

How AppDynamics transformed from a siloed startup to a team of teams

APPDYNAMICS

INDUSTRY

High tech

LOCATION

San Francisco, CA

COMPANY

1500-2000

Employees

PRODUCTS

[Jira Service Desk](#)

[Jira Software](#)

[Confluence](#)

[Bitbucket](#)

When AppDynamics doubled its headcount in two years, the company's startup culture needed to grow with it. The team managing Jira took on the responsibility of de-siloing teams and information to create an open and transparent culture – and they used Atlassian's suite of products to do it.

Since opening its doors in 2008 as a global application monitoring service, San Francisco-based AppDynamics has embraced an entrepreneurial culture. Teams throughout the organization operated as “startups within a startup”; they confronted challenges head-on and built custom solutions that delivered on the company's mission to “make the digital world work” for its customers around the world.

But as AppDynamics evolved from a small startup into the two thousand-employee enterprise it is today, the company encountered growing pains. Many of the pre-existing processes and systems from its early days needed to be updated to keep pace with the business's changing goals and needs.

“When I first started, each team operated like its own startup and made decisions independently,” says Jeff Tillett, Senior Build and Release Engineering Manager at AppDynamics. “That worked when the company was smaller, but as we

grew, it meant that we weren't as open and transparent with one another as we wanted to be. Many decisions about technology and resources were made in isolated silos."

“ As our processes evolve and grow over time, Jira Service Desk Data Center enables our support teams to scale operations.

JEFF TILLET

Sr. Build and Release Engineering Manager

DELIVERING SEAMLESS, AGILE SERVICE WITH JIRA SERVICE DESK

Jeff was brought on board as a Jira Administrator to help the company standardize their tooling beyond a developer audience. As Jeff's role grew to manage the IT Operations team, he expanded the group and brought on Alex Christensen, Atlassian Suite Engineering Lead.

Prior to Jira Service Desk, AppDynamics used Jira Software as a service desk for IT support. The workaround suited the developer-dominated company in its early days, but was not scalable in the long run. As the company grew to include more non-technical internal users, AppDynamics realized the need for a dedicated service desk that included out-of-the-box SLAs, automation rules, and ITIL workflows. This would enable a more user-friendly experience for all team members—agents and help-seekers alike.

Since the organization had been using Jira

Software and Confluence since its early days, Jira Service Desk was a natural choice. First, the ease of integrations on the same platform with Jira Software meant that teams would be able to seamlessly connect it to tools the company was already using. Second, they could meet their service requirements at a lower price point with an easier deployment and fewer modifications. Finally, instead of building expertise from scratch with another vendor, they already had internal Jira experts with the knowledge needed to deploy and maintain Jira Service Desk.

With Jira Service Desk in place, the AppDynamics team has also found that they're able to maintain a DevOps culture of moving quickly to solve problems and foster transparency while also supporting the valuable ITIL processes that have helped the team standardize operations as they grow. "We embrace the DevOps culture according to ITSM best practices. Adhering to DevOps principles allows us to pivot easily and collaborate openly. When there is a need for more formal or time-sensitive assistance and incident resolution, we fall back to ITSM best practices for standard operating procedures and service-level agreements. In short, adopting both practices allows us to be flexible to the ever-changing needs of our organization," says Jeff.

SCALING A SERVICE CULTURE ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION

As internal users submitted IT support tickets, other teams realized the value of having a dedicated service desk to manage their own requests and support the growing organization. Over time, Jeff and Alex's team scaled Jira Service Desk to nine additional teams outside of IT Support across the organization including

HR for onboarding and termination requests, CRM support for permission and data issue reporting, Facilities for internal event planning, maintenance, and moving requests, and Procurement for services, software, and contract requests.

“ Atlassian tools ensure everyone is on the same page as our organization has grown. Not only does it improve transparency, but Atlassian tools are so flexible that you can track anything.

ALEX CHRISTENSEN

Atlassian Suite Engineering Lead

Much of these teams' success is due to Jeff and Alex's team's mindset of acting as service leaders and treating each interaction with internal stakeholders as an endeavor of shared objectives. Strong relationships with partner-stakeholders enable Jeff and Alex to make life easier for their colleagues. The team prioritizes user enablement training to make sure employees are familiar with the tools, underutilized features, and best practices.

When Jira Service Desk was first introduced, Alex led hands-on training sessions with agents and shared documented processes

within Confluence. Dedicated channels within Slack were used to answer questions about navigating Atlassian products and to direct employees to open tickets in the Jira Service Desk customer portal. When other teams come to them asking for a new tool to purchase, they strive to understand what problem is being solved, then focus on finding a way to solve it using a more user-friendly solution.

Recently, Alex used a consultative approach to help a colleague who was considering a database tool to store user research studies. Within an hour and a half, he built a proof of concept to show the colleague how the problem could be solved using Jira Software. "Atlassian tools are extremely flexible and we can build out almost any use case," says Alex.

INCREASING UPTIME WITH DATA CENTER

As AppDynamics looked for new tools to foster cross-functional collaboration, they also explored ways to keep all of their systems up and running.

When Jeff and Alex joined the team, the company was approaching the user limit for their Jira Software Cloud instance, had exceeded their storage capacities for Confluence and Jira, and had an increased amount of REST API calls and third party add-ons. As a result, AppDynamics saw its infrastructure crash at the same time nearly every day. They knew it was time to consider an upgrade to Data Center, Atlassian's self-managed deployment option, which offers the ability to run on multiple nodes.

With the help of an Atlassian Solution Partner, the team migrated their data to a two-node data center stack in AWS. The team even developed an automated way to spin up a full Jira stack in just seven minutes, making scaling across the company quicker.

Additionally, the team timed their migration to Data Center with their deployment of Jira Service Desk. With Jira Service Desk Data Center, teams enjoy high availability with uninterrupted access to their service desk. When necessary, they can upgrade their instance without downtime, increase users without additional licensing fees, and use native SAML support. As they spend less time worrying about crashes, they have more time to provide support to colleagues while planning for future growth.

BUILDING A MORE TRANSPARENT WORK ENVIRONMENT

Thanks to their Atlassian suite of products, Jeff and Alex have been able to improve transparency and increase uptime across their organization as it has scaled, all while reducing the administrative burden of adding more tools to their tech stack.

“I would recommend Atlassian tools to anyone who wants to make sure their team is on the same page,” says Alex. “Jira is so flexible that you can track and contextualize virtually anything from development processes to general business processes. There are very few times where I can say ‘No, the tool can’t do that in some form or fashion.’ I use Jira every day, more than any other tool.”

One way that Jeff and Alex have taken advantage of the flexibility of Atlassian tools is with a product idea intake portal. They created the portal using a hybrid of a Jira Service Desk project and a Jira Software project to allow stakeholders to submit new ideas through a user-friendly Service Desk form. After feedback is submitted to the form, a ticket is created in that Service Desk project, which immediately closes it out and copies it into a software project, creating visibility across multiple teams.

With the help of Atlassian products, Jeff and Alex have implemented new processes to help the business evolve as it grows, and they have been recognized for their efforts. Recently, one of AppDynamics’ founders wrote to acknowledge the hard work the team did to help AppDynamics deliver on its mission. For an ever-evolving company like AppDynamics, adaptability and scalability are key to making the digital world work, for team members and customers alike.

➤ Learn more at atlassian.com/data-center

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