

Simplifying Processes and Lives

Background

One corporate family of leading brands provides products and services for offices and homes around the globe. Founded in 1944, it has grown to one of the largest office manufacturers in the world. The organization got there, in no small part, thanks to their “dedication to integrity, quality, innovation, service, continuous improvement and value creation for customers.” It is those same values that lead the IT organization to make a shift from manual and traditional delivery processes, to innovative, automated, and forward-thinking processes.

Manually Validating what was just Executed

The IT organization had been using manual and scripted processes to manage their software delivery, and were facing challenges with errors, visibility, and reporting.

Manual processes, by their nature, are error prone. The team has been manually writing shell scripts to deploy code, customizations, and configurations. Those scripts had to be touched by multiple people, who each had to follow specific steps for execution. If a script was run on the wrong server, run with the wrong permissions, or even run at the wrong time, it would cause an error that may lead to not only that execution failing, but subsequent, dependent deployments as well.

Running manual processes also meant the team had limited visibility into what artifacts were where across the lifecycle, or what deployments had been executed to which environments. Additionally, there was no visibility into errors that occurred post-deployment. Understanding what artifacts were where, and what deployments had been done to which environments was a challenge.

Finally, the team had a manual process where each time there was a deployment to production, a report was run and saved off to be used at periodic review and for audit reporting. The team’s Applications Manager explained “we were having to generate specific log files to go back and validate what we did five minutes ago.”

Not only were these processes time consuming and frustrating for the team, but there were negative impacts for the business. Outages in production, and inability to deliver at the speed of business, and an inability to give an accurate picture of execution timelines were just a few challenges. As the Applications Manager put it “each time we saw a release, or an event was bigger than a few objects, we exponentially grew in our risk to be able to do that successfully and do it in a timely fashion.”

Key Facts

Industry: Manufacturing

Employees: 9,500

Environment

- Oracle Cloud Infrastructure
- Oracle Integration Cloud
- Oracle EBS 12.2.4
- Oracle SOA Suite 12c
- OSB 12.2
- Enterprise Data Warehouse
- Oracle Business Intelligence
- Informatica
- Microsoft BizTalk

Benefits

- Reduced deployment time 60x
- Cut off-hours support two hours a night
- Increased visibility into delivery lifecycle improved ability to report on deployment timelines
- Cut time from request to delivery significantly

Challenges before FlexDeploy

- Migration processes were manual, error-prone, and lacked visibility
- Scripts had to be created, maintained, and executed, requiring multiple individuals to follow specific and detailed processes
- Lack of visibility into what deployments had been done to which environments
- Inability to give a clear or accurate picture of execution timeline
- Team was pulling manual reports to validate what they had just done

Life after FlexDeploy

- Reduced deployment time 60x
- Cut off-hours support two hours a night
- Increased visibility into delivery lifecycle improved ability to report on deployment timelines
- Cut time from request to delivery significantly

The Solution: FlexDeploy

The team initially found Flexagon at an Oracle conference, which spurred them to investigate the Continuous Delivery and Release Orchestration space. After reviewing the market, they chose FlexDeploy based on three main factors.

1. The team liked that FlexDeploy is a “whole solution.” That is, FlexDeploy includes both Continuous Integration and Continuous Delivery features. The team did not want to have to implement multiple tools (e.g. Jenkins as CI and Octopus Deploy as CD) and run them in tandem.
2. FlexDeploy included out-of-the-box connectivity and functions for all their key systems. Rather than write scripts to perform a process, and utilize a tool to run it, the team can create and execute an automated workflow in FlexDeploy using pre-built plugins.
3. Pipeline and release features allow the team an orchestration component that they could not find in other tools. Defining a release and being able to execute it across a reusable pipeline, with visibility throughout, gave the team control they did not previously have.

Automation and Pipelines bring Significant Improvements

The team spent the beginning 2019 getting the pieces in place and went live with their implementation in April 2019. On day one they were able to go live with support for Oracle EBS running on OCI, Oracle SOA Suite, and Enterprise Data Warehouse. The Apps Manager recalls that the first weekend following the go-live “I was deploying to our production environment from FlexDeploy for all of those major systems.” They have since added support for Oracle Integration Cloud, Informatica, Oracle BI, and Microsoft BizTalk. The benefits were seen immediately:

- Reduced deployment time 60X via a reduction in manual steps (automation) and pipelines that incorporated scheduling and dependency execution.
- Cut off-hours support two hours a night
- Able to accurately report on deployment timelines
- Time from a request being raised to deployment was significantly improved; when an approval gate is met the deployment is automatically in queue to run in the next deployment window

The team had struggled with early mornings, outages, user errors, tracking and visibility, and extensive manual processes. FlexDeploy offered them a total solution, thus simplifying their processes and their lives. What one person previously completed in a day, can now be finished in 15 minutes. Plus, there are fewer errors, more visibility, and immediate feedback. Amazed with the simplicity and the elimination of long-lived struggles, the Apps Manager recalled thinking, “*You’ve got to be kidding me.*”

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

