours on a lower setting.

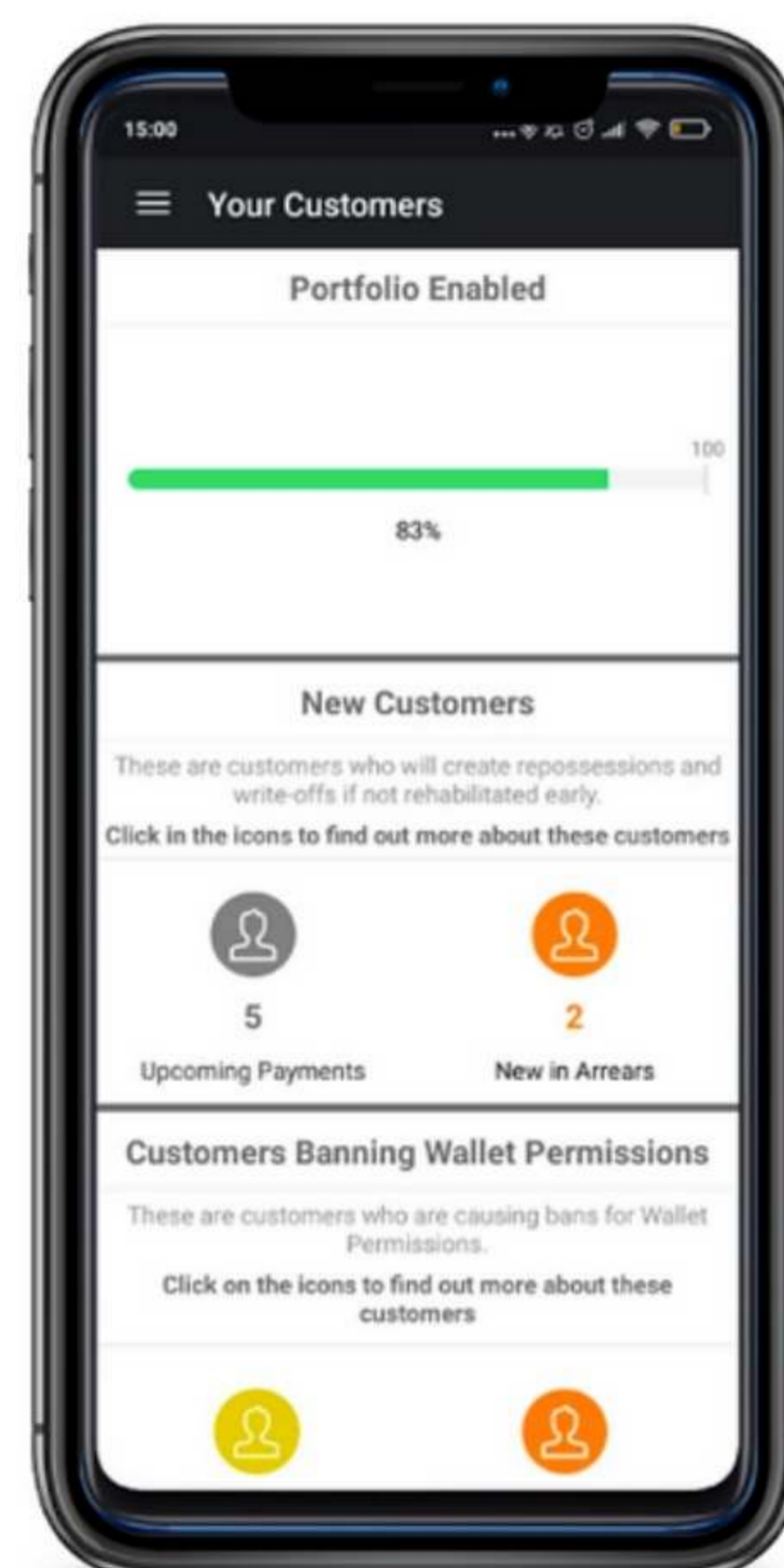


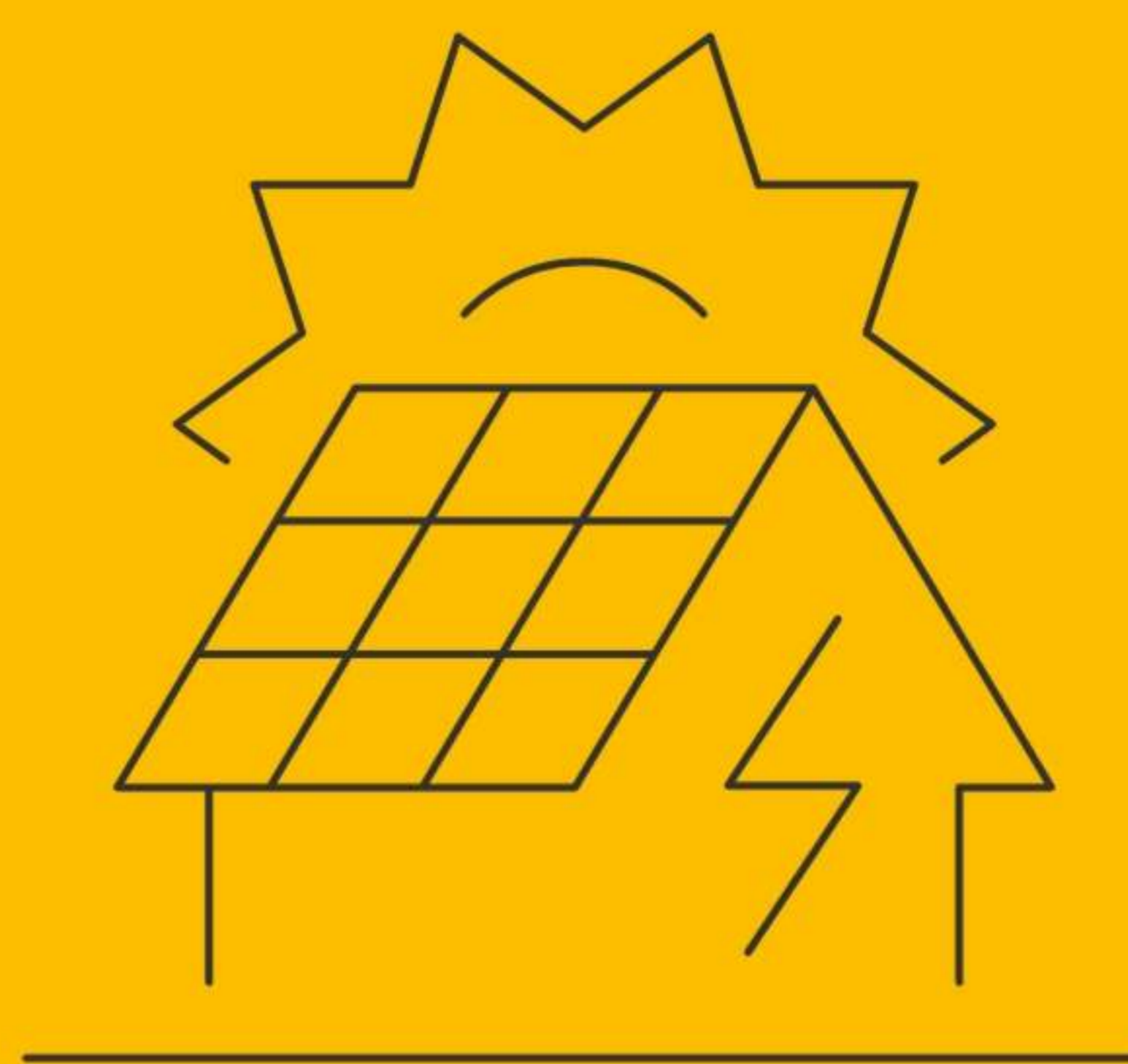


Payment

Yellow sells the system at 6 dollars a month over two years. Every month, customers make the payment and receive a code by SMS, which they punch into the unit to unlock 30 days of light.

Once they pay all the amount, they then own the solar unit and can use it without payment or restriction. When the battery reaches the end of its life, they can buy a replacement, rather than needing a whole new unit.





Process

There aren't any typical retail channels in the villages Yellow caters to. So the company set up a network of agents living in and around Malawi/Uganda, who manage customers, and their needs, based on their portfolio.

They operate through a network of 900+ agents and meet the challenges of last-mile distribution with a solution developed on Zoho Creator, called Ofefee. They offer products on a credit system, with an instalment sale agreement that makes them affordable for almost anyone.

Recently, we got to interview Ben Walwyn, CTO at Yellow, and learn how he, along with his team, leveraged low-code technology to make life better for everyday households across Africa.



Ben joined Yellow in June 2019 as the third member of the management team, alongside Mike (CEO) and Ross (CFO). He has previously worked in insurance and credit risk, customer analytics and product teams at Absa and Discovery Bank. His passion though is to leverage technology to do more with less.

Combining this experience and passion, Ben has and continues to be the genius behind many of the company's incentive-driven technology systems that make it possible to deliver previously unaffordable products and services to Yellow's customers. As Yellow continues to grow exponentially, his role focuses on the architecture, design and skills development in technology and data analytics systems, pricing and credit management.

**Here's an
excerpt from our
interview.**

Challenges

What according to you was the biggest concern?

Early phase problems were linked to the affordability of providing products to some of the poorest people in the world. 90% of rural Malawi is unelectrified and lives off <\$2 per day. For our target audience, even \$1 can make all the difference, and there simply would not be demand if we made our products expensive.

We had to figure out how to provide them with the products they need (lighting, radio, and phone charging) in a way they could afford, so we could reach millions of households. We had to keep costs low across all areas of the business, from technology and physical operations to finance and reporting.

The other aspect is that the business was initially run in Malawi while our management team was in Cape Town.

We had to figure out how to:

- Ensure our agents were serving our customers
- Manage employee productivity and automate tasks
- Manage the performance and incentives of our sales agents
- Automate reporting for funders and executive management

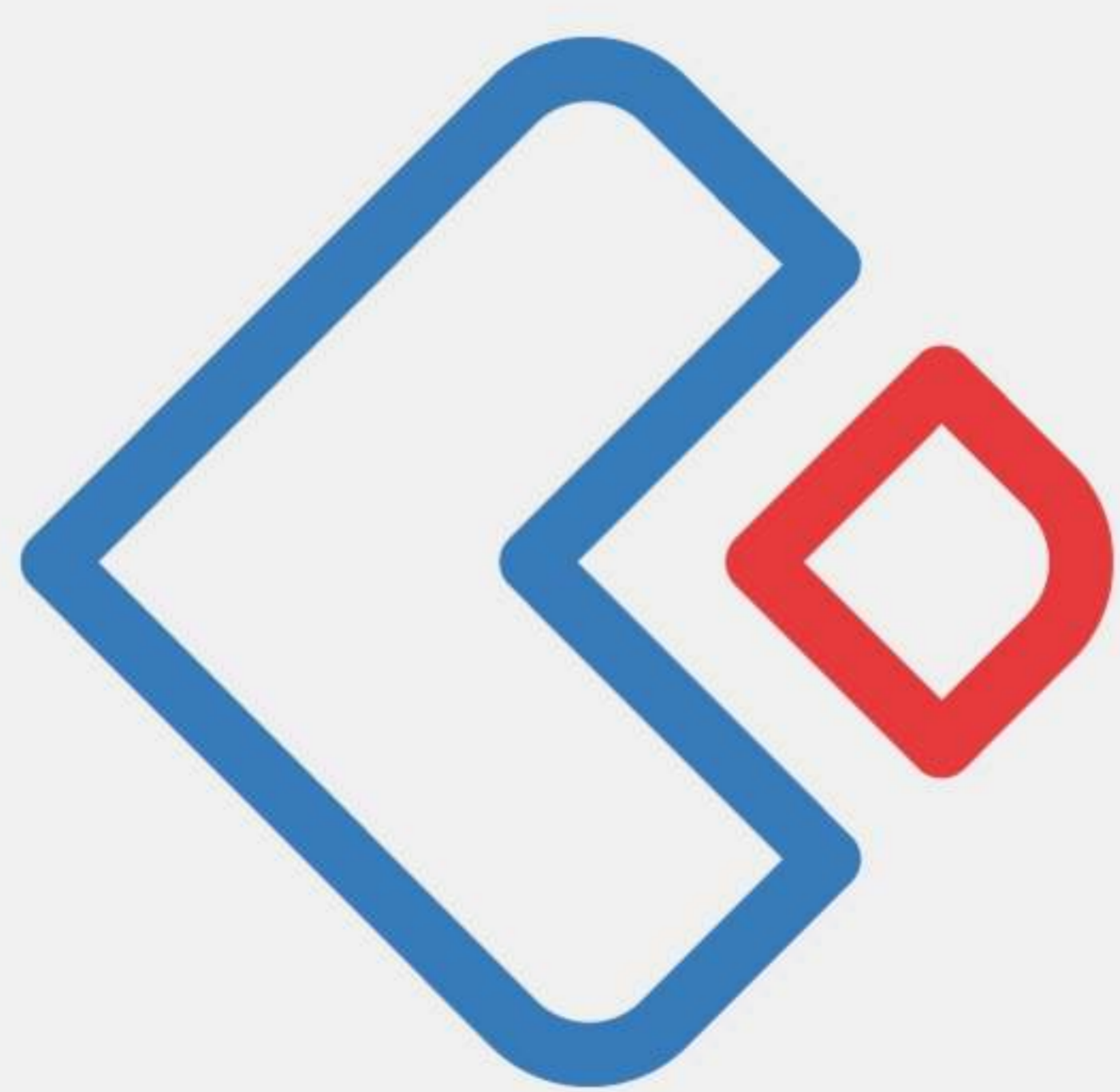
What tools were you using before you decided to go with low-code?

At first, Yellow's agents were making use of a third-party sales and CRM System, however this did not cater for the customer care business areas which initiated the beginning of Google Sheets. Customer care tasks and calls were completed on Google Sheets, however Yellow could not integrate the Sheets with the external CRM, and therefore there was no automation of data pipelines and measurement of productivity.

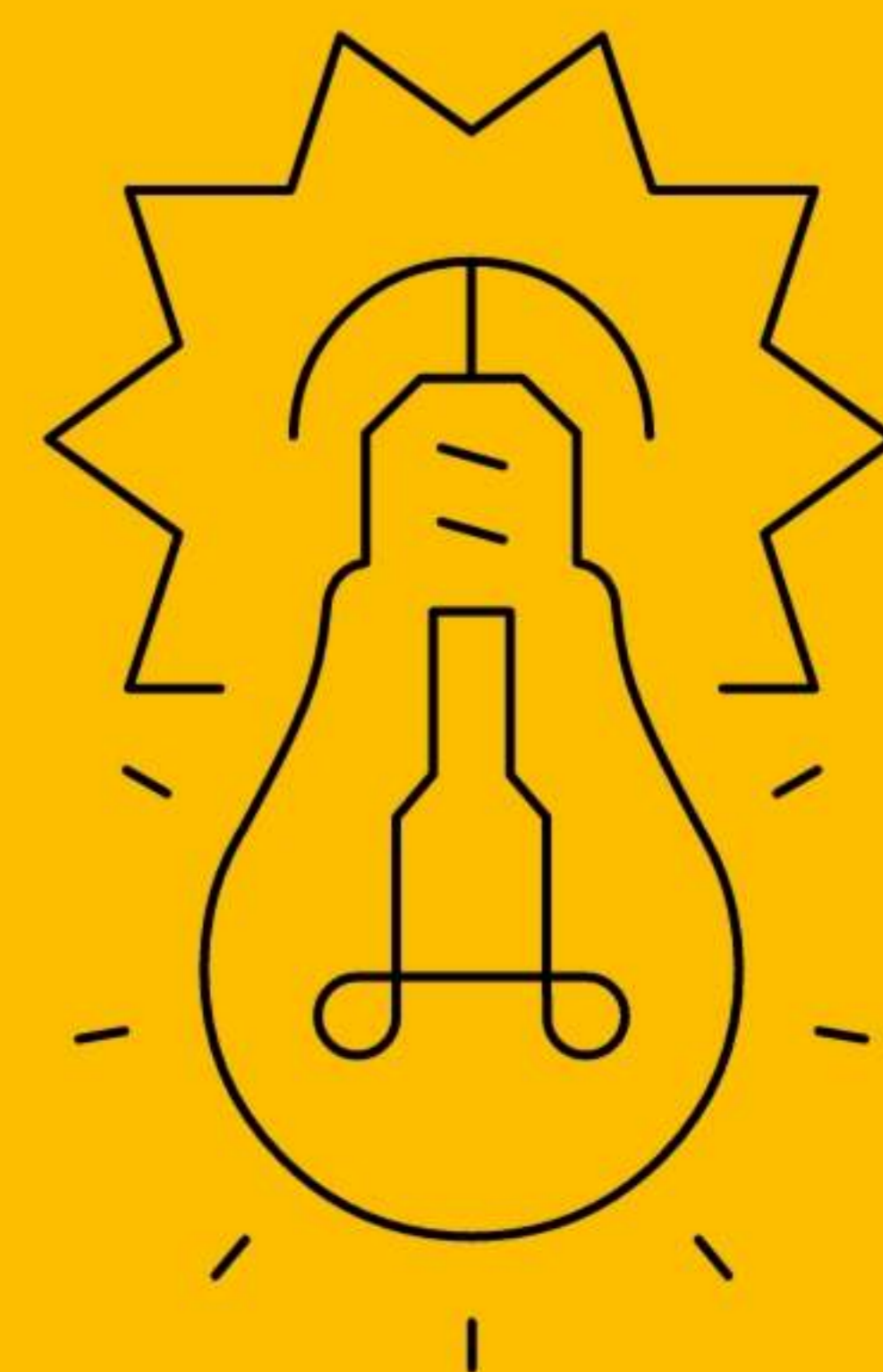
Solution

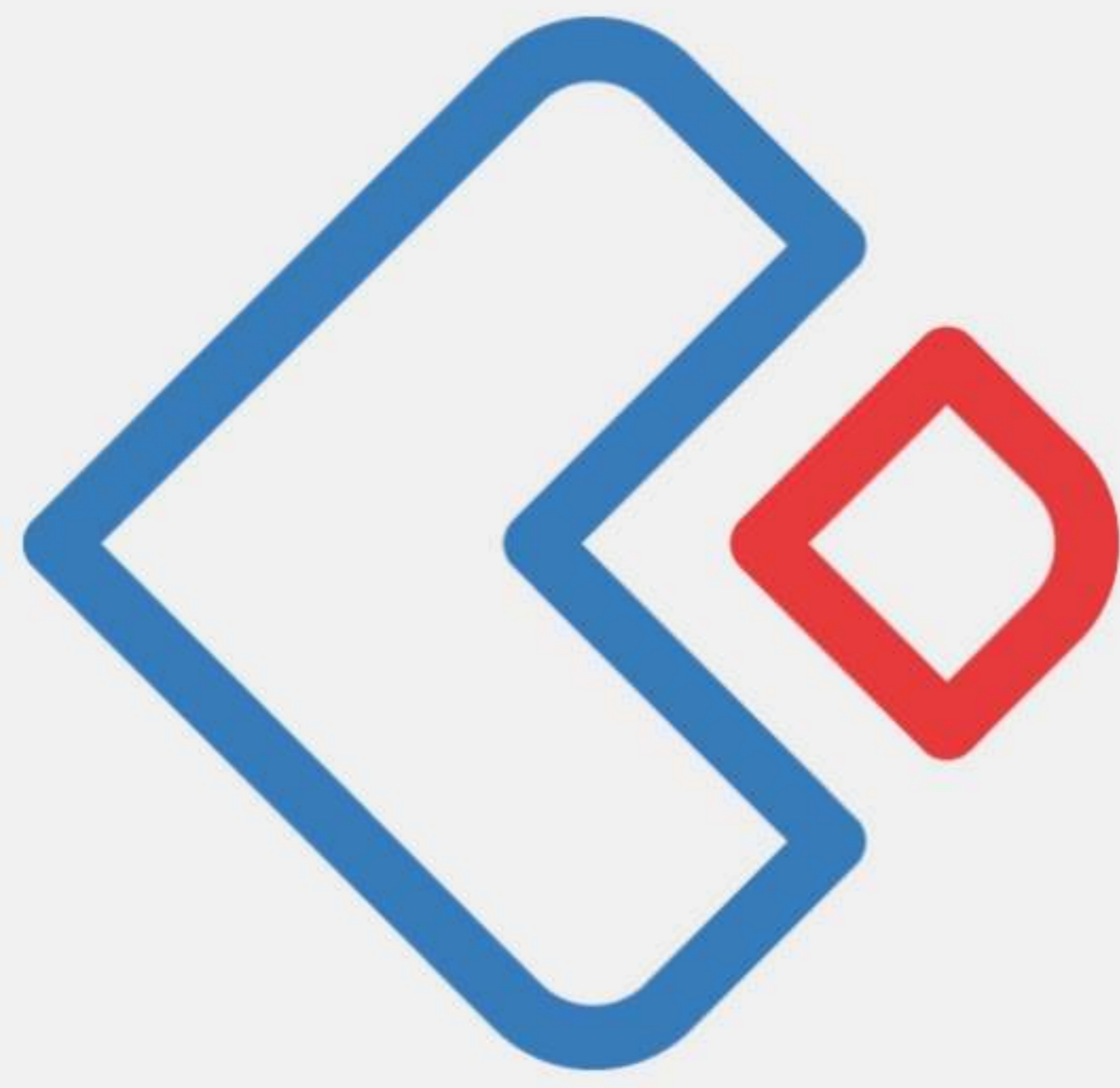
We actually got quite lucky, as our founder just searched online—the first workflow automation software we tried was Zoho Creator and we never looked back!

At first, we didn't know the full extent of what was possible. It took about 5 months to really grasp how powerful the platform was. But once we did, we had turnaround times measured in days, rather than weeks.



Zoho Creator



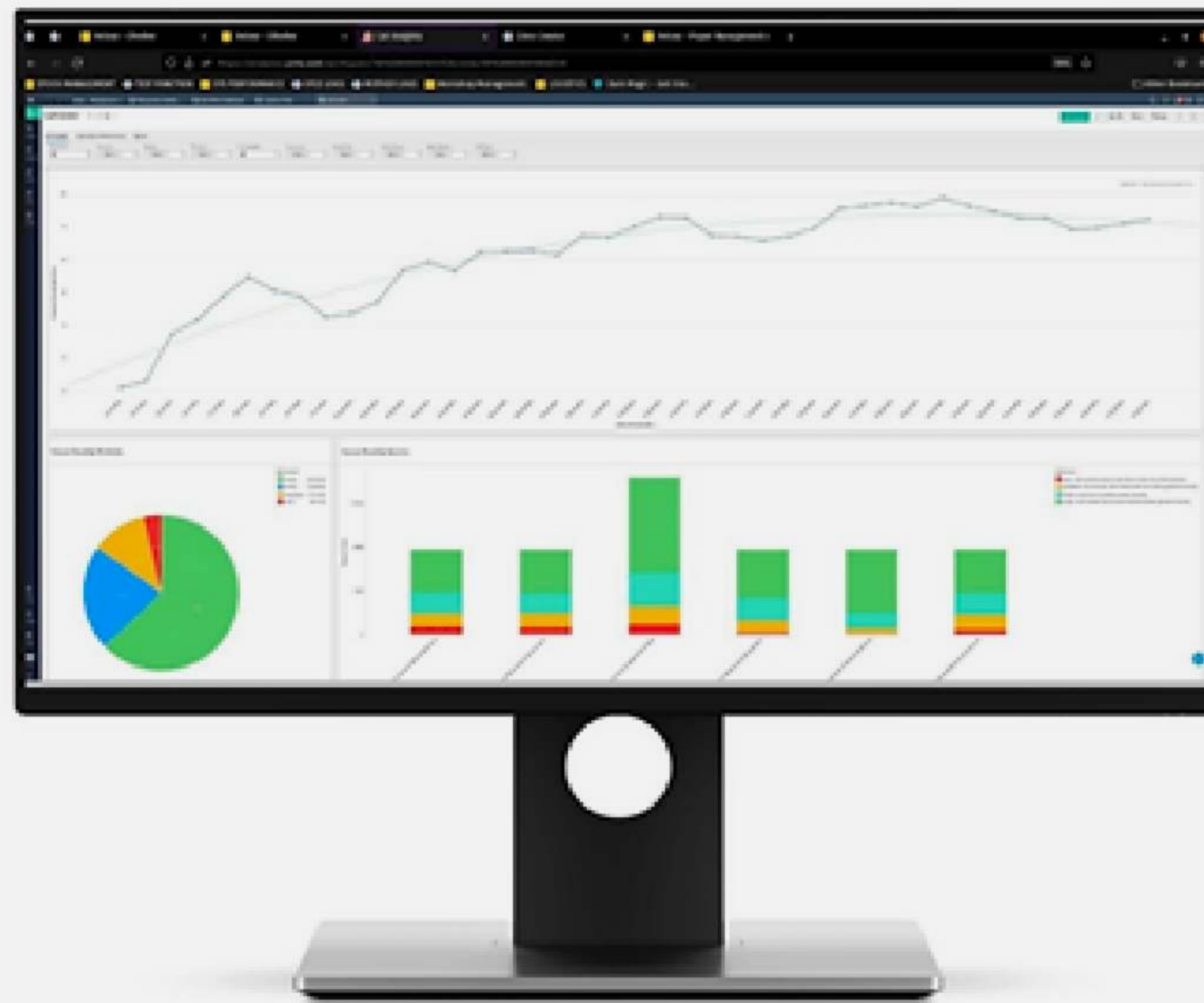


Zoho Creator

Yellow's most loved Zoho Creator features:

- Deluge event processing: Form workflows and Zoho Flows
- Deluge invokeURLs
- Deluge cross-app function calls
- Scheduled workflows based on existing records
- Timestamps have allowed us to build a CRON-type scheduling tool
- Zoho Flow webhooks allow us to complete complex event use cases
- HTML snippets with Deluge code allows us to build almost any page UX
- Customer portal apps deployable as APKs
- Low data usage, which is vitally important for agents in Africa

Results

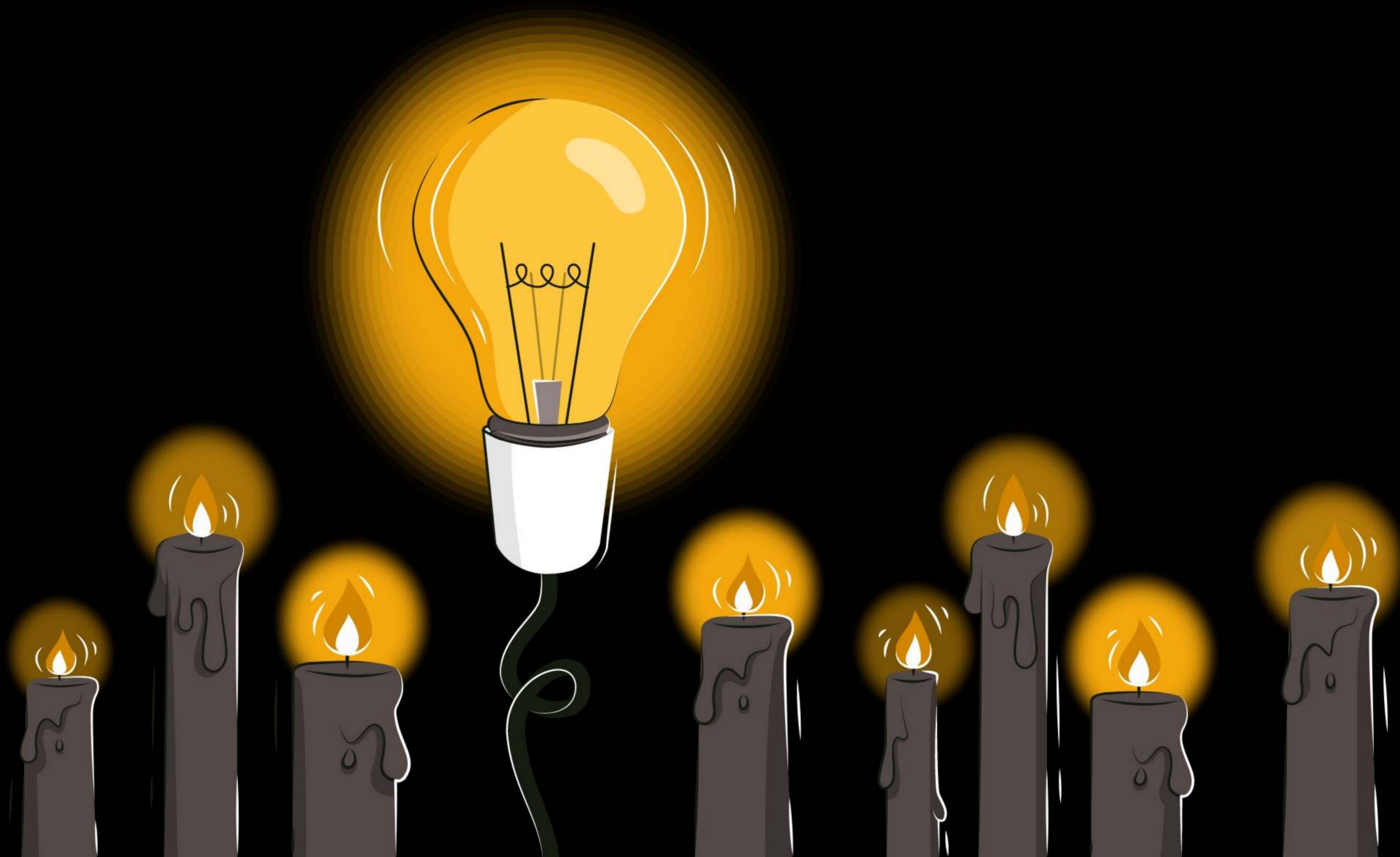


How easy was it to implement the application?

Zoho Creator requires some time to learn the full extent of its power, but still much faster than complex languages and frameworks. The development cycle is extraordinarily quick, so implementing projects is rapid and users require minimal training, as the default objects are so intuitive in a Web 2.0 world.

What is your favorite feature? Why?

Being able to deploy an APK in 1 day was a game-changer for us, as it allowed us to scale the agent network without high development costs—we didn't have to employ anyone new to build services or UX. The mobile views are there by default, easily configurable, and packaged into the APK in a few simple steps.



How exactly do you use Zoho Creator for your business?

Our use of Zoho Creator is extensive. We've built an entire enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution—Ofeefee—for our specific industry (last mile distribution). We like to say it's SAP for our industry, but it costs us a fraction of the equivalent licensing fees.

Zoho Creator enables our agents to earn commissions for sales made, see when customers need help with technical questions, and see when they're going to get deliveries. The agents' whole operation runs on this application.

This means it has digital tools for every step of the product journey: procurement, inbound delivery, inventory management, outbound logistics, account management, commissions, billing, payments, payroll, rewards, and more. But because it's all digital, we were able to build incentives for every action an agent or employee does. This makes our people highly productive, efficient, and effective.

Have you integrated with any other services?

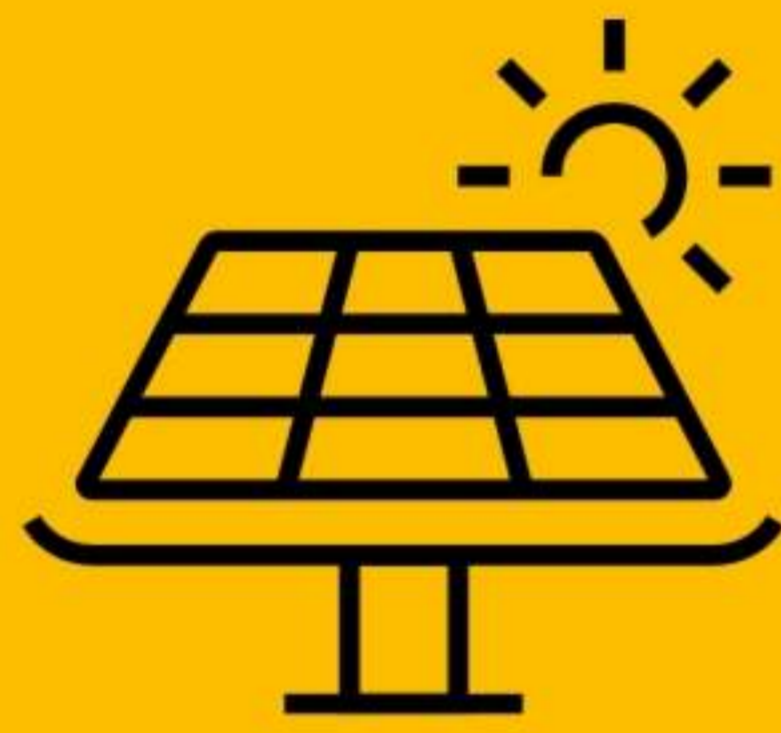
Yes! We've integrated a third-party loan management system for webhook events and polling, Google Sheets integrations for an entire learning management system, Calendar, Flow—there are quite a few!

Benefits and ROI

What results have you seen with our solution so far?

Success! We were able to scale at unit economics that made the product affordable to people in our markets that weren't before, but also still keep track and manage the product, people, and customers effectively.

Can you share any metrics that show the success you've enjoyed with our product?



161,000

Customers



900+

Agents



66

Team members



3

Countries

We now have 161,000 customers, with 900+ agents in the network, and are onboarding 10,000+ customers per month. We are the largest solar distributor in Malawi and are growing 30% per month in Uganda. We've also expanded our product range to include TVs and smartphones.

Most importantly, we are profitable and sustainable, being able to raise sufficient funding to reach our goal of making life better for 10 million households by 2030.

We can't measure reduced costs because we wouldn't have been able to get to this scale without Zoho Creator in the first place! Our productivity metrics increased by 100%, and by being able to scale at low cost, we increased revenue many times over.

What is the single biggest reason you would recommend Creator?

We can rapidly implement digital products and services to test the market before investing heavily. Also, the Zoho support teams were extremely helpful. I hope to meet some of the employees someday.

Careers at Yellow

Yellow is expanding their team to continue their successes using Zoho Creator as their workflow automation software of choice.

Are you interested in joining their developer team?
Please view the opening roles and requirements
here:

<https://www.yellow.africa/careers>



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 13,000+ brands create bespoke solutions and improve their end-to-end operations across a variety of industries. With over 25 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 the [sign-up page](#). You can also check out our [prebuilt workflow templates](#) to get started right away.





ZOHO Creator

www.zoho.com/creator

**We'd love to talk! Reach out to us:
hello@zohocreator.com**