

INFO1111: Computing 1A Professionalism

2021 Semester 1

Self-Learning Assignment

Tool: Jira

Domain: Software Development

**Domain of Application: Logistics – Staff Management
and Team Communication**

Level 2

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1. Introduction

This is a report in which I will explore the usefulness of Jira to my chosen domain of application: Staff Management and Team Communication as well as reflect on how I went about learning this. In this report I will investigate the depth of Jira's benefit to Software Development teams particularly focussing on its application for my domain of application.

Throughout this report I will come to see how Jira poses as an excellent tool for Software Development teams of small to medium sizes but begins to lose its key benefits as teams get larger or the number of teams grow. However, I will also discuss how the associated tool Confluence can be used to handle larger teams to great effect.

Finally, I will understand how my method for self-learning of this tool and its application will be very similar to that of my Level 1 Report.

2. Learnings

Moving on from learning the basics of Jira for my level 1 application, I then intended to explore the depth to which Jira could be useful in this domain and domain of application. Thus, following on from the level 1 report I indicated that I would attain a greater understanding of the software and its application.

Thus, through the process of teaching myself to use Jira I was able to learn more about the software and its application in my domain and domain of application. My main focus for this level being on the particular usefulness of Jira in my domain of application in Staff Management and Team Communication, as well as looking at Jira from a wider perspective. Such to evaluate the efficacy of Jira in a major setting like a large corporation with multiple teams communicating with each other and working on multiple projects at once, instead of a single team working on a single project that was explored in the previous report.

To this end, using my knowledge of the tool from the level 1 application I now looked deeper into its wider application and had to understand the likely limit that the tool had when it came to its usefulness in larger settings.

2.1. Outcomes for the level

As stated in my previous report, I had chosen to learn Jira to compensate for some weaknesses I outlined that were crucial for this degree. After teaching myself the basic application, I then needed to understand the software in greater depth, including more efficient use and application, benefits and drawbacks, such that I would eventually have a greater knowledge of the tool:

	Outcome
Level 2 - Basic Knowledge	I will understand how Jira allows for Software Development teams to interact when undertaking issue management within my chosen domain of application (logistics), and how this is more/less beneficial than individual communication between members of a given Software Development team. I will also understand how Jira adds depth in communication compared to using Git as a standalone tool within a Software Development team. (SLP Proposal)

2.2. What I Learned

In my previous report, I outlined how Jira was an almost perfect tool for teams not only in my domain of application but also in software development generally. I went on to discuss the stark difference in efficiency that Jira provided to a given Software Development team and how Jira provides an easy alternative that is far more efficient.

The alternative to Jira for a given team would have previously been heavily reliant on face-to-face communication, emailing and video calls. However, as previously stated, these methods of team communication can be quite inefficient in some cases:

“On average employees check their email 36 times an hour which amounts to 288 times a day for an eight hour work day. To make matters worse it takes employees around 16 minutes to refocus on their tasks after handling email.”

(Morgan, 2013)

This suggests that Jira, presents as an ideal tool to for this aspect of a Software Development team to fill this role. Alternatively, to previous methods, Jira is a tool whereby team members have an efficient and clear platform from which they can communicate easily. Moreover, the tool can also be a vital tool for managers when managing a team is a high priority. The use of the “child issues” to assign work to certain team members for projects that have their own timelines presents as an ideal tool to keep team members up to date on their work and promotes a team environment in which the members all have a clear understanding of what they are working on whilst also having access to an integrated means of communication.

Whilst Jira only deserves praise on this level for its usefulness in this domain, when it comes to dealing with larger teams and corporations the tool can falter, however this is also where the tool can be reshaped to meet this need. Firstly, Jira is a subscription-based software. For small teams this is not a problem as a user can have up to 10 people on their project for free, although they are limited by the number of files they can upload. However, for larger teams and more file storage, larger teams and corporations must pay a subscription per person.

Furthermore, whilst the roadmap is technically used to present a team’s “Epics” (current projects) it can only realistically represent a few projects efficiently by at most a few different teams. When it comes to larger teams or multiple teams apart of a large corporation, the tool can become easily clustered, removing the one benefit that Jira has over its alternative. This ultimately reduces its effectiveness as a given team size or number of teams on a project grows.

This ultimately is where Jira suffers in its application to this domain and domain of application, but it is also where its parent company, Atlassian, has come up with an integrated solution, Confluence.

As Atlassian themselves put it:

“Confluence is for teams of any size and type, from those with mission-critical, high-stakes projects that need rigor behind their practices...”

(Atlassian, 2021)

Unlike Jira, Confluence is heavily tailored to larger teams and larger numbers of teams. Confluence uses pages, whereby each page directly represents a whole Jira domain. Such that, in a given corporation, each project would be represented by a single “Page” on confluence, including all the details for it, from where a team can then work on the said project on a single

Jira domain. This allows for large teams to subdivide their projects and manage them efficiently through Confluence and then work on those projects effectively in their teams in Jira.

Overall, it seems that Jira is a perfect tool for the domain of application and even though it can become less effective in larger settings, the complimentary use of Confluence can easily fix this issue by providing a clear structure for work, facilitating communication between multiple teams and large numbers of team members as well as allowing for better team management through a clear management chain.

2.3. SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

As outlined in the above section, Jira is a perfect fit as a tool to compliment team communication and team management. It is far more efficient than its alternatives, providing a solid platform where a team can be efficiently managed and communicate well. Jira is essentially perfect for small to medium software development teams, especially in this domain of application and has little to no drawbacks for teams of these sizes.

Weaknesses:

However, as I discovered, Jira starts to become less efficient for larger teams and corporations. Its usefulness in the domain of application of staff management and team communication begins to fade as team numbers/sizes get larger. This is largely due to the tool getting overcrowded and inefficient, defeating one of the main purposes of the software, organisation. Moreover, the nature of the tool as a subscription-based software forces large teams and corporations to spend money in order to improve efficiency in these areas. Thus, a given team/corporation would be forced to turn to Confluence to help alleviate the problem.

Opportunities:

Having already understood its usefulness to Software Development teams it is clear now that the tool has potential to be far more effective as more teams begin to use it and as teams start to better understand how to use it well.

Currently, Jira has about 10 million active monthly users from 180,000 companies in over 190 countries¹. This large userbase indicates a growing understanding of the tool's usefulness in this domain of application as well as many more

Threats:

Jira seems to have little to no negative effects on the domain of application. Whilst there is a price tag to the software, it likely has a miniscule affect to large corporations. Other than that,

¹ Atlassian. (2021). Customers. Retrieved May 28, 2021, from Atlassian website:
<https://www.atlassian.com/customers>

Jira only acts as a replacement for less efficient methods and is specifically applicable to the domain of application and therefore can only be seen as a positive for it.

2.4. Examples

In my domain of application, staff management and team communication, Jira has, as above, been discovered as a perfect fit for these issues. Especially for small to medium teams.

In this case, team managers and leaders have a clear platform from where they can set up projects and tasks, assign tasks to members and easily communicate details and instructions to all their team members. Meanwhile, team members have a platform from which they can receive clear instructions on tasks and their timelines, whilst also having a clear means of communication between other members and the leadership chain.

Alternatively for larger teams and corporations, team communication and management through Jira can become a little more tough. However, should a given software development team decide to use Confluence concurrently with Jira, they will easily negate this problem. Using Confluence, a corporation can easily set up “Pages” that represent an individual project in a Jira domain, and assign teams to each “Page”. From there, the specific leader can set up their respective project on their own Jira domain, effectively breaking up the corporation into teams whilst still maintaining the leadership chain and improving communication and streamlining management in the process.

Thus, it seems that when it comes to improving team management and communication, Jira is a perfect tool that can greatly benefit this process with little to no drawbacks.

3. Resources

Similarly to the level 1 report, I was able to intuitively gain some understanding of Jira and its benefits through the process of learning the tool. By learning how the tool worked and theorising its uses in my domain of application for the level 1 report, I began to understand where and how Jira could be applied and be useful to this domain and domain of application. From there, I began to research other opinions and details to help better understand Jira and its usefulness.

Firstly, I reviewed the Atlassian Jira tutorial (<https://www.atlassian.com/software/jira/guides/getting-started/basics>) to further my knowledge of the software and its uses whilst trying to understand the depth of its use in Software Development teams. This was well complimented by an article that compared pros and cons of the software (<https://project-management.com/the-pros-and-cons-of-using-jira-software/>) which furthered my understanding of the tools benefits and drawback.

Once I understood how Jira suffered when it came to larger teams and how Confluence could be used concurrently to great effect to improve efficiency greatly, I consulted the Atlassian tutorial for Confluence (<https://www.atlassian.com/software/confluence/guides/get-started/confluence-overview>) to help me understand how the tool worked. Once I had a good understanding, I was able to formulate ideas as to how these two tools could be used together to great effect when it came to handling team communication and staff management in large teams/corporations.

Finally, the rest of my resources largely consisted of info and statistics on certain details of the tool and its use to help me better understand things such as the tools benefit over alternative methods (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jacobmorgan/2013/10/15/5-ways-email-makes-your-employees-miserable/>) or the sheer potential of the tool in this domain and domain of application (<https://www.atlassian.com/customers>) (as well as many others).

4. Process

The process for learning and understanding all this information about Jira and formulating ideas about its usefulness was similar to level 1 however not exactly the same. As mentioned in section 3, “Resources”, I was firstly able to use my knowledge from teaching myself the application of the tool to start to formulate ideas about its use in my domain and domain of application. From there I began to follow a path which revolved around the information I found:

- Firstly, I used my current knowledge to formulate how Jira would be applied to help facilitate staff management and team communication
- By using the Jira tutorial to help gain some more understanding I began to realise there may be a limit to using Jira when it came to larger teams/corporations
- By investigating this more I found that Atlassian also had produced a tool, Confluence, to directly combat this problem
- From reviewing the Atlassian tutorial for Confluence I began to understand how it could be used concurrently with Jira and to great effect for a large corporation
- Finally, I went looking for outside opinions on the usefulness of Jira in a Software Development team to best understand any commonly stated drawbacks

After which, I finally came to the conclusion that has been outlined in the report, that Jira itself is very effective as a tool for staff communication and management in small to medium teams but requires concurrent use of confluence to be effective in large teams and corporations.

It is clear to me now that my process for learning about this tool for both level 1 and 2 that my method mainly revolves around taking what I know and using the resources I can find to help formulate ideas as to the best application of the tool. I largely relied on what I found and followed the information I found until I was comfortable that my understanding of the tool was good enough that the ideas I had relating to the tools application were reflective of what I had found.

5. References

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