

Bringing agility to higher education



INDUSTRY

Higher Education

LOCATION

Tempe, Arizona

NUMBER OF USERS

1,800

PRODUCTS

Jira Software

Confluence

Trello

Bitbucket

MARKETPLACE APPS

[Tempo](#)

[Team Calendars
for Confluence](#)

[Forms for Confluence](#)

[Scriptrunner for Jira](#)

[Zephyr for Jira](#)

How the IT Department at Arizona State University is using agile practices and data to impact the future of higher education.

Universities cultivate two invaluable products: people and ideas. Alumni can go on to make significant contributions to the workforce, while the ideas developed through academic inquiry help shape the way we relate to and engage with the world around us. Higher education institutions, particularly large ones, tend to have trouble evolving as quickly as the ideas and people developed within them. For this reason, it's become critical for universities to reimagine their work processes, both for their own success and for the communities that depend on the intellectual capital they produce.

ASU is one of the largest universities in the United States, and has been named #1 in innovation for the past four years. As an institution, ASU has made it a priority to foster an accessible, flexible online and in-person learning experience for students from all walks of life through their Universal Learning initiative, which offers resources that aid a diverse pool of conventional and non-traditional learners. Through their cross-discipline approach with a focus on creating the future of Smart Cities, ASU is also pursuing educational strategies that will integrate data-driven decision making and city planning, and provide more opportunities for students to turn innovative community solutions into technical realities.

In order to scale their ambition to make education more accessible and modernize the University's workflow capacities, ASU hired a Chief Information Officer to increase the institution's capacity for serving students and nurturing ideas, and lead an agile transformation across the University.

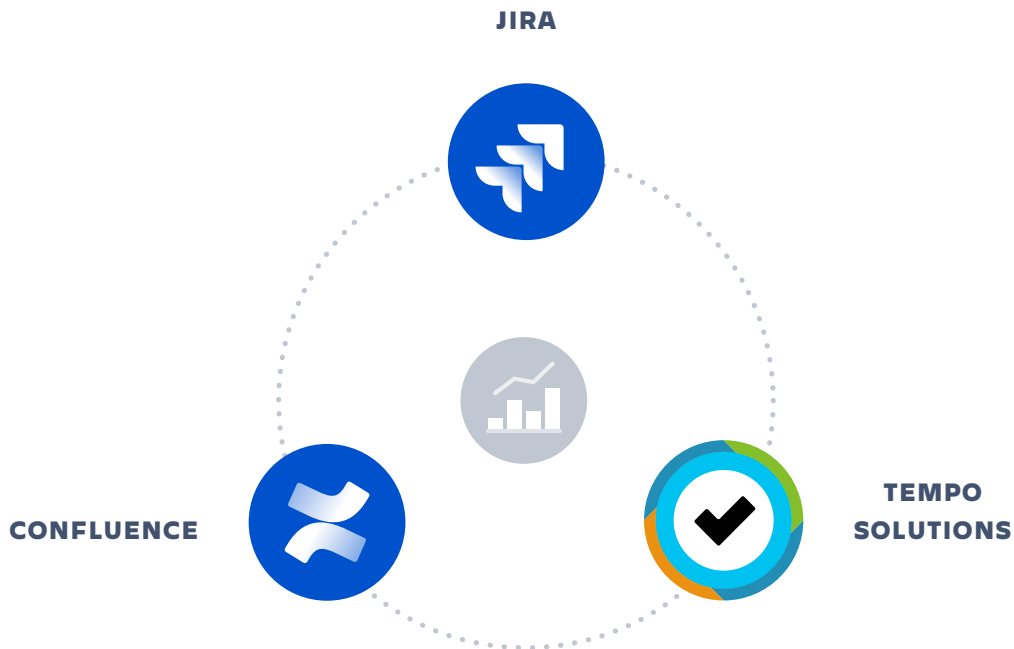
TOOLS FOR THE FUTURE OF IT

The IT department (known as the University Technology Office, or UTO) in particular was ready to help lead this change because a technical foundation through the Atlassian suite was already in place to support agile practices. As ASU prioritized issues of education and access at a strategic level, the University Technology Office ran into cost and usability issues with its original project management tool. The cost of adding new users and the siloed nature of the tool threatened to undermine the IT department's effectiveness..

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ASU

Nathanael Davis, Director of Business Support and Quality Assurance in the UTO, along with his team, led an in-depth evaluation process, where multiple teams tested a variety of workflow solutions. This process resulted in the adoption of Jira Software Cloud, used for project management, network administration, customer support, marketing projects, bug tracking, and reporting; Confluence Cloud, used for project planning and collaboration, support and instructional documentation, and project status updates; and Tempo, one of the leading apps in Atlassian Marketplace. ASU worked directly with Tempo on a solution that visualizes big-picture project impact, tracks time spent on specific projects, and bill customers. “We're proud to be part of the success of ASU's change process,” says Philippe-Olivier Marchand, ASU's Customer Success Manager at Tempo. The Atlassian suite and Tempo have created a modern workflow that can scale with the University and better support its strategic initiatives.



The IT department at ASU is now spreading the adoption of their tools and processes to teams across the University. “We’ve developed a complete IT service management model to help with the on-boarding process of new teams and departments that may be unfamiliar with Jira and Tempo,” explains Nathanael. This model starts with an initial consultation and includes training on how to use Atlassian tools. “We work with teams to develop Jira packages that fit their work and process needs. This ‘package’ becomes their template. Whenever they request a new project, we simply just copy the template and assign the project to the requestor.” Nathanael further explains, “occasionally, we get one off requests for Jira and Tempo setup that won’t be utilized again, but the benefit of the Atlassian toolset is that it allows us to support the variety of needs from customers seamlessly and efficiently.” This service and support model has spread throughout the University, and because of that, more teams have wanted to use Jira and Tempo. The teams that have adopted the tools vary from technical (Business Intelligence, Operations, Advanced Networking) to non-technical (the marketing team for Sun Devil Fitness Center), which is possible due to the ease of use and flexibility of the tools.

FROM BUSINESS PARTNER TO BUSINESS LEADER

“With an agile workflow in place, we’re implementing efficiencies within project teams so that the UTO can stay ahead of the innovative pace at which ASU moves,” says Nathanael. By taking advantage of the increased levels of reporting available through Jira and Tempo, the UTO can directly measure how their work supports institutional goals and gain deeper insight into the capacity of their team.

Nathanael plans to use these new insights to create better work-life balance for his team through capacity planning. “By reviewing the data of our plans and efforts within Jira and Tempo, we can assess the efficiency of our process. Therefore, we can ensure that team members can complete the work they planned to do within normal working hours,” he says. As the team’s reporting process matures, they anticipate making significant contributions to organizational decisions using the data they gather.

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Thanks to the forward-thinking leadership of Nathanael and his team, ASU’s IT department has become essential to the University’s future success, helping to reimagine the experience of higher education for all people, everywhere.

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