ATLASSIAN MIGRATION:
Preparing for Server End of Life

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GovCollab
FedRAMP-Hosted Atlassian Solutions Provider

ATLASSIAN | Silver Solution Partner   ✖ Confluence   ◆ Jira Software

Introduction

Atlassian is ending support for Server products in February, 2024. This means that Federal agencies need to make decisions quickly about software solutions that are integral to Agile project management, organizational collaboration, data collection, and more.

Agencies who wish to continue their Atlassian use have three migration options:

1. Migrate to the Atlassian Cloud
2. Migrate to a dedicated Data Center instance
3. Migrate to a shared Data Center instance

Atlassian is encouraging organizations to migrate to their Cloud versions of Confluence and Jira, but this will not be an option for most Federal agencies. Cloud delivers accelerated innovation, is easier to manage, and more cost-effective, but, unfortunately, it is not a FedRAMP-compliant solution. Atlassian Cloud is not a viable option for any agency requiring a FedRAMP-moderate or higher rating. It is structured for private sector and commercial use, first and foremost. This leaves Data Center as the primary option for Federal agencies.

In deciding on a migration path, agencies need to consider several factors including number of users, the size and nature of existing content, security requirements, future needs, customization requirements, and support. An accurate assessment of these factors is essential to ensure a seamless migration with the minimum time and effort used.

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Size of User Base and Quantity of Content

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There aren't exact thresholds, but in general, more users and more content will require more effort from developers throughout your migration. If your organization has more than 500 users and/or approximately 10 Jira projects or Confluence spaces, a significant amount of development effort will likely be required for a seamless migration.

When content grows in quantity it also tends to grow in complexity. As more users join, the boundaries of functionality continue to expand to meet the ever-growing requirements of organizations. These expanded use cases lead to more complications when it comes to migrating from Server to Data Center.

RISK: The greatest risk stemming from the size of your user base and content during a migration is data loss. Whether it be configuration related or peripheral subject matter, data can be dropped, overwritten, or simply not translate accurately after a migration if the appropriate preparatory actions aren't taken.

Users depend on your organization's Atlassian products daily for mission critical data collection and collaboration needs. Without a proper migration strategy, there is a real risk of losing valuable content, including formatting and configurations. A successful migration can only take place if the proper considerations of both the existing and target environments are taken into account. To mitigate this risk speak to a migration expert from Atlasssian or GovCollab to ensure that all aspects of the migration process are accounted for.

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Special Configuration and Customization

Jira and Confluence are powerful tools in part because they are highly configurable to the requirements of individual organizations. There are a host of plugins that provide special functionality in addition to the native Atlassian capabilities. However, highly customized environments can add complexity to any migration effort.

Agencies need to assess the number and scope of plugins being used in their current environment, as well as any changes made to the source code of their current environment. An assessment by a Certified Atlassian Professional of which capabilities are out-of-the-box versus which are achieved through plugins will assist in your migration preparation. Although the native Atlassian functionality is designed to seamlessly migrate from Server to Data Center instances, there are cases where that isn't possible. For example, if workflow statuses, permission schemes, notification schemes, or even project-level components of the same name already exist in the target instance then they cannot be migrated successfully without planning. The only proven approach to ensure there are no issues with the migration is to manually assess each instance to identify and address conflicts which takes both experience and in-depth understanding of the tools.

RISK: As complications are evaluated by the team managing your migration it's imperative to pay special attention to the more intricate, advanced configurations present in your current instance(s). A possibility for loss of critical functionality exists as each advanced configuration is transitioned into the target instance. Without step by step testing and documentation, your organization runs the risk of losing capabilities users depend on due to inadequately replicating your exact system disposition.

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Security Considerations

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A number of security issues arise with migration.

AUTHENTICATION: Agencies may be required to change authentication methods as a result of changing hosting environments. Some environments and hosting services, such as GovCollab, allow agencies to use whatever authentication method they prefer. Other options are more restrictive.

RISKS: If your user base isn't prepared for their upcoming migration to a new environment they may experience a reduction in their familiarity with the platform. Explicit communication, including training sessions and live demos, may be necessary to convey the exact manner in which their login experience will be impacted.

Requirements for New Environment

Application architecture and security configuration are different depending on whether you're hosting your environment in-house or moving to a shared instance. For example, Jira and Confluence are configured slightly differently in Data Center than they are in Server and Cloud. Most agencies will be migrating from Server to a shared or dedicated Data Center instance, so reconfiguring the applications for the new environment is essential.

Differences between Cloud and Data Center versions of the Atlassian applications include but are not limited to:

- user management
- SSO and LDAP integration
- mobile experience
- plugin compatibility
- APIs
- backup copies
- direct access to databases
- outgoing mail configuration

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Each of these factors should be closely considered in preparation for a migration by an Atlassian Certified System Administrator to determine whether your migration path is impacted.

RISKS: The most significant risk you may face in migrating to a new environment is one or many incompatible configurations. In addition to the global configuration differences listed above, your organization could experience incompatibility with complex workflows, permission schemes, notification schemes, project-level settings, or more. To protect against this risk your migration team should evaluate anticipated incompatibility by researching, documenting, and testing with single projects to ensure configurations present as intended in the target environment. The official migration should not be the first time your migration team discovers configuration issues. Instead, these predicted as well as the unanticipated issues should be documented and mitigated well before the official migration takes place. This, of course, implies having a testing environment set up well before your transition date to represent the target environment prior to cutover.

Who is Performing the Migration?

Experience with Atlassian products is key to a successful migration. Federal agencies should only work with Atlassian Certified Partners. Consider if there are existing relationships that you or your organization have that might be of interest to you in your migration journey. Atlassian has strong documentation, but there aren't many fed-specific resources that will be able to speak the same language for federal security and use case requirements.

Performing the migration in house can lead to more problems due to lack of configuration expertise. This means budget overruns, wasted time

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and money. Unless you have highly experienced staff that are intimately familiar with the intricacies of architecting and configuring Atlassian products it is a major risk to assume your migration can be completed internally. A safe approach is to hire a consulting firm with Atlassian Certified Professionals to assist with the planning and execution of your migration. Alternatively, if you're migrating to a shared platform ensure that the offeror has the experience and dedicated resources to accommodate your unique migration requirements.

RISKS: The greatest impact risk to your organization in an Atlassian migration is likely spending too much time on it. This results from a number of factors including, but not limited to lack of experience on the part of the migration team; improper credentials of the application administration teams handling configurations in both environments; unknown migration pathways and outcomes; and unforeseen complications due to environment differences between the existing and target environments. To mitigate, carefully consider the team you are entrusting your migration with.

First Steps

Atlassian is ending support for Server, so agencies currently using Server licenses need Data Center or Cloud arrangements well before February 15, 2024. This can be a smooth process, but plans for migrations need to begin as soon as possible.

1. Engage stakeholders and leadership at your agency.

Atlassian tools touch many areas of the organization, and migration will require input and effort from all of them. Engaging them early in the process will pay dividends down the line.

2. Determine the number of licenses your organization requires.

Large organizations with 2000+ users will likely find a dedicated Data Center instance the best option. Smaller organizations will likely find a shared Data Center instance appropriate for their needs.

Determine who in your organization is responsible for purchasing and renewing licenses. This should help inform the current type and support of the license.

3. Determine Security Requirements.

Atlassian Cloud is a great service, but unfortunately it is not an option for any agency requiring a FedRAMP moderate or higher rating. Other organizations may not permit a non-FedRAMP-hosted solution.

Work with your security teams to determine requirements and choose the best path forward.

4. Catalog Plugins and Customized Code.

As noted above, plugins and customized code affect migration time and effort. They are also expense factors when migrating to a new platform. Some MSPs that offer shared Data Center instances include plugins at a minimal price because the cost is spread across a large customer base, whereas a dedicated instance requires the organization to pay entirely for the plugin themselves.

5. Consult a certified Atlassian Partner with deep experience in the federal sector.

Given the unique requirements of Federal agencies–FedRAMP-hosted platforms, budget restrictions, and procurement timelines–agencies need an Atlassian partner with knowledge of working in Federal agencies and Atlassian applications.

Without a clear migration, agencies face losing access to key tools necessary for Agile development, DevSecOps, workflow management, collaboration activities, data collections, and more. If migration is rushed, lost data and content, security breaches, and cost overruns may result.

FAQs
govcollab.us/faq

Contact us for more information about your agency's best options for migrating Atlassian solutions.

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