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Flexagon FlexDeploy - Customer Case Study

A Move to DevOps and FlexDeploy

Key Facts

Industry: Financial Services

Company: Athene

Employees: 1,400

Environment

- Oracle E-Business Suite
- Hyperion
- Jira
- ServiceNow
- CyberArk

Benefits

- Reduced deployment time upwards of 90%
- Issue/error reduction of 95%
- Increased visibility to current, historic, and planned activities across the lifecycle
- Reduction in bottlenecks and time spent waiting for a request to be processed

Setting the Stage

Athene's Finance IT group was facing challenges across their software delivery lifecycle due to manual processes. They were using a managed services provider for code migrations but were still handling all development and handoff of to the vendor. Athene would do the development work, pull and provide the code to their vendor, and the vendor would manage the deployment to various environments. With these processes, wrong files were often downloaded and/or deployed, files would be deployed into the wrong environment or onto the wrong server, or even in the wrong location. This caused delays and rework to accomplish the team's requirements.

Additionally, there was a lack of visibility and transparency into the level of changes going in and out at a given time. Individual employees knew they sent a file to be deployed but had no visibility after that. Given all the manual steps, handoffs, approvals, and checks required, response time was significant. Deployments would hinge on an individual receiving the required file, getting any required approvals, and executing a deployment.

Why FlexDeploy

Challenges with governance, human errors, and time to delivery prompted an organizational mandate toward DevOps and automation. Other teams in IT had landed on Jenkins to automate their delivery. Rajan Garg, Technical Lead on the Finance IT team, had experience with FlexDeploy from a previous job, and pulled together a business case as to why FlexDeploy would be a better solution, identifying four major differentiators.

1. Oracle Aware: After upgrading to E-Business Suite 12.2.6, the team adopted the EBS-proprietary migration technique, ADOP. FlexDeploy had native support for ADOP specifically, and for EBS as a whole. With other tools, the team would have had to build custom scripting to automate EBS deployments.
2. Partial Deployment Capabilities: Athene's branching strategy required the capability to do partial deployments, that is create a build package by choosing selected files versus all files on a branch. With this capability native in FlexDeploy, Athene was able to easily meet audit requirements, and developers could focus more on development than on packaging.
3. Integrations across the lifecycle: FlexDeploy had out-of-the-box plugins or integrations for myriad tools in the Athene lifecycle (Git, Jira, ServiceNow, CyberArk, Single-Sign on, etc.) so the team could easily plug and play.
4. Support for Hyperion: Utilizing FlexDeploy's Windows and File Plugins, the team was able to automate all Hyperion related deployments, eliminating the tedious and finnicky process of manually exporting and deploying to server locations.

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Challenges before FlexDeploy

- → EBS code migration processes were manual, and tedious, and the team lacked the autonomy to complete themselves
- → Managing Hyperion changes across multiple servers was particularly error-prone
- → Lack of visibility into changes being made and transparency into the level of changes going in and out
- → Time to respond was significant given manual steps, handoffs, approvals, and checks required

Life after FlexDeploy

- → Reduced deployment timeline upwards of 90%
- → Increased visibility across current and historical data across the pipeline
- → Improved compliance across the lifecycle via Jira integration, and documented approvals
- → Reduction in errors that accompany manual tasks
- → Reduced time for Audit response by utilizing built-in reporting
- → Reduction in bottlenecks across the process, and increased autonomy within the team

Benefits Across the Lifecycle

Athene's Finance IT group moved forward with FlexDeploy for Oracle E-Business Suite and Hyperion, integrating with existing Jira, and CyberArk implementations.

The results achieved aligned to six main areas:

1. Reduced Deployment Time: The team has seen a reduction in deployment time by upwards of 90%. In the last six months there have been no deployments that exceeded five minutes. Previously, it would take more than five minutes for a DBA just to open a ticket and download the correct files.
2. Increased Visibility: Managers have easy visibility to what changes are in flight via FlexDeploy's pipelines and releases. At any point, the team can go into the tool and see what changes are scheduled and their current stage, as well as full details on what was previously deployed.
3. Better Compliance: Since FlexDeploy works in conjunction with Jira, compliance is ensured every step of the way and all approvals are documented. Additionally, the team has configured windows such that deployments are started at the correct time and all changes are deployed at the allocated time.
4. Reduction in Errors: With the move from their previous processes (download a file, identify the correct folder and location on the correct server, deploy there) to automation, human errors are eliminated. The team does not have to worry about an incorrect version being deployed or being deployed to a wrong file or location. If something works in a development environment, the team has certainty it will work in QA, Test, and Production environments.
5. Reduced time for Audit Response: With all approvals automatically documented in Jira, responding to audits has become a snap. Where the team previously had to download files and compare differences, they can now simply run a report to confirm the same version of a package is deployed across various environments.
6. Reduction in Bottlenecks: With FlexDeploy, the right people and roles have the right access to get their jobs done, reducing time spent waiting significantly. Before FlexDeploy, the team would create a deployment request with the admin team and then wait for a weekly meeting to discuss and approve changes. Now, the team can deploy in the pipeline and it will be deployed within the configured parameters for approvals, time, notifications, etc.

All involved with the project, from management to developers to Athene's hosting provider, have seen the benefits FlexDeploy provides. Even other teams in the organization that are currently standardized on Jenkins have expressed an interest in moving to FlexDeploy. Rajan reported that the implementation of FlexDeploy has been the biggest win of the year for the Finance IT team.

About Flexagon

Flexagon provides DevOps and Automation software and services which improve the speed, quality, and cost of software development and operations. Flexagon's FlexDeploy brings automation, controls, and visibility to software provisioning, build, deploy, test, and release processes, and includes pre-built plugins for Oracle Database, Fusion Middleware, E-Business Suite, Cloud, and many open source and commercial technologies.

For more information, please visit flexagon.com

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