" Upgrading to Data Center has given us the ability to deliver better speed and performance for our teams, and allows us the time we need to plan for how – and when – we go to the cloud.

**SHARON WARNER**
CD Toolchain Delivery Lead

| 80% | > 66% | 0 |
|---|---|---|
| Reduction in configurations | Reduction in Confluence spaces after cleanup | Downtime required for upgrades |

# How IAG created a stronger, more resilient workplace by optimizing and shifting to Atlassian Data Center
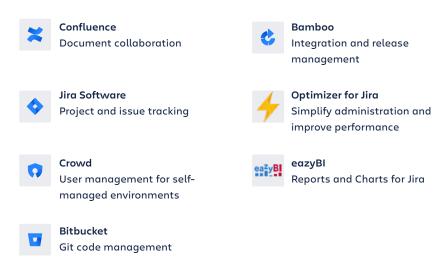
By optimizing their server instances (including reducing configurations by 80%) then shifting to Atlassian Data Center on AWS, IAG increased speed, stability, and scalability within months, while putting key preparations in place that will streamline their future move to Atlassian's cloud service.

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By their nature, insurance providers love to analyze risk. And the internal culture at Insurance Australia Group (IAG) is all about working together to take calculated risks. So, it's no surprise that the firm has approached their digital transformation with a healthy mix of ambition and caution.

As part of their strategy to "create a stronger, more resilient IAG," the company is working toward transforming the customer experience by re-architecting core platforms to enable greater agility. This has included planning a cloud migration for many of their platforms, including Atlassian. While IAG's ambitions are motivating them to take flight toward the cloud, their analysis suggested a "layover" on Atlassian Data Center.

For the first step in their cloud journey, IAG chose to migrate their Atlassian platform to Data Center on AWS to leverage cloud capabilities without immediately sacrificing control of their infrastructure. By optimizing their server instances then shifting to Data Center, the team has improved productivity, stability, and scalability, while planning a sensible route to achieve their cloud ambitions.

## Interim steps on the path to cloud migration

For years, IAG has used Atlassian solutions "to help our customers, faster," as CD Toolchain Delivery Lead Sharon Warner explains. The Engineering team first adopted Jira and Confluence Server around 2010, and the tools organically spread throughout the organization. Over time, IAG's Atlassian user base grew and began pushing the limits of their server plan, putting strain on the system and hindering speed and performance.

The company's needs had expanded over time too. Leaders and employees craved more advanced reporting to track and manage growth, better monitoring of performance and vulnerabilities, and other features suited for enterprises like theirs.

Then, at an Atlassian Team event in 2019, a light bulb went off for IAG's Engineering team as they listened to others' stories of digital transformation and cloud migration. "My manager said, 'We want to go to cloud!'" Sharon recalls. "But when we got home, reality hit. The cloud is where we're going, but we realized we need an interim step."

Part of the challenge was that IAG needed a quicker fix for speed and performance, and they didn't have time to properly prepare for a migration to SaaS. The company was also developing an internal framework for the governance of cloud adoption activities, and as one of the first workloads to move the Atlassian suite was a valuable way to prove the new processes.

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**SHARON WARNER**
CD Toolchain Delivery Lead

While the IAG team continues to monitor Atlassian's Cloud roadmap so they can make an informed decision about when to migrate, Data Center on AWS presented them with the perfect stepping stone to solve their immediate challenges, keep them in control, and pave the way to the cloud. "By upgrading to Data Center, we can make a sensible decision about how – and when – we go to the cloud."

## Optimizing and shifting for a smooth Data Center upgrade

After getting approval and funding for Data Center by showing how internal Atlassian improvements would trickle down into a better customer experience, Engineering took an "**optimize and shift**" approach to the upgrade.

The team began by hosting a planning workshop, where key collaborators could understand each other's roles and the challenges and pressures they were each facing. Empathizing and aligning in this way not only helped create a more effective plan from the beginning, but also solve complex problems together later on.

### Pro tip from IAG

"**Develop consensus around the best process for the whole team. It's not about one person dictating or getting what they want, but about getting a process everyone can support.**"
MICHAEL THORNHILL, Technical Lead

Once the team agreed on a plan, their first step was to clean up their server instances so they could demonstrate quick wins to leaders – specifically around performance improvements and cost savings – while ensuring they were only transferring must-have data, pages, spaces, and configurations.

"We did it smart and used data analysis to see what people were and weren't using," Sharon says. "We reduced the number of Jira fields by 56% to create our standard configuration. We also reduced the number of issue types by 75% and the number of workflows by 80%. It was hard work, and we had to do it sensitively."

During this cleanup process, IAG archived or removed 47% of Jira Software projects and 66% of Confluence spaces, which not only made for a smoother upgrade, but also increased consistency and accuracy of reporting data.

### Pro tip from IAG

**"Clean up and standardize before you move [to Data Center or the cloud]. That's the way to build an enterprise tool for the future."**
SHARON WARNER, CD Toolchain Delivery Lead

By the second half of 2020, Engineering was prepared to launch their first Data Center node. As their Confluence upgrade was nearing completion, they quickly moved Jira Software to Data Center too. Within about a month, both solutions were fully upgraded and ready for rollout.

### Pro tip from IAG

**"Don't go straight to prod! Test first to avoid bringing the system down or slowing things down."**
SHARON WARNER, CD Toolchain Delivery Lead

Throughout the upgrade process, IAG leaned on Jared Winter from Atlassian's Advisory Services team for enterprise-level support and guidance. "As soon as Jared came in, he just fit into our team and culture. People immediately respected his knowledge and past experience with AWS," Sharon says. "He's been absolutely fantastic in bringing Atlassian and IAG together to achieve this upgrade. We couldn't have done it without him."

## Improving for today, while preparing for the future

Now that IAG is up and running on Atlassian Data Center, teams across the organization can work faster and more securely and collaboratively.

The company's 5,000-plus Confluence users (up 30% in two years) rely on the solution for knowledge management and sharing, brainstorming, managing checklists for releases, completing post mortems, and communicating across locations and time zones. Around 4,000 users (up 45% in two years) also leverage Jira Software, Bitbucket, and Bamboo to handle every stage of the product development lifecycle, from roadmapping and sprint planning, to testing, deployment, and maintenance and portfolio management.

Automating the creation of new spaces and projects while reducing the number of configurations has helped employees and the business. "Before, people had to wait two or three days to create a project. Now it's instant, and over 80% of Jira projects are on a consistent and recommended configuration," Sharon explains. "That saves our team 15 minutes of repetitive work for each setup and has allowed us to really reduce the noise and prepare the tools to move forward [to the cloud]." Long-term, those 15-minute increments add up to over 100 hours saved in less than a year.

IAG also unlocked better roll-up reporting through Data Center, which has helped them better understand what tools people are using and how. "Reporting was big for seeing how we could rightsize our licensing and decommission a heap of tools that were duplicative or weren't being used," Sharon says. Now we're more proactive, we're not constantly reacting, and people want to use the tools because they're more stable."

With a suite of Data Center solutions at their fingertips, employees are working faster and delivering even more value, especially as they grow in size and locations. Looking ahead, the team feels more confident than ever about their ability to keep up with the pace of change as they transform their business and industry.

## "It just works": forging ahead with a simple, standardized, scalable system

As the Engineering team reflects on their progress, there's no doubt in their minds that upgrading to Atlassian Data Center has helped them make a significant step toward digital transformation and create a stronger, more resilient IAG.

In addition to accomplishing their initial goals of increasing efficiency, standardization, and scalability while maintaining control, Sharon and Michael appreciate how the move to Data Center has provided peace of mind and shown the added value their team can provide. "With Data Center, we can do zero-downtime upgrades, and they're all automated. Things like reindexing used to take almost 12 hours and had to be done within business hours," Sharon says. Michael adds, "It just works. I don't even stick around to watch people make changes!"

Saving time and increasing user confidence has also shifted the relationship between Engineering and the business. "The biggest change has been shifting from apologizing for poor performance and availability to having time to add value to our users and focus on the future path to Atlassian Cloud," Sharon says. Michael agrees: "Instead of being stuck in the toil of regular work, we're helping answer user questions. It's less about, 'Can you do a thing for me?' and more about, 'How can I do a thing?'"

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> Technical Lead

These improved efficiencies and relationships are laying the groundwork for the next steps in IAG's digital journey. To prepare for their migration to Atlassian Cloud products, the team has archived 27% more Jira Software projects and 6% more Confluence spaces. Freeing up time and resources with Data Center has also enabled the team to confidently shift their focus to optimizing other existing tools (like Bitbucket and Bamboo) and implementing new tools (such as Proforma).

Through every step in their transformation, Sharon says IAG's culture and collaboration with Atlassian have been the key to their positive progress. "We work closely as a team (including with Atlassian), support and trust each other, have the courage to call out issues early, and manage to have fun along the way! Applying Agile methodologies and prioritizing our work together to collectively understand the journey was a huge contributor to the team's success in moving to Data Center."

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**Reach out** to an enterprise advocate for more information on Atlassian Data Center.

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