Version Control For Dynamics Solutions

Purpose of Version Control :-

As we started progressing with dynamics, we came across different challenges each sprint. Also there are some anticipated challenges as we start deploying to production environment. Here are few of them.

1. Finding changes from last deployment to this deployment

Dynamics solutions are being deployed twice every sprint from Dev to Test environment for now. Every time, there are few changes, that are made in Dev environment and deployed to Test. Developers who make the changes are aware of their changes. And peer developers who does review the work are aware of these changes as well. How about remaining team members like Architects, P.Os and fellow developers who dint work on that development piece.

Here comes the necessity of consolidated report of changes made from last release to this release. A report that keeps a track of pieces that are being added/modified/deleted in an application to meet the business requirements. This helps everyone in the team to be knowledgeable of the changes made. This helps them to convey it to stake holders and users who will be curious to know whats going on with the product, just like updating enhancements with every version of the product.

The obvious solution to this is by saving the code in a repository every time development is done. Git is most known tool that helps us get the log of differences from previous version to current version and thus in finding changes between two versions or releases.

2. Changes made by developers on same solution needs to be tracked respective to the developer

By tracking changes made by developers on a solution with developer's name, helps in understanding who worked on what? For example if "deve loper1" works on entity1 and "developer2" works on another entity2, and this is being tracked, then team will have an idea on whom to approach if something in entity1 or entity2 fails.

3. Deployment to another environment brings unfinished code as developers are working on same solution

As currently, there are multiple developers working on one solution, all of the developers will make their changes in the same solution. Now, getting the solution directly from dynamics carries finished work of one developer and also, work that is in progress by another developer. This makes test environment have unfinished code that makes testing difficult.

A possible solution for this is to be able to just deploy the changes that are finished despite the entire solution.

4. A solution that is readily available for release

We should be able to track the versions of solution that are being deployed in each environment to make sure that we are ready to roll back or roll forward when ever necessary. For example, we have production environment with changes from 15th September. Now in October, there is an issue in production that needs an urgent fix. With current situation, Dev environment and Test environment will always be ahead as development work is done in Dev and all the features developed are tested in Test environment and we don't really track which version of solution is deployed in these environment. Instead we store the entire solution in box and tag this solution in confluence with the date it is being deployed from one environment to the another. Even though we are practically saving the solution, we are not versioning it. so, if the question comes like which version of solution is running in test environment, we can take the solution from box, and give it, but that solution does not have any version. In addition to this, as the files are physically being uploaded to box, each file takes the duplicate space as the code is being saved repetitively in each solution.

One of the solutions for this issue is to have a version control tool for dynamics solutions.

Dynamics Solutions:-

A solution is a bucket where all the customization components of a particular project are stored. Creating a solution helps in moving these components from one environment to another. There are three different types of solutions: default, managed and unmanaged.

Default Solution: The out-of-the-box Microsoft Dynamics CRM software as well as the pre-deployment customizations are part of the default solution.

Unmanaged Solution: The beginning state of solution is the unmanaged solution state. During this phase, you can add, edit, update, remove, delete, and test any of the components of the solution. You also have the ability to create restrictions on the components within the solution. Any number of these unmanaged customized solution components can be associated with any number of unmanaged solutions.

Managed Solution: A managed solution is a finalized solution that can be distributed and installed. They are created by exporting an unmanaged solution by setting restrictions to prevent any further customization. They are installed in addition to the system solution. They can also be layered on top of other managed solutions as well. The unrestricted components of the solution are still customization.

To move a solution from one environment to another environment we need to export the solution from first environment and import it to the second one. Exporting a solution, creates a zip file that can be used to import it to another environment. Inside the zip file, we have a folder structure that holds the data of different entities and related customization. These details needs to be versioned.

Solution packager:-

Solution Packager is a tool that can reversibly decompose a Dynamics 365 Customer Engagement (on-premises) compressed solution file into multiple XML files and other files so that these files can be easily managed by a source control system or a version control system.

How to Download and Use Solution Packager:-

Step1:- Download the zip file in box from link given below. This folder has all the SDK tools of Dynamics.

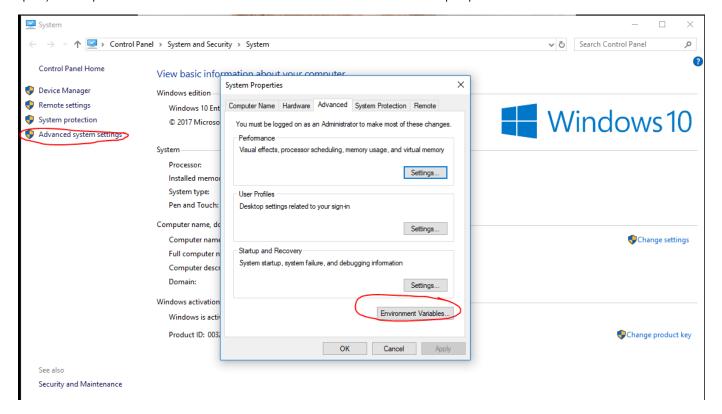
https://usf.app.box.com/file/541782707834

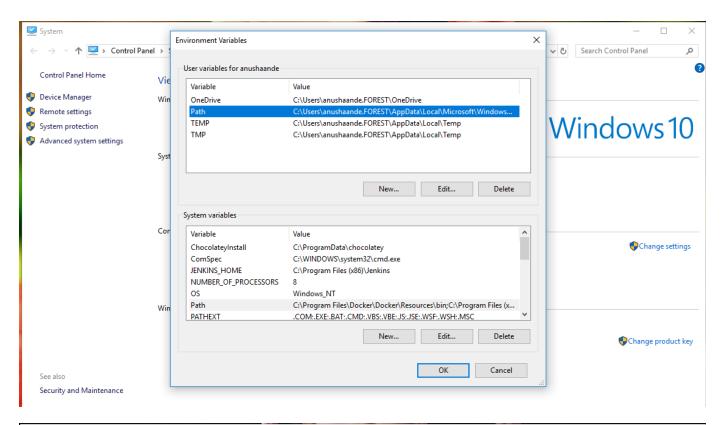
Step2:- Unzip the file and choose a folder you prefer to place the .exe files for further use.

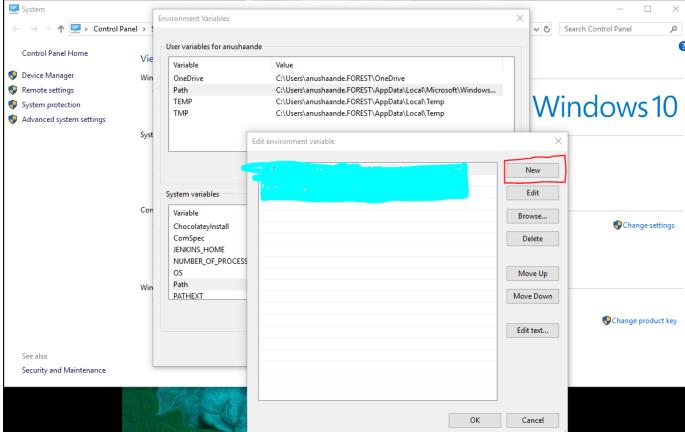
Step3:- Include the path of "SolutionPackager.exe" in environment variables to use it from powershell or command line.

- Copy the path of CoreTools Folder under Tools. This looks something like this Your path to tools folder\Tools\CoreTools\
- Here is how we do it in windows10.

Right click on "This PC" - Choose Properties - select "Advanced system settings" (Found on left pane of the window opened. Last option) - Chose path from User Variables - Click on Edit - Then Choose New - Paste the copied path - Click "OK"







Step4:- Use SolutionPackager.exe from powershell

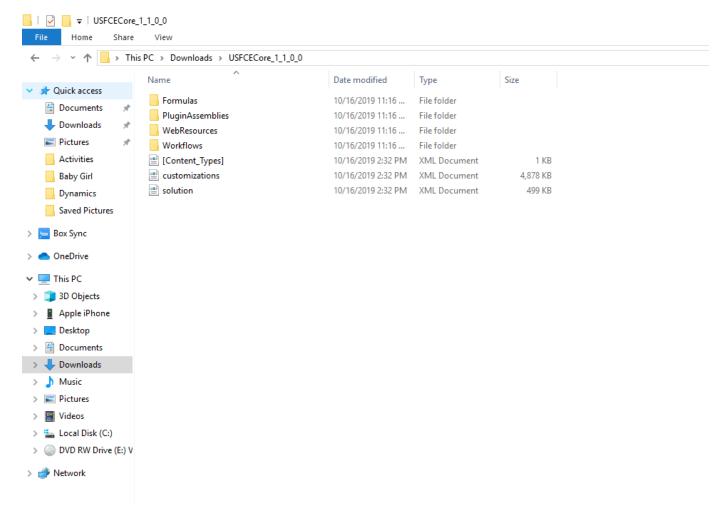
Open PowerShell. If it is already opened, close it and open it again for the changes made to system get reflected.

Run the command "SolutionPackager.exe". If you see the following, then SolutionPackager is installed successfully.

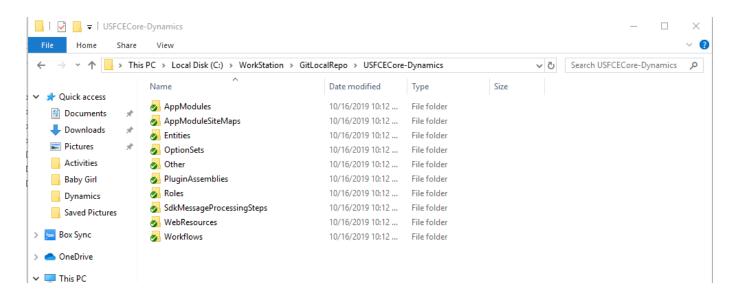
```
:\Users\anushaande.FOREST [(unknown)]> SolutionPackager.exe
SolutionPackger CRM Solution Packaging Tool [Version 9.1.0.13]
 2017 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved
Missing required argument '/action'.
Missing required argument '/zipfile'.
Options:
 /action:{Extract|Pack}
                                                  Action to Perform (short form /a)
                                                  The full path to the customization ZIP file: C:\customization.zip
  /zipfile:<string>
                                                  (short form /z)
  /packagetype:{Unmanaged|Managed|Both}
                                                  When Extracting use to specify dual Managed and Unmanaged operation.
                                                  When Packing use to specify Managed or Unmanaged from a previous
                                                   'Extract Both'. (short form /p)
                                                  The path to the root folder: C:\Solutions\Solution1. When Extracting
  /folder:<string>
                                                  this will be written to, when Packing this will be read from. Default value:'.' (short form /f)
                                                  The path to the log file. (short form /l)
Minimum logging level for log output [Verbose|Info|Warning|Error|Off].
  /log:<string>
  /errorlevel:{Off|Error|Warning|Info|Verbose}
                                                  Default value: 'Info' (short form /e)
 /allowDelete:{Yes|No|Prompt}
                                                  Dictates if delete operations may occur. Default value: 'Prompt' (short
                                                  form /ad)
  /allowWrite:{Yes No}
                                                  Dictates if write operations may occur. Default value: 'Yes' (short form
                                                  /aw)
  /clobber
                                                  Enables that files marked read-only can be deleted or overwritten.
                                                  (short form /c)
  /map:<string>
                                                  The full path to a mapping xml file: C:\maps.xml (short form /m)
  /nologo
                                                  Suppresses the banner. (short form /n)
  /sourceLoc:<string>
                                                  Generates a template resource file. Valid only on Extract. Possible
                                                  Values are auto or an LCID/ISO code of the language you wish to export.
                                                  When Present, this will extract the string resources from the given
                                                  locale as a neutral .resx. If auto or just the long or short form of
                                                  the switch is specified the base locale for the solution will be used.
                                                  (short form /src)
  /localize
                                                  Extract or merge all string resources into .resx files. (short form
                                                  /loc)
  /useUnmanagedFileForMissingManaged
                                                  Use the same XML source file when packaging for Managed and only
                                                  Unmanaged XML file is found; applies to AppModuleSiteMap, AppModuleMap,
                                                  FormXml files (short form /same)
  @<file>
                                                  Read response file for more options
SolutionPackager: CommandLineException thrown: Microsoft.Crm.Tools.SolutionPackager.CommandLineException: Exception of t
ype 'Microsoft.Crm.Tools.SolutionPackager.CommandLineException' was thrown.
   at Microsoft.Crm.Tools.SolutionPackager.Program.ParseCommandLine(String[] args)
   at Microsoft.Crm.Tools.SolutionPackager.Program.Main(String[] args), returning error code '2'
 :\Users\anushaande.FOREST [(unknown)]>
```

Differences between unzipping and Unpacking:-

Folder structure of a solution unzipped: We can use any zip tool for unzipping the solution. Solution gets unzipped into a folder which has files as shown below.



Folder structure of a solution unpacked: Using Solution packager we can export the files in a solution in granular level as shown below.

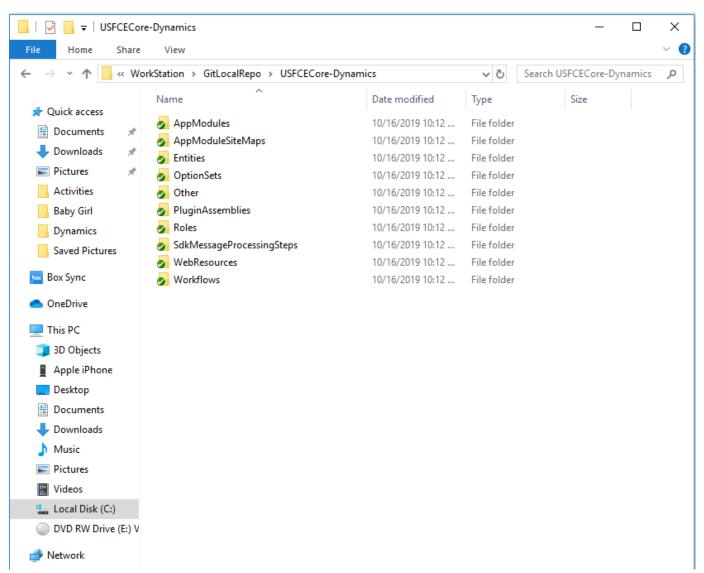


Unpacking the Dynamics solution:-

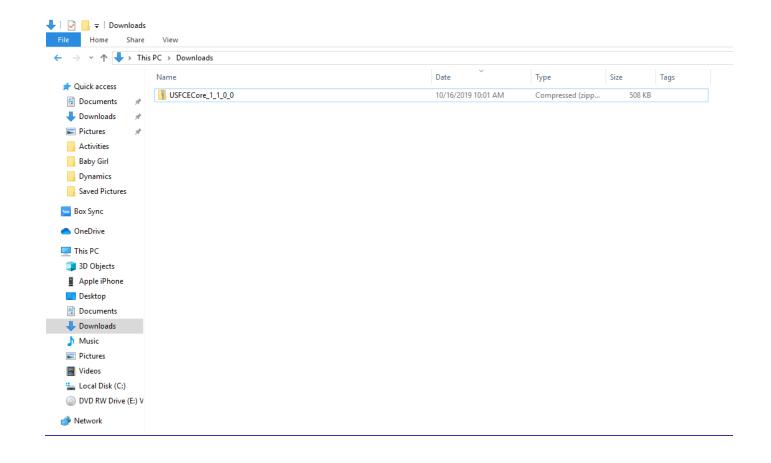
Here is the command to extract files of solution from solution zip to a folder

Using Solution Packager with Github:-

Step1:- Have a git local repository or clone the current repository from github.



Step2:- Download the solution from dynamics



Step3:- Extract solution to git local repository

Step3.1: Command to extract the solution

```
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relationship Compared to Control to Control
```

Step3.2: Warning to Delete Files

As this is a git local repository, there will be few files that are related to git. These files are treated as unnecessary files by solution packager while extracting solutions to git local repository.

```
Processing Component: CustomControls
Processing Component: SolutionPluginAssemblies
- USF.CE.CodeComponent.Plugins, Version=1.3.0.0, Culture=neutral, PublicKeyToken=e68b8e690cac6082
Processing Component: SdkMessageProcessingSteps
 - 89120840-438b-e911-a833-000d3a375590
Processing Component: AppModuleSiteMaps
- usf_Admissions
Processing Component: AppModules

    msdyncrm_MarketingSMBApp

    usf_Admissions

Processing Component: EntityDataProviders
Unmanaged Extract complete.
There are 15 unnecessary files
Delete files? [Yes/No/List]:List
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\config
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\description
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\head
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\applypatch-msg.sample
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\commit-msg.sample
 \verb|c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\fsmonitor-watchman.sample|\\
 \verb|c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\post-update.sample|\\
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\pre-applypatch.sample
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\git\hooks\pre-commit.sample
 \verb|c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\pre-push.sample|\\
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\pre-rebase.sample
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\pre-receive.sample
 \verb|c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\prepare-commit-msg.sample|\\
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\update.sample
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\info\exclude
```

Step3.3: Chose "No"

As we need all these files, we chose "NO" to delete the files.

```
Processing Component: AppModules

    msdyncrm_MarketingSMBApp

- usf Admissions
Processing Component: EntityDataProviders
Unmanaged Extract complete.
There are 15 unnecessary files
Delete files? [Yes/No/List]:List
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\config
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\description
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\head
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\applypatch-msg.sample
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\commit-msg.sample
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\fsmonitor-watchman.sample
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\post-update.sample
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\pre-applypatch.sample
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\pre-commit.sample
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\pre-push.sample
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\pre-rebase.sample
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\pre-receive.sample
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\prepare-commit-msg.sample
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\hooks\update.sample
 c:\workstation\gitlocalrepo\usfcecore-dynamics\.git\info\exclude
Delete files? [Yes/No/List]:No
Not deleting files
1 warnings encountered
C:\WorkStation\GitLocalRepo\USFCECore-Dynamics [master #10 ~0 -0 !]>
```

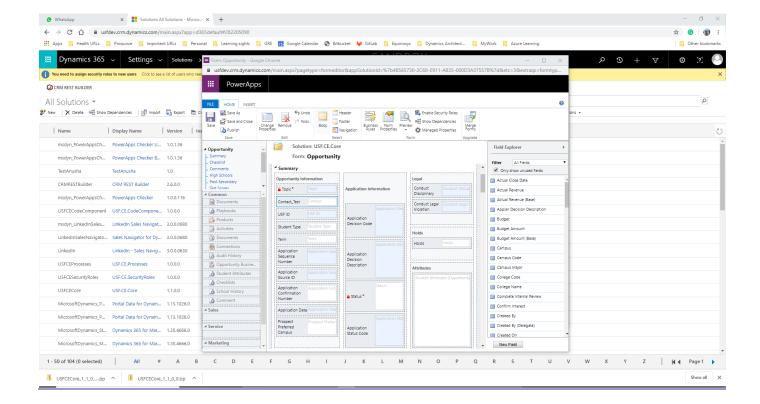
Step4:- Check changes from last version to current version

Assuming "current version" is the working directory (uncommitted modifications) and "last version" is HEAD (last committed modifications for the current branch), simply do:

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```

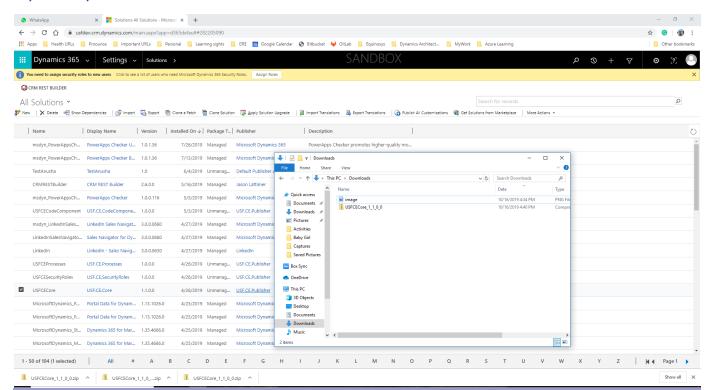
Step5:- Commit changes to git remote repository

Multiple developers Working on same solution:-



Step2:- Changes made to Contact entity by developer2

Step3:- Developer1 extracts solution from dev environment to local machine



Step4:- Developer1 pulls the code from remote repository

```
C:\WorkStation\GitLocalRepo\USFCECore-Dynamics [master 1]> git pull
Username for 'https://github.com': anushaande
Password for 'https://anushaande@github.com':
Already up to date.
C:\WorkStation\GitLocalRepo\USFCECore-Dynamics [master 1]>
```

Step5:- Developer1 Unpacks the solution to git local repository

```
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```

Step6:- Developer1 checks the changes from previous version to current version

```
| Comparison | Com
```

```
C:\WorkStation\GitLocalRepo\USFCECore-Dynamics [master f1 +0 -4 -0 1]> git status
On branch master
Your branch is ahead of 'origin/master' by 1 commit.

(use "git push" to publish your local commits)

Changes not staged for commit:

(use "git add <file>..." to update what will be committed)

(use "git checkout -- <file>..." to discard changes in working directory)

modified: Entities/Account/FormXml/main/(84488/3f-3f42-454e-362a-f8195B0419af).xml
modified: Entities/Contact/FormXml/main/(1fed44d1-ae58-4a41-bd29-f13arac4acfa).xml
modified: Entities/Opportunity/FormXml/main/(1fed44d1-ae58-4a41-bd29-f13arac4acfa).xml
modified: Entities/Opportunity/FormXml/main/(1fed44d1-ae58-4a41-bd29-f13arac4acfa).xml
modified: Other/Solution.xml

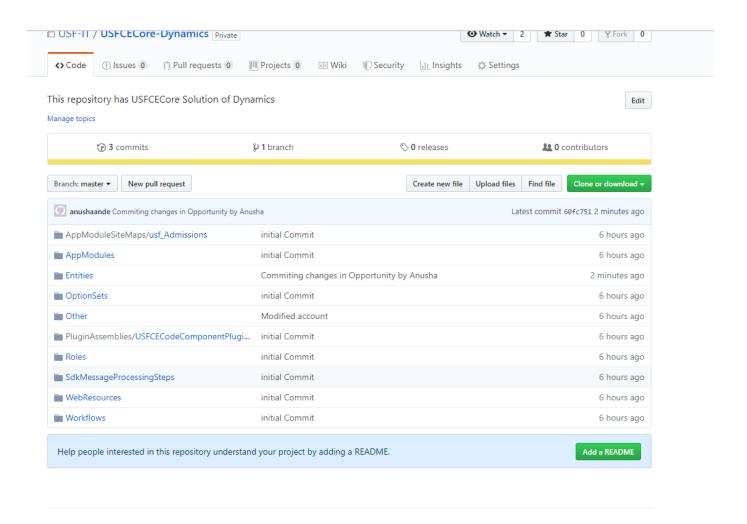
no changes added to commit (use "git add" and/or "git commit -a")
C:\WorkStation\GitLocalRepo\USFCECore-Dynamics [master f1 +0 -4 -0 1]>
```

```
C:\NorkStation\GittocalRepo\USFCECore-Dynamics [master 11 d nd 10 ]) git status
On branch master
Your branch is shead of 'origin/master' by 1 commit.
((use "git not roughlish your local commits)
((use "git add <file>..." to update what will be committed)
((use "git add <file>..." to discard changes in working directory)

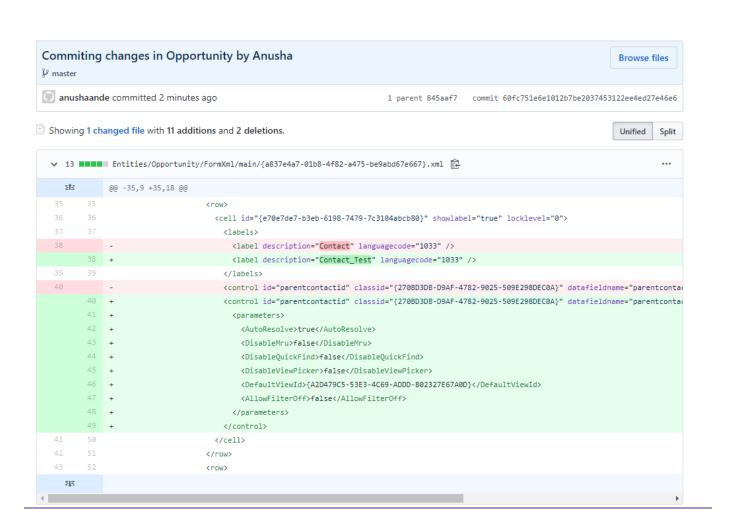
***Months of the committed of the commit
```

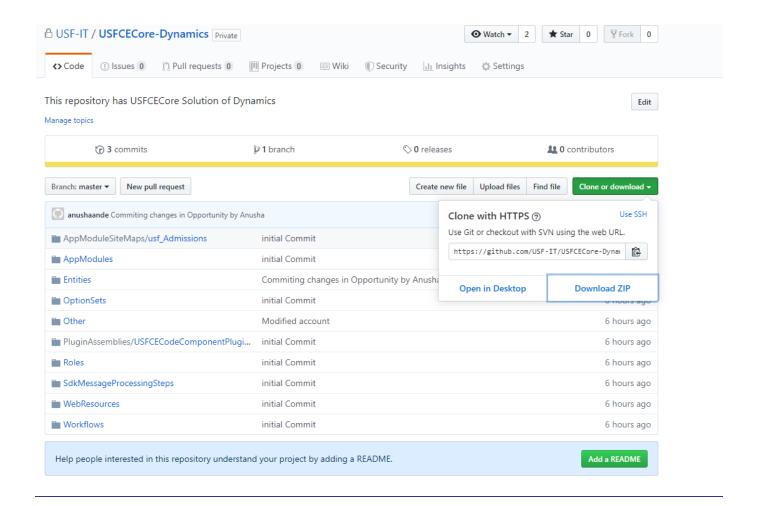
Packing Solution Using Solution Packager and deploying solution to dynamics:-

Step8:- Download the code from git remote repository

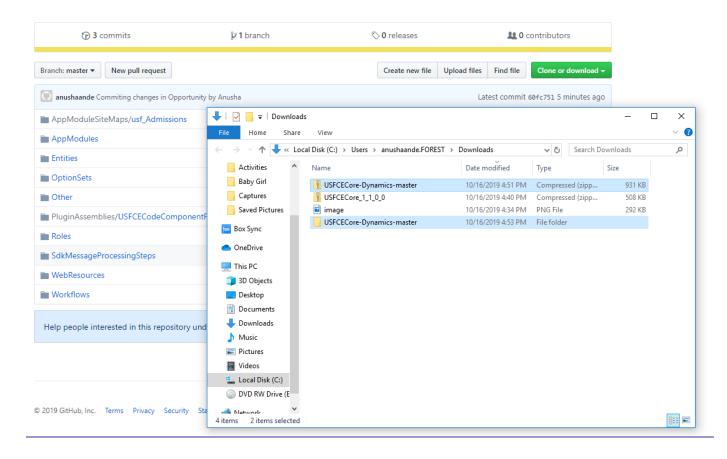


Clicking on "Committing changes in Opportunity by Anusha" we can see exactly whats changed





Step9:- Unzip the code



Step10:- Pack the files into dynamics solution using solution packager

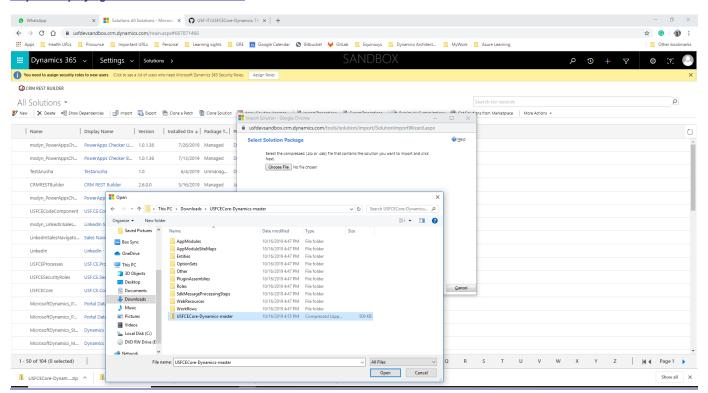
Command to pack the files :-

solutionpackager.exe /action:Pack /folder:"Path\To\Folder\That has\granular\files of\ solution" /zipfile:"Path\to\zip\files\to\File_Name.zip"

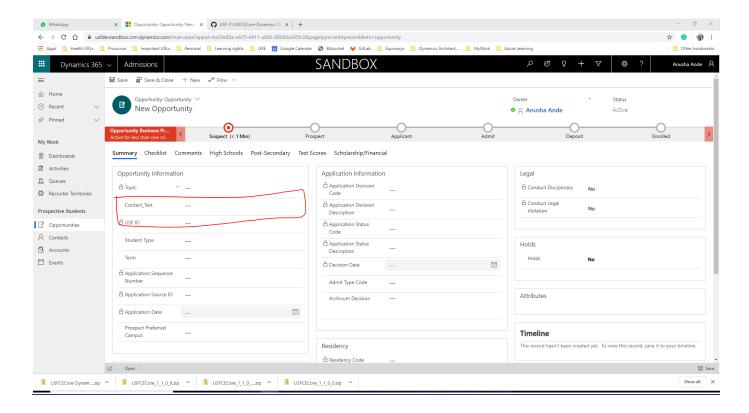
```
Comparison of Co
```

```
Type='Dashboard', Id
                       (or schema name)='{a837e4a7-01b8-4f82-a475-be9abd67e667}
                       (or schema name)='{ab491d37-edce-48ea-9cc2-0d4967c9c348}
  Type='Dashboard', Id
  Type='Dashboard', Id
                       (or schema name)='{b4b344dd-5e56-49ce-af8d-79fd84be37d9}
  Type='Dashboard', Id
                       (or schema name)='{c2cd9e55-d4b4-4b55-9951-16ead79643e5}
  Type='Dashboard', Id
                       (or schema name)='{c938569d-fc9d-4e07-b15b-187d28abbbfb}
  Type='Dashboard', Id (or schema name)='{c9c504eb-fa19-4124-851f-bd3d46590322}
  Type='Dashboard', Id (or schema name)='{e3c588ee-8e11-49da-a5fe-3800f3f683de}
  Type='Dashboard', Id (or schema name)='{e56a9046-90eb-477f-9af9-0c9bfaba6842}
 Type='Dashboard', Id (or schema name)='{e588f94a-4e0c-4491-8de3-2253d22bba38}
 Type='Dashboard', Id (or schema name)='{e9bb6310-f81c-4e74-8afe-d36581342eb5}
 Type='Dashboard', Id (or schema name)='{f033e3ed-61ef-4faf-b4f1-1dc0a138bfc8}'
 Type='Dashboard', Id (or schema name)='{f376ae20-45a4-46bc-9712-1c12b057b8c2}'.
Unmanaged Pack complete.
2 warnings encountered
C:\WorkStation\GitLocalRepo\USFCECore-Dynamics [master = +0 ~3 -0 !]>
```

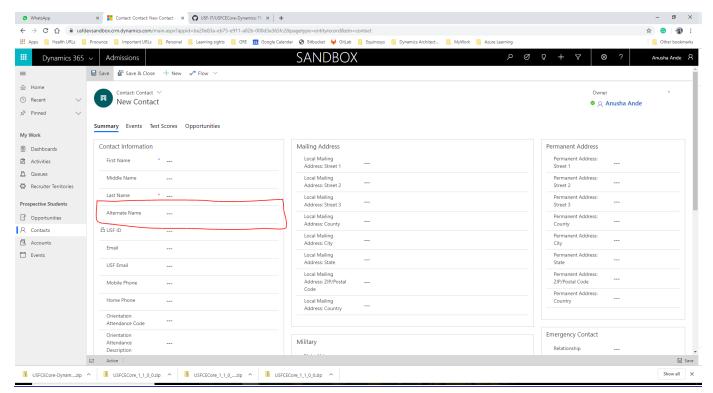
Step11:- Deploying solution to usfdevsandbox



Step12:- Check the changes made by developer1 - Changes will be reflected



Step13:- Check the changes made by developer2 - Changes will not be reflected



Hence changes made by developer1 got reflected in dynamics and changes made by developer2 are still in dev environment. This way as developer will be responsible for their code, there is no unfinished code being deployed to another environment.

Release tags for a solution:-

Tagging a version of solution when ever it is ready to deployed to another environment and keeping a track of the version released is one of the best practices to know which version of code resides in which environment.

References:-

https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/dynamics365/customerengagement/on-premises/developer/compress-extract-solution-file-solutionpackager

https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/dynamics 365/customereng agement/on-premises/developer/download-tools-nugety-premises/developer/download-tools-nugety-premises/developer/download-tools-nugety-premises/developer/download-tools-nugety-premises/developer/download-tools-nugety-premises/developer/download-tools-nugety-premises/developer/download-tools-nugety-premises/developer/download-tools-nugety-premises/developer/download-tools-nugety-premises/developer/download-tools-nugety-premises/developer/download-tools-nugety-premises/developer/download-tools-nugety-premises/developer/download-tools-nugety-premises/developer/download-tools-nugety-premises/developer/download-tools-nugety-premises/developer-premises/de