

How to scale your organization in the cloud





How to scale your organization in the Cloud

So, you're getting ready to scale your organization?

Given [65% of growth-minded companies](#) are finding a place in new markets and 61% have expanded internationally, we aren't surprised. Companies that graduate from start-up to scale-up have 20% revenue growth year-over-year. And who doesn't want to increase revenue and efficiency while minimizing costs and becoming more sustainable? That's a recipe for stability, solid cash-flow, happier employees, and leaner business operations.

Of course, scaling presents its own unique set of challenges, requires strategic thinking, and takes time. If scaling is the next step for your business, here's how to face those challenges, plan strategically, and make sure your technology supports your scaling journey.

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Why companies choose to scale in the cloud

By the end of the 2020, experts predict that [83% of enterprise workloads will be in the cloud](#). Cloud services are more secure, sustainable, agile, and cost-effective than ever before and companies are embracing the new technology with open arms. That's why we aren't just talking about scaling your business. We're talking about scaling your business with the right solutions.

Be more profitable: Companies that invest in the cloud experience up to 53% faster revenue growth, [according to Dell](#). And that's not even factoring in the money you save on the hefty set-up costs and ongoing internal support required for on-prem.

Stay agile: 65% of professionals say meeting business demands quickly is [one of the top reasons to move to the cloud](#). And the bigger your company, the more speed matters. In companies with over 1,000 employees, 76% said they're adopting the cloud [to improve the speed of IT service delivery](#).

Scale faster (and cheaper): Scaling in the cloud is flexible and instantaneous and comes with automatic upgrades to security and product features—the minute they are available.

Free up your IT team: Instead of focusing on infrastructure and architecture, your IT team can focus on supporting the business at a higher level via improvements in efficiency and automation. [As Airbnb's VP of Engineering puts it](#), "It is important for our engineers to focus as much as possible on the things that are unique to our business, not running a ton of infrastructure."

Support distributed teams: As you scale, chances are your teams will become more geographically distributed. Cloud allows them to access your tools whenever and wherever they are, as long as they have the right permissions, guaranteed uptime, 24-7 support, and a good internet connection.

Improve your eco-friendliness: [Up to 98% more eco-friendly](#), according to one study, cloud is the choice for companies that value environmental sustainability.

Common scaling challenges (and how to overcome them)

How can you minimize risk, maximize profit, stay innovative, and hang onto valuable talent as your business continues to grow?

The answer starts with recognizing some of the most common challenges you'll face and preparing to meet them head on.

Did you know

90%

of the Fortune 500
use Atlassian tools.

SCALING ISN'T JUST ABOUT TOOLS

We believe everything comes back to teams, practices, and company culture. You can have the best tools in the world at your fingertips, but without the right people and processes, digital transformations, growth plans, and even companies can fail.

You don't have to take our word for it. Survey after survey shows that the biggest challenges you'll face when you take on high-impact organizational changes are nearly always people and process. In fact, 84% of business people say [culture is vital to successful change](#). And 76% of those whose change initiatives failed said a change plan that didn't take culture into account was to blame.

This is why when we talk about growing pains, we talk about silos, teams, and culture, not just tools and features.

CHALLENGE

Silos

When teams work in silos, bureaucracy reigns, progress slows, and work disappears into corners of email and hard drives where only one or two people can find it. Best-case scenario, silos mean less communication and slower progress. Worst-case, they can lead to big misunderstandings, expensive tech incidents, or regulatory non-compliance.

And all of this gets worse as you scale up. The more your teams and customer base grow, the worse it is if they're all disconnected from each other. The more teams keep information in separate (and disconnected) places, the less effective your efforts at collaboration, team agility, smooth customer experiences, and compliance with data regulations will be. And the more siloed your communications, the less effective every organization-wide effort will become.

This is why when you're planning to scale, you should be looking for solutions that give you visibility across teams. Your admins should be able to easily see what teams are doing and how employees use your products. Leadership should be on board and teams themselves need to be committed to a culture of transparency and collaboration.

BREAKING DOWN YOUR SILOS?

Check out our [presentation](#) on how the Jira team used the Atlassian Team Playbook to break down silos that got in their way.

SOLUTION

Break down silos with dependency mapping



No team is an island. The work we do has a ripple effect—impacting other teams, business functions, and tech products, which is why at Atlassian, we practice a play called [dependency mapping](#).

The goal? To get a handle on all the things that might impact the success of our projects, including conflicting projects, changes, and tech upgrades other teams might be working on.

Without dependency mapping, it's easy for Team X to accidentally introduce errors into Team Y's launch by updating code they don't know Team Y needs. By thinking it all through before you dive into a new project, you mitigate the risk of bottlenecks, duplicate work, and—perhaps most importantly—unscheduled, expensive system down time.

[Get the dependency mapping play here!](#)

CHALLENGE

Open culture

Adopting an open work culture means less time getting up to speed, fewer knowledge gaps, and better (not to mention faster) decision-making—all of which comes in handy when you're expanding.

In fact, transparency is one of the [top indicators of employee satisfaction](#). (And we don't need to tell you that employee turnover means lost investment, lost knowledge, and training or ramp-up time that slows everything down.)

So, what do we mean by open?

Be radically honest

At Atlassian, we believe in building company practices that encourage honesty—top down and bottom up.

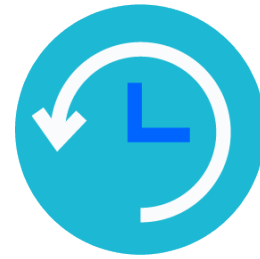
What this looks like varies from company to company, but from the top down, we've seen some big successes from businesses like Buffer and FitBit that choose to be radically transparent about things like employee salaries, sales numbers, revenue use, what data they collect and why, and more.

On the bottom-up side of the coin, here at Atlassian, we embrace practices like [blameless postmortems](#)—where teams come together to figure out what led to a tech incident and how to mitigate that risk in the future.

The difference between a blameless postmortem and the more usual debriefings companies have is this: nobody gets blamed, fired, or demoted. The pressure to keep mistakes to yourself is gone and teams can have open, honest conversations about major missteps. This is great for our teams, who can figure out what went wrong and fix it with playbooks, run books, process tweaks, or tech solutions in the future. And it's great for the teams around them, who can learn from their mistakes and processes (both the good and the bad).

SOLUTION

Promote openness with honest retrospectives



Blameless, honest [retrospectives](#) aren't just for your development teams. They help all teams improve future performance, communication, and connection.

At Atlassian, our internal teams even have an open page where employees share and reflect on the worst tech mistakes they ever made. It's full of humor, comradery, and lessons learned. Even better, it encourages connection, collaboration, information sharing, humility, and a feeling of belonging across teams.

The goal here is to create a safe place to look back on what worked (and what didn't) on past projects and how your team can improve the things that matter to you.

[Get the retrospectives play here.](#)

Remember that no company can become transparent unless their teams are on board with the practice and they have the tools to support it. The good news is that most people ([87%](#)) want to work for an open company, so finding the people who are excited about transparency shouldn't be a difficult task. And with the right tools, you can avoid having your employees spend [20% of their time trying to track down internal information](#), and instead stay efficient while keeping everything organized and accessible.

CHALLENGE

Agile communication

One of the most important ingredients you need for successful scaling—and perhaps most important—is productivity.

So, how do you maximize productivity to achieve your audacious business goals? The answer, at least in part, is communication.

In fact, organizations with effective communication programs are [350% more likely to outperform their peers](#).

And, like everything else we've talked about, the benefits of good communication become even greater and more imperative as companies expand.

How can we create more efficiencies if our teams aren't talking? How can we find the gaps in our knowledge, our contingency plans, and our customer needs? How can we grow and collaborate and generate new revenue streams if development never talks to operations and marketing has to wait for their monthly meeting to check in with sales?

With multiple teams, working across multiple different projects, and likely located in different timezones, work becomes more complex. As organizations grow, that complexity intensifies and the need for proactive communication becomes a requirement to succeed.

SOLUTION

Be proactive with stakeholder communication



So, how do we make communication agile? The first step is getting teams on board. You simply can't change company culture without buy-in from the people who need to make the change.

The second step is to move beyond a regular cadence of communication (scheduled meetings, occasional update emails) to real-time feedback loops, which requires the right tools (real-time chat or open Confluence pages) and the right communication practices. We use a mix of [Slack](#), [Confluence](#), and [Jira](#) for real-time discussion and easy access to project information so we can proactively ask questions, share insights, and offer new solutions.

The easiest way to get communications wrong is to assume they'll happen naturally. Good communication will eventually become a normal part of your organization's day-to-day routine, but it helps to kick it off with a solid plan.

Stakeholder communication planning helps you provide coworkers and executives with the right information at the right time in the right channels. Start by sharing important details and changes with those involved proactively to avoid misaligned expectations and being blindsided with changes at the 11th hour.

[Get the stakeholder communication play here.](#)

CHALLENGE

Decision-making and assessment

If you want to accelerate your progress, it's time to go beyond status meetings and adopt consistent decision-making frameworks.

This is especially true for high-stakes decisions when companies are focused on scaling. Without clear roles and responsibilities, it's easy to exclude key teams and decision-makers who should be involved from the start, to agonize over decisions, or to delay decision-making altogether.

The other side of the coin here is this: how do you know your decisions were the right ones? How do you measure project and team successes?

To answer those questions, you'll need not just a clear path to making decisions, but a way to set goals, measure success, and encourage teams to think big.

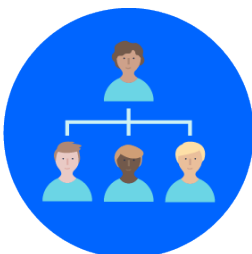
SOLUTION

Make better decisions with DACI

Documenting decisions where everyone can contribute and add opinions means big decisions and the data to support them are accessible by everyone who might be impacted. You're also providing a space where individual perspectives are taken into account, creating greater buy-in on the final outcome.

With the DACI framework, it only takes 15 minutes to set your team up for decision-making success. The goal here is to define decision-making roles into four categories that make it clear who is responsible for driving (D), approving (A), and contributing (C) to each decision and who needs to be informed (I). Once that's set, get your contributors together to lay out the options, provide the pros and cons, and recommend a solution.

[Get the DACI framework play here.](#)



Define successes ahead of time with OKRs

When making decisions, it's good to keep team or company goals top of mind. Especially as organizations grow, alignment on how team goals ladder up to the company's end goal is critical to keep the org progressing forward and inspired. OKRs (objectives and key results) are a goal-setting methodology that's all about pushing past our comfort zones and setting truly big, audacious goals—and brainstorming ways to reach them.

While traditionally this is in the realm of leadership, we have every team at every level set their own stretch goals and dream big. That way, everyone has a stake in the company's success and at the end of each quarter and year we can see the impact each team has made on our overall vision.

[Get the OKR play here.](#)



CHALLENGE

Security

Ask businesses what aspects of scaling make them nervous and the first answer you'll get is probably security. And who can blame them? In 2019, [over 4 billion records were exposed](#) by data breaches—just in the first half of the year. And [68% of business leaders](#) say the risks are only trending upward.

The more you scale—adding new teams, new vendors, new data sources and places you store data—the more security risks need to be top-of-mind.

Getting the basics down, like who has access to your systems, where they're being accessed from, and how they are being accessed are critical. But what about maintaining a healthy balance between the privacy required and the visibility that's needed to keep teams productive and moving quickly?

It's not all doom and gloom. With the proper security team in place and the tools to support them, implementing policies and uncovering security gaps can be tackled head-on.



Moving your organization's sensitive assets to the cloud requires different—and greater—control over which employees can access...cloud apps and services. This aspect of IT governance—cloud identity and access management (IAM)—is the key to overcoming the biggest challenge in digital transformation.

GUIDE TO CLOUD IDENTITY AND ATASSIAN GOVERNANCE

SOLUTION

Choose a secure vendor

On the teams side of things, keeping security top of mind means managing what data people have access to and how they can share it. It also means educating your team and putting fail-safes in place to make sure they don't accidentally allow malicious access to their systems.

On the tech side, the security challenge with scalable cloud services is that valuable (and sometimes sensitive) data is now spread across multiple products and vendors. The answer to keeping this all secure, according to our [Guide to Cloud Identity and Access Governance](#), is having access to data on how your systems are being used and having greater control over how employees access apps and services. Make sure you research and choose a vendor that clearly outlines their [security best practices](#) and aligns with your team's beliefs on data privacy and compliance.

Did you know

94%

of businesses surveyed say security got better for them after moving to the cloud.



The best cloud IAM approach provides a central place to manage user identities and works within heterogeneous environments, allowing access to any IT resource regardless of the OS platform, authentication protocol, location, or vendor.

GUIDE TO CLOUD IDENTITY AND ATlassian GOVERNANCE

CHALLENGE

Tedious manual processes

If the key to scaling is efficiency, standardization and automation are scalability's best friends.

After all, how can you be efficient when you're manually installing each new server and load balancer, documenting processes, and approving a hundred simple requests that have no real impact on your business' bottom line?

There are always going to be tasks that make more sense to do manually. Approving risky changes before the new code goes live, making strategic decisions, and researching new tools will require your unique brain power to be successful.

But there are a thousand small things that don't need a human touch. Manual tasks like process approvals, new hire onboarding, event log monitoring, and even user provisioning and management only add burden to your teams. These can and should be automated.

DID YOU KNOW?

Tools like [Jira automation](#) save technical and non-technical teams over 6+ hours a month by making it simple to automate processes without tech expertise.

SOLUTION

Automate and standardize routine tasks



Tech automation frees up IT teams to spend more time on innovation and optimization and less time on tedious, mind-numbing tasks that don't really require their deep expertise. Automation tools can document processes, automatically generate postmortem reports after an incident, pre-approve standard changes, or flag code for peer review—removing the burden of both the tasks themselves and the mental space they take up for your teams.

On the non-technical side of things, standardization of processes or documentation can speed up work, reduce errors, and help employees navigate smoothly through the operational workflows that drive your business. Document easy to follow steps for common workflows or develop [templates](#) to speed up work and create consistency across the organization.

CHALLENGE

Reliable infrastructure

Now, more than ever, customers (and employees) expect always-on services, and downtime is costing companies big. The [average cost of downtime](#) is \$5,600 per minute, according to a 2014 study, and many companies lose far more during outages. Facebook—for example—estimated their losses at \$90 million after the [fateful 2019 outage](#) that left systems down for 14 hours.

With figures like these, it's clear that unreliable infrastructure is one of the easiest ways to drive your scalability right off a cliff. For employees using your software internally, it can mean major process slow-downs, missed deadlines, and lengthy workarounds. For external customers, it often means no access to the products or services they need, sluggish customer service, and sometimes missing major deadlines of their own. And while customers will forgive the occasional outage, the less reliable your infrastructure, the more likely they are to take their business elsewhere and never return.

As with our other challenges, the more you scale, the worse the consequences get. The more your teams grow, the higher the cost to you if their systems are down for an hour. The bigger your customer base, the bigger the blow-up on social media when systems run at sloth speed or stop functioning altogether.

SOLUTION

Choose the right tools



With most of the challenges of scaling, team ingenuity, collaborative culture, and great processes can really save the day. But when it comes to system reliability, the only solution is making sure you have the right tools in place.

When you choose your cloud vendor, look for a company with a great reputation, longevity in their industry, and an option for you to test out their products to make sure they work well for your teams. Solutions should come

with a guaranteed uptime SLA, which ensures a certain level of uptime and is backed by service credits. If you have a geographically distributed team, access to a support team that's available around the clock is also critical for any big issues that may arise during off times. Tools should also come with the necessities like high or unlimited storage limits so teams can share files and documents with no obstacles, and audit logs to keep a record of important changes and events for troubleshooting.

Questions to ask before you scale

Before you embark on the journey to scale, make sure your teams and leadership are ready. [74% of startup failures](#) boil down to premature scaling, according to one survey, which is why understanding the challenges and planning for them are a vital part of the process.

Scaling isn't just growth. It's not just hiring more people or bringing in more customers. It's about balancing that growth with productivity and efficiency. It's about scaling revenue faster than you scale resources.

And the only way to do that is to plan strategically for it.

In our experience, the most successful companies ask—and thoroughly answer—these 20 questions before they begin and continue to reassess them as they scale. Today's answer might not be tomorrow's and there may be more opportunities for efficiency, productivity, and revenue scaling that show up in a month or two or six.

Silos

1. Where does our data live? Is it siloed or connected? If it's siloed, how can we better connect it?
2. Do teams have visibility into what other teams are doing? How can we improve the ability to see not only their projects but also the big picture?
3. Do I have visibility across teams? Have we set up our culture and tools to support that visibility?
4. Who's responsible for looking at the big picture? Who's taking advantage of that visibility and what are their objectives?

Radical honesty

5. What are we currently sharing with employees, stakeholders, customers, and the public? Is there anything we're holding back that we could share?
6. How can we encourage employees to be radically honest? What changes do we need to make to our meetings, retrospectives, and compensation/rewards to promote transparency?

Agile communication

7. How do teams communicate now? How can we make it easier for them to communicate in real time?
8. What practices and tools do we need to implement to make communication more agile?

Alignment and planning

9. How do we currently align teams? What is our decision-making framework? Could it be improved? If so, how?
10. Who is responsible for making decisions and how will we make sure decision-making doesn't become a bottleneck?
11. Is the work we're doing aligned to our team and company strategy? Is there any work that's misaligned, duplicated, or wasted?
12. How are we measuring our success? What are our stretch goals? Do they support our larger company goals? How are we encouraging teams to aim high and rewarding them for doing so even when they don't hit their ambitious targets?

Security

13. What processes and workflows do we have (or will we put in place) to make sure our organization stays open but also secure?
14. What data do teams need access to and what data needs to be less accessible?
15. How do our systems authenticate users? How do we keep our tools secure?

Automation and standardization

16. What processes are automated now? What other processes could be automated?
17. What tedious tasks are teams spending time on that could be automated to free them up? What low-risk decisions or workflows could be automated?

Reliability

18. Is our software being used company-wide or by a small number of teams? Are these tools critical to day-to-day business operations?
19. Are teams located in different geographies or time zones? If systems are down during an off-time, can we contact the vendor?
20. Do we plan on hiring quickly in the near-term? Can our current infrastructure support rapid internal and/or customer growth?

What to look for in a scalable cloud service

The key to scalability is culture and strategy—addressing the challenges above head-on. But to do that, you also need the right tools. Tools designed to take you on the journey from small business to thriving empire.

So, how does [Atlassian Cloud Premium](#) support you as you face the challenges above? The answers lie with technology that's built with open culture, breaking down silos, and secure scaling in mind.

Tools for silo-free growth and open culture

The more you scale, the more unwieldy some solutions get. Having built-in admin and end user visibility that doesn't get siloed as you grow is vital to keep cross-functional work productive and support an open culture. Features like [Jira Premium's advanced roadmaps](#)—a holistic view of what multiple teams are doing and how their work intersects and depends on each other—and [Confluence Premium's analytics](#), which provides reports on projects, teams, and content to help you make smarter business and resourcing decisions give the visibility needed to keep information flowing.

Tools for agile communication

If agile communication is a priority, you can't afford inefficient administration that slows teams down. [Confluence Premium's admin key and inspect permissions](#) gives site admins more visibility and temporary access to restricted pages for permissions troubleshooting. This is particularly important when employees leave the company and have locked down important content that other teams need to reference, or when HR needs extra access for internal investigations. Addressing permissions issues quickly keeps teams and communication moving smoothly.

As companies grow, so does the documentation it produces. [Confluence and Jira's archiving functionality](#) reduces clutter and keeps sites up to date by archiving stale or outdated content and projects. This cuts down on time wasted looking for and sharing the right information with teammates.

Tools for better decision-making

Making decisions and measuring success requires data and insights, which is why you should look for tools that give IT teams data on their product usage.

[Admin insights](#) helps admins understand product usage over time and visibility into security and access of their Premium products. This shifts admin responsibilities from being reactive to proactive by uncovering adoption trends and gaps in security, and making the investments to resolve them.

Tools to keep systems secure

With security risks always on the rise and new security regulations popping up around the world, choosing tools with the right security features is vital. In addition to having data on security and access with Admin insights (ie who has access to API tokens and who doesn't have two-step verification enabled), you also need features that actually add extra layers of security and consolidate user management.

IP allowlisting limits access to your content based on trusted IP addresses (ie VPN and office networks), which means you always know who has access to your systems and access is automatically denied to those who don't.

SAML single sign-on is about ditching the insecurity of relying solely on usernames and passwords, and watching as your employees reuse the same credentials across multiple apps. By integrating your Atlassian cloud tools with [Atlassian Access](#) you can set up SSO with the cloud IdP of your choice, giving admins peace of mind and allowing your users to seamlessly access their various Atlassian cloud products.

External directory sync through Atlassian Access allows you to connect your Atlassian cloud tools directly to your existing directory of users within your company. This means only having to maintain one source of truth for users and groups and that any changes you make in your directory (adding or removing users) will be automatically synced with Atlassian tools.

Tools that support admin efficiency

Scaling isn't just about growth. It's also about efficiency. Look for solutions that understand admin workload and aim to ease the burden. We recommend looking for [automation features](#) which let both admins and end users save time on repetitive tasks and processes with easy to setup if-then-then-that rules and boost productivity. Tools that support admins with managing tasks in bulk, such as [bulk archiving](#) outdated content, or give them advanced permissions capabilities (from auditing and editing to troubleshooting) also free up time for IT teams to focus on strategic initiatives that support your organization's end goals.

Tools that support a reliable infrastructure

In a world where the average cost of downtime is upwards of \$5,600 per minute, choosing a vendor with guaranteed uptime (and a reputation for keeping their promises) is a must. Atlassian Premium gives teams a 99.9% uptime SLA, backed by service credits, 24x7 Premium Support with a one-hour response time for critical issues, and unlimited storage so your organization can stay productive without the interruptions.

Support for a cultural change

We've said it before, and we'll say it again: a successful journey to scale isn't just about the right tech. It's also about culture, teams, and practices.

Atlassian isn't just here to provide the technology. We have a [robust playbook](#) to support your teams in becoming more collaborative, productive, efficient, and satisfied - and our tools are all set up with these things in mind.

As your organization grows, remember that it's a process of better connecting a larger workforce – creating happier employees, sustainable productivity and efficiency, better big-picture visibility, and open conversations.



Curious what Atlassian Cloud Premium can do for your business?

Atlassian's Premium solutions give teams the confidence to scale reliably while maintaining a culture of transparency. [Learn more](#) about how Premium can support your team with advanced features that give more reliability, admin control, and visibility across your organization.