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Building a Unified Agile Tool Ecosystem

We are living in a digital age which is characterized by speed, quality, and experience. Ask any customer if they are ready to compromise on any of these and the answer would be a definite 'no'. That's why all companies are striving for faster, flexible, and customer-centric approaches to application delivery. But the biggest hurdle in creating an ecosystem that supports a faster, flexible, and customer-centric delivery is the lack of collaboration between the systems and teams across the ecosystem. While most teams in a mid-sized/big IT organizations practice agile methodologies and collaboration at a team level, there is a considerable disconnect between the cross-functional teams and the systems they use. The disconnect between the cross-functional teams and their systems often disrupt the major business goals and cause customer dissatisfaction. To bring these teams and systems together and achieve absolute agility and collaboration at an enterprise level, organizations need to create a unified software delivery ecosystem. And at the centre of that ecosystem should be a highly efficient Agile platform.

Digital.ai Agility (Formerly VersionOne) is that agile platform and VersionOne ALM Connect provides the foundation for a very well integrated ecosystem containing best of breed heterogeneous tools, which provides rich collaboration, functionality, and transparency. For example, one can integrate Digital.ai Agility (Formerly VersionOne), which already comes loaded with the best of agile templates and features to support agile practices, with 50+ other ALM, DevOps, and ITSM systems to create a unified, scalable, functionally rich, and collaborative ecosystem.

How unified ecosystems help achieve absolute enterprise agility

When the different teams in an organization practice collaboration and agile methodologies at a team level, they make their teams efficient. However, until these cross-functional teams and systems create a mechanism to achieve complete transparency and seamless exchange of information amongst each other, the organization remains far from leveraging the full potential of its resources and achieve customer centricity.

Challenges in creating a unified ecosystem

It is easier to achieve agility in smaller functions by introducing manual agile processes or solutions that work successfully at a smaller scale. But to create a fully scalable agile foundation (processes and systems) that successfully runs across the enterprise, there are multiple challenges that an organization may face.

The first and foremost challenge is working seamlessly with multiple, disparate best-of-breed Application Lifecycle Management (ALM), Quality Assurance (QA), and IT Service Management (ITSM) systems in the ecosystem. To eliminate this challenge, some organizations use a single ALM system across the delivery chain, which in turn impacts the productivity. Some organizations that prefer to stick to the systems of their choice struggle to successfully integrate these systems together. However, it is always a better choice to allow the teams to use the systems best suited for their roles and integrate them using a robust integration solution that facilitates transparency and allows seamless exchange of information.

The other challenges in creation of a unified ecosystem are the adoption and execution of enterprise-scale framework such as the Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe), introduction of automation at scale, and the organization's reluctance towards subsequent cultural shift (working with cross-functional teams, learning from failure, etc.).

VersionOne ALM Connect + other cross-functional systems = a unified ecosystem that helps achieve enterprise agility.

The goal of this integration across the DevOps/ALM chain is to ensure alignment between all the teams involved in the delivery process, extend the agile practices across the delivery chain, improve the product quality, reduce the cycle time for delivery, and bring in customer voice to the delivery ecosystem.

Let's see the impact of the VersionOne ALM Connect integration on the software delivery lifecycle:

Integration with other Project Management (PM) Systems	Integration with Requirements Management System	Integration with Quality Management Systems	Integration with Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and IT Service Management (ITSM) Systems
Integrate 3rd party PM systems such as HPE, JIRA etc. with VersionOne to ensure all teams are up-to-date on project priorities and status of tasks in action.	Integrate the existing requirements management systems with VersionOne to give real-time change set level visibility to the development and product managers	Integrate the quality management, Issue Tracking System, such as HPQC, with VersionOne to help the QA teams prioritize defects, find defect patterns, if any and achieve a continuous test environment that will assist quality improvement.	Integrate the CRM and ITSM systems, such as Salesforce and ServiceNow, with VersionOne to bring customer voice in the delivery process and make the solution more contextual and in line with customer needs.

As you can see integration of systems and teams across the functions ensures that all team members have visibility into the delivery process. They are also equipped to take independent as well as collaborative decisions with insights into complete customer context and raise concerns, if any, at any given point in time. An ecosystem like this doesn't only accelerate the decision-making process, it also makes the delivery process risk proof and customer centric.

Note: This blog was developed by Digital.ai Agility (Formerly VersionOne) in collaboration with OpsHub. It has earlier been published here.

Find out more about blogs from our team of integration & migration experts.

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