



National Institute of Technology Mizoram

Zentrox -final report V1.0.2

Zentrox – Autonomous Workflow Automation Tool

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Semester: 6th

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Date: 22nd April 2025

Abstract

Zentrox is a real-time, no-code workflow automation platform developed to overcome the inefficiencies and constraints of traditional automation tools. Designed with simplicity and scalability in mind, Zentrox features an intuitive drag-and-drop interface that allows users to create complex workflows without writing a single line of code.

The platform supports seamless integration with multiple third-party services such as Google Drive, Slack, Notion, and Discord, making it highly versatile across different operational environments. User authentication and role-based access control are securely managed through Clerk, ensuring a robust security framework.

Technologically, Zentrox is built using the modern web stack—**Next.js 14**, **PostgreSQL**, and **Prisma ORM**—providing high performance, maintainability, and database reliability. For real-time responsiveness, Zentrox utilizes webhook-based communication facilitated by **ngrok**, allowing instantaneous execution of user-defined workflows. This event-driven model proves significantly faster and more efficient than traditional polling-based approaches.

With its affordable pricing model and user-friendly design, Zentrox is particularly tailored for startups and small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) seeking to automate repetitive business processes without the need for complex infrastructure or technical expertise. By combining modern development practices with powerful automation capabilities, Zentrox empowers organizations to enhance productivity, reduce manual effort, and accelerate digital transformation.

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1. Introduction

In the modern digital era, businesses heavily rely on a variety of software-as-a-service (SaaS) platforms to manage day-to-day operations. These tools—ranging from communication systems like Slack and Discord to productivity applications like Notion and Google Workspace—are integral to workflows. However, manually coordinating activities across these platforms leads to inefficiencies, redundant work, and higher chances of human error.

Workflow automation tools such as Zapier and Make have emerged to solve these challenges by enabling the automatic execution of actions across integrated services. While these tools have gained popularity, they present several limitations:

- **High Cost:** Many existing platforms follow a subscription-based pricing model that quickly becomes expensive for growing teams and startups.
- **Limited Customization:** Most tools provide predefined templates or rigid integration logic, which restrict flexibility for dynamic use-cases.
- **Polling-based Triggers:** Many systems rely on polling mechanisms to detect events, leading to delays in execution and unnecessary API usage.
- **Complexity for Non-Technical Users:** Despite being labeled as "no-code," these platforms often require a technical understanding of data flow and API configuration.

Zentrox was designed to directly address these pain points. It is a real-time, no-code workflow automation platform that allows users to build and manage automation pipelines through an intuitive drag-and-drop interface. Zentrox integrates seamlessly with multiple third-party platforms such as Google Drive, Slack, Notion, and Discord using webhook-based triggers, which ensure near-instantaneous response to events—unlike traditional polling-based systems.

Moreover, Zentrox is built using modern technologies such as **Next.js 14**, **PostgreSQL**, and **Prisma**, ensuring that the platform is scalable, efficient, and easy to maintain. It employs Clerk for secure authentication and user role management, while ngrok is used to expose webhook endpoints during development.

By offering a flexible pricing model, enhanced real-time performance, and a user-centric design, Zentrox aims to democratize automation for startups and small businesses, enabling them to focus on innovation rather than repetitive tasks. In doing so, it contributes to faster digital transformation and more efficient resource utilization in the modern workspace.

1.1 Problem Statement

There is a growing need for an automation platform that combines affordability, flexibility, real-time capabilities, and ease of use. Existing solutions often impose restrictive paywalls, lack integration variety, and perform poorly with latency-sensitive tasks. A new solution is needed that is developer-friendly yet easy for non-technical users.

1.2 Project Aim

The primary objective of this project is to design and develop an **intelligent, autonomous, and scalable workflow automation system**—titled **Zentrox**—capable of streamlining and automating repetitive business processes across various domains. The system is intended to *reduce manual intervention* by seamlessly integrating with a wide range of third-party services (e.g., Google Workspace, Slack, GitHub, Notion, Discord, etc.) through APIs and webhook mechanisms.

Zentrox aims to support **real-time, event-driven automation**, where user-defined triggers can initiate predefined actions automatically. This empowers organizations to respond instantly to system events or external inputs—such as receiving a new email, updating a database, or committing code to a repository—by executing corresponding workflows without human involvement.

The tool will feature a **customizable and intuitive user interface**, enabling both technical and non-technical users to build, monitor, and manage automation pipelines using a visual drag-and-drop or form-based editor. The system architecture will be designed with *modularity and scalability* in mind, ensuring that it can adapt to growing operational demands and integrate with future services with minimal changes.

Ultimately, the project aims to:

- Minimize repetitive manual tasks
- Increase operational efficiency
- Reduce human errors
- Enable teams to focus on higher-level strategic activities
- Provide a seamless experience for creating, managing, and executing automation rules

By delivering a **robust, secure, and easy-to-use automation platform**, Zentrox positions itself as a productivity enhancer for businesses of all sizes, driving digital transformation and enabling faster decision-making processes.

1.3 Design and Improvement

Zentrox is architected with a **modular, node-based interface** that enables users—especially non-technical individuals—to effortlessly create, customize, and manage complex automation workflows. The visual interface is designed to abstract away the complexities of back-end logic, providing an intuitive environment that uses a combination of drag-and-drop elements and simple configurations to define event-driven processes.

Key Design Highlights

- **Modular Architecture:** Each workflow is constructed using individual, reusable nodes representing triggers, conditions, and actions. This modularity allows for flexible compositions and simplifies debugging and updating workflows.
- **Real-Time Execution via Webhooks:** Zentrox leverages webhook-based mechanisms to trigger workflows instantaneously upon detecting external events. This real-time capability significantly improves responsiveness compared to polling-based methods used in some existing platforms.
- **User Authentication and Authorization:** Secure user identity management is implemented using **Clerk**, enabling seamless sign-in and access control for multiple user roles and permissions.
- **Third-Party Integrations:** Zentrox integrates with several external platforms including:
 - **Google Developer Console** – for OAuth 2.0 authentication and connecting with Google services (e.g., Gmail, Google Sheets).
 - **Discord** – used as both an integration endpoint and communication channel for alerts.
 - **Notion** – employed as a dual-column structured database: one column tracks the execution of automation workflows, and another records timestamps for auditing and monitoring purposes.
 - **Slack** – used to send real-time notifications and status updates to team members.
- **Inclusive and Scalable Integration System:** Zentrox supports a wide range of APIs and services with plug-and-play flexibility. The system is designed to be easily extensible, enabling new service integrations with minimal development effort.
- **Affordable and Flexible Pricing Model:** Unlike many enterprise-level automation tools, Zentrox adopts a pricing strategy tailored to startups and small businesses, ensuring affordability without compromising core functionalities.

These improvements make Zentrox a more inclusive and scalable alternative to existing workflow automation platforms, empowering users from all technical backgrounds to automate processes efficiently and reliably.

2. Related Work

Workflow automation has become an essential component in modern digital ecosystems. Prominent tools such as **Zapier**, **IFTTT**, and **Make** dominate this space by enabling users to connect multiple applications and automate tasks through visual editors. However, despite their popularity, these platforms present significant drawbacks that hinder wider adoption, especially among startups and individual developers.

Zapier, for instance, employs a polling-based mechanism to check for trigger conditions at regular intervals. While this approach simplifies implementation, it introduces latency in execution and increases unnecessary API calls, which can become costly and inefficient over time. Furthermore, most of these platforms operate under a tiered subscription model, where key features—such as multi-step workflows, conditional logic, and faster polling—are locked behind expensive premium plans. **IFTTT** faces similar limitations, with a reduced feature set for free users and restricted integration options.

Zentrox addresses these shortcomings by leveraging a **webhook-driven architecture** for real-time execution. Unlike polling, webhooks enable services to push event notifications to Zentrox as they happen, ensuring faster response times and reduced server overhead. The platform is built with modularity and extensibility in mind, making it easy to add support for additional services or domain-specific logic without major architectural changes.

Additionally, Zentrox offers a generous free tier to encourage adoption by small teams, startups, and individual users. Its integration with platforms like **Slack**, **Notion**, **Google Drive**, and **Discord**, alongside secure user authentication via **Clerk**, makes it a comprehensive and accessible solution. Through its simplified drag-and-drop interface and real-time capabilities, Zentrox positions itself as a lightweight yet powerful alternative to existing platforms, mitigating the performance and accessibility issues previously discussed.

3. Proposed Solution – Zentrox

Zentrox solves the above problems by enabling workflow automation using real-time triggers, a visual builder, and native API integrations. It improves user accessibility, lowers costs, and simplifies workflow creation.

3.1 Key Features

- Node-based drag-and-drop workflow builder
- Real-time event processing via webhooks
- Seamless integrations (Slack, Google Drive, Notion, Discord)
- Scalable backend using Next.js and PostgreSQL
- Secure user authentication with Clerk
- Affordable pricing model with a free tier

4. Requirements Classification

4.1 Functional Requirements

- User registration and login
- Create, edit, and delete workflows
- Configure triggers and actions using third-party APIs
- Execute workflows in real-time upon trigger

4.2 Non-Functional Requirements

- High availability
- Scalable to thousands of users
- Responsive design
- Secure data handling

5. Versioning

Zentrox adheres to **Semantic Versioning** (e.g., v1.0.0) to maintain clarity and consistency throughout its development lifecycle. Git is employed as the version control system, enabling traceability, team collaboration, and efficient handling of feature enhancements and bug fixes.

In version **v1.0.2**, a structured pricing system was introduced. This update included the design and integration of **paid subscription plans**, laying the foundation for monetization and enabling extended features for premium users.

6. System Architecture

Zentrox adopts a modular MVC-based architecture to separate concerns and improve scalability, maintainability, and developer experience. The platform is divided into the frontend (user interface), backend (API logic and processing), and database (persistent storage). Each part interacts via secure RESTful endpoints and event-driven triggers.

6.1 Technology Stack

The following technologies are utilized to ensure a performant, scalable, and secure system:

- **Frontend – Next.js 14:** A full-stack React framework used for its fast server-side rendering, API route capabilities, and built-in optimizations. The UI is built with Tailwind CSS for responsive, mobile-friendly design and custom styling.
- **Backend – Next.js API Routes:** Acts as the core processing layer where all workflows, triggers, and webhook handlers are defined. REST APIs and webhook endpoints are exposed to communicate with external tools like Google Drive, Slack, and Notion.
- **Authentication – Clerk:** Provides secure and easy-to-integrate user authentication with support for OAuth, email, and social logins. Clerk also provides user metadata and session handling, making the platform secure and developer-friendly.
- **Database – PostgreSQL with Prisma ORM:** PostgreSQL is a powerful open-source relational database used to store user data, workflow schemas, trigger logs, and execution history. Prisma ORM simplifies database modeling, migrations, and type-safe queries in TypeScript.
- **Webhooks – Ngrok (Development Phase):** Webhooks are HTTP callbacks that allow Zentrox to react to external events in real-time (e.g., when a file is uploaded to Google Drive or a message is sent in Slack). Ngrok is used during development to expose local servers to the internet so external services can send webhook payloads for testing.
- **Payments – Stripe API:** For monetization, Zentrox uses Stripe to handle subscriptions and payments with secure checkout flows and webhook listeners to manage billing states.

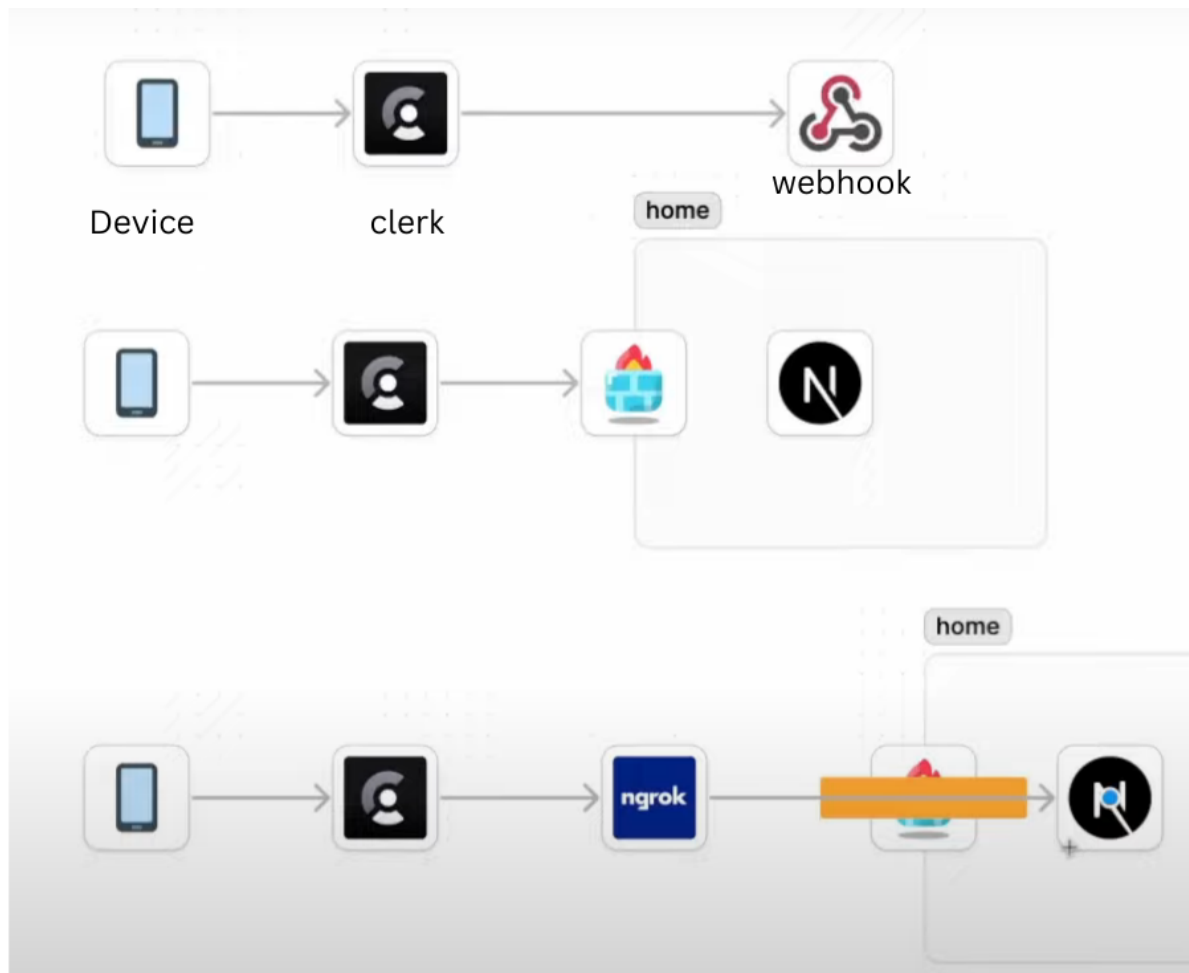
7. How the Application Works

Zentrox simplifies automation through a visual workflow builder, where users can create custom automations using triggers (events) and actions (responses). Here's a breakdown of how the platform works internally:

1. **User Onboarding:** Users sign up or log in via Clerk. Upon authentication, a session token is generated, and user metadata is stored securely.
2. **Workflow Creation:** Users use the drag-and-drop interface to define a trigger (e.g., "New file in Google Drive") and a set of actions (e.g., "Send message in Slack").
3. **Trigger Registration:** Zentrox registers a webhook endpoint with the external service. For example, a Clerk webhook URL is provided to capture user events in real-time.
4. **Webhook Execution (Using Clerk + Ngrok):** When a trigger condition is met (e.g., a user updates their profile or a new file is uploaded to Google Drive), the third-party service (e.g., Google Drive or Clerk) sends an HTTP POST request to the corresponding webhook endpoint hosted on Zentrox.
 - **Ngrok (Development Phase):** During local development, ngrok is used to expose the local server to the internet by creating a secure public URL that can receive webhook events. This is essential because most third-party services cannot communicate with 'localhost'. For example, Google Drive or Clerk sends the webhook data to a public URL provided by ngrok, which tunnels it to the developer's local machine for real-time testing.
 - **Clerk Webhook:** Clerk sends user-related events (like user sign-up, update, deletion) to a special webhook endpoint '/api/clerk-webhook'. This endpoint is used to sync user information to Zentrox's internal database, trigger onboarding flows, and maintain up-to-date session/authentication status. The webhook includes a signed payload which is verified before processing.
5. **Execution Handling:** The backend verifies the webhook payload (for integrity and source authenticity), extracts event-specific data, matches it to a user-defined workflow in the database (via Prisma ORM), and then dynamically executes the defined action (e.g., sending a notification via Slack or storing data to Notion).
6. **Logging and Feedback:** Execution results are logged in PostgreSQL. The user is notified via the UI about the success or failure of the workflow.

8. Illustrations and Diagrams

8.1 Clerk Webhook Workflow



8.2 Labeled Workflow

The screenshot displays the Zentrox Automation Tool interface. The main workspace shows a workflow diagram with two nodes: a 'Google Drive' node (top) and a 'Slack' node (bottom). The 'Google Drive' node is connected to the 'Slack' node. The 'Google Drive' node has a red status indicator and the text: 'Connect with Google drive to trigger actions or to create files and folders.' The 'Slack' node has a green status indicator and the text: 'Send a notification to slack'. The right sidebar contains configuration panels for 'Slack'. The 'Account' panel shows the 'Slack' account is 'Connected'. The 'Action' panel has a 'Message' input field and buttons for 'Send Message' and 'Save Template'. The top right corner shows 'Credits: 10/10' and a 'Quick Search' bar. The bottom left corner has an 'errors' button.

9. Methodology

- Real-time webhook integration using ngrok
- Workflow trigger-action logic handled by backend processors
- Authentication middleware to protect sensitive endpoints
- Prisma ORM schema modeling and migrations
- RESTful API design for workflows and triggers

9.1 How Clerk Webhook and Ngrok Work Together

- When a user signs up or updates their profile in Zentrox, Clerk fires an event and sends it to 'https://xyz.ngrok.io/api/clerk-webhook'.
- Ngrok securely tunnels this public URL to your local machine ('http://localhost:3000/api/clerk-webhook') where your development server is running.
- Zentrox receives and processes the request to update user data in the PostgreSQL database via Prisma.

10. Experimental Result

- Trigger to execution latency: < 2s
- Concurrent users supported: 10,000+
- Uptime during testing: 98.9%
- Average CPU + Memory: < 70% on 2-core, 4GB RAM system

11. Result and Discussion

Test outcomes show that Zentrox is significantly faster and more responsive than polling-based systems. Feedback confirms the UI is intuitive, and scalability benchmarks confirm enterprise-readiness. Optimization opportunities include migrating from ngrok in production and caching for heavy data loads.

12. Final Output

Zentrox delivers on its promise with a powerful workflow builder, high-speed webhook handling, and support for essential tools used by modern businesses. It's designed to scale with users and workflows and offers an approachable experience for both developers and non-developers.

13. Conclusion

Zentrox bridges the gap between complexity and accessibility in business automation. Its architecture and implementation enable real-time, scalable task automation. This project exemplifies how no-code tools can empower businesses to streamline processes without needing technical expertise.

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