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Agile at Scale - all you need to know to extend agile methods in your company

What's best for your company:
Jira Align vs Advanced Roadmap vs Agile Hive

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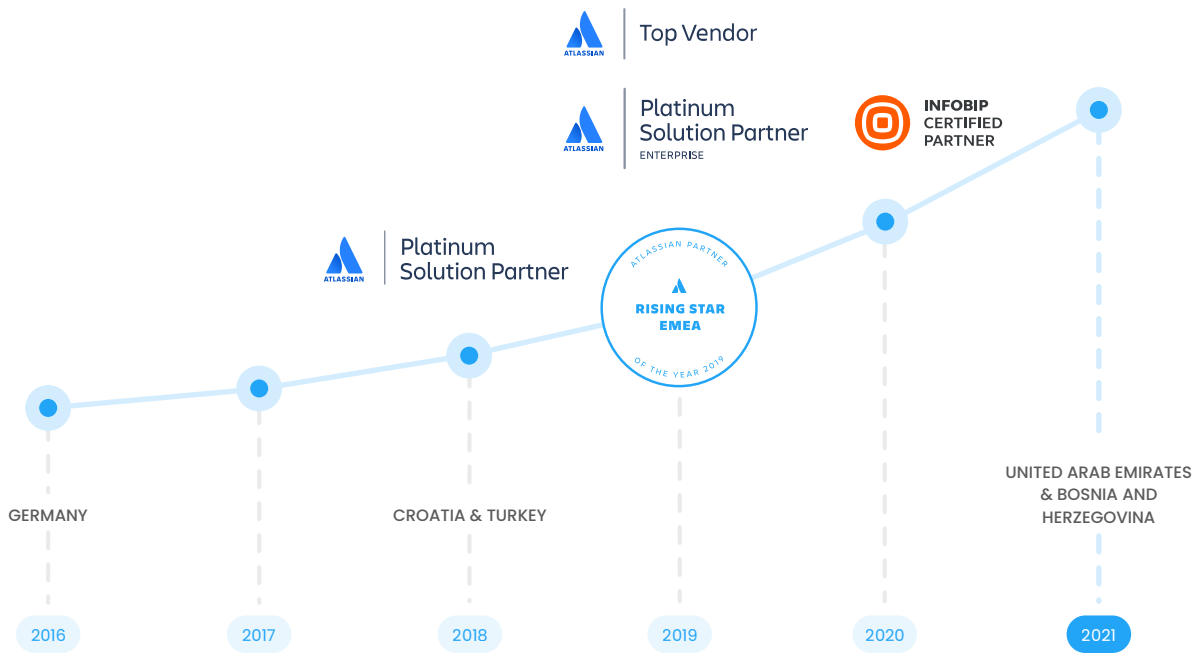
About venITure - "We get IT done"

venITure is an IT consultancy and software development company with its HQ in Germany and offices in Croatia and Turkey, Founded in 2016, venITure became one of Germany's leading Atlassian Platinum & Enterprise Solution Partner's. We provide qualified solutions on the entire Atlassian product portfolio for businesses of all sizes. Through our services that include licensing, consulting, training, implementation and maintenance of Atlassian tools, we are pursuing our business approach to unleash the maximum potential of our customers teams. Based on our experience and knowledge, we develop Atlassian apps in order to extend the Atlassian tools functionalities to better fit our customers needs. Besides the Atlassian portfolio venITure is also an expert in the areas of agile software development and software quality assurance.



The IT solutions offered by venITure ensure better team collaboration and efficient processes across all industries. Regardless of the industry, our solutions play a major role in successful digital business management. Whether software team, service team or business team, with our solutions in the areas of knowledge management, project management, task management and process digitization, we drive the digital transformation of your company. In all our areas of application, the focus is always on efficiency and effectiveness for our customers.

The basics of Agile at Scale

Agile methods and agile tools have been used successfully in software development for some time now. But the idea of Scaling Agile methods and tools across business teams to enterprise-level is new. Many organizations have already implemented this idea and manage their business in an agile way. However, most companies lack a truly efficient and strategic approach to sustainably implement agile principles. Therefore, in the following, we would like to present possible tools for implementing Agile at Scale in your company. Using agile frameworks ensures that all functional silos are broken down and instead there is strong alignment between technical and strategic teams. As agile adoption is constantly increasing, many organizations have established agile principles and are scaling agile methodologies to help them plan, deliver, and track progress across the different teams. Scaling agile is a complex, multidimensional process, It involves changing the skills, mindsets, practices and tools of your teams to improve collaboration in your organisation. However, all these changes will create greater transparency and alignment around work, and help to hard-code the values and principles of agile into the entire DNA of an organization.

Scaling Agile helps you to:

- maintain a high level of innovation in order to succeed in your market
- adapt to constantly evolving customer demands
- provide customizable solutions across all digital touchpoints
- facilitate team collaboration across different timezones and regions
- establish technology as an enabler for other business teams
- enable all teams to become more flexible, creative and innovative in their work

Agile at Scale with Atlassian

Atlassian definition of Agile at Scale:

"The ability to drive agile at the team level, while applying the same sustainable principles, practices, and outcomes at other layers of the organization"

Implementing agile processes is a learning journey - well worth the work! With Atlassian tools, we support you in this journey and guarantee to develop the best solution for you. We recommend Atlassian Tools for your agile transformation because we can confirm, based on our many years of experience, that Atlassian provides a suitable foundation for agile methods. This is also evidenced by the Gartner Magic Quadrant for Enterprise Agile Planning Tools from 2020. The Gartner Magic Quadrant shows that Atlassian is one of the market leaders and also the most visionary.

Figure 1. Magic Quadrant for Enterprise Agile Planning Tools

Source: Gartner (April 2020)

Atlassian tools you want to rely on:

Jira Software

The Jira ticket system is a powerful and flexible task management solution that can be used as the foundation for any Agile workflow. Jira Software alone is not sufficient to implement comprehensive agile practices for large enterprises. However, with the Advanced Roadmaps feature and with the help of external extensions, the first step towards agile transformation can be implemented. The solutions are also particularly suitable for smaller teams. Jira can quickly become the “one source of truth” every organization needs to scale their Agile practices effectively.

Jira Align

Jira Align takes the strong and successful foundation of Jira and multiplies Jira's capabilities and power by bringing together all level of scaled Agile enterprises. Jira Align's various and detailed planning, monitoring, and reporting functions facilitate the work of portfolio managers, program managers, and executives at every level and across all industries. In addition, data on Jira software where teams are working operationally flows into Jira Align in real-time.

Throughout the next pages of this whitepaper, we’ll be highlighting how Jira Software and Jira Align as powerful tools can help you with your agile transformation. With the help of the integrated feature "Advanced Roadmap" portfolio management can be enabled with Jira Software. At this point, the question "why extensions such as Agile Hive or even Jira Align exist to implement Agile at Scale" naturally arises. This is why we are going to take a close look at each solution as Agile Planning Tool and compare the features, benefits and relevant use cases of **Advanced Roadmaps** for Jira Software, **Agile Hive** for Jira Software and **Jira Align**. We also want to clarify why it still makes sense to use Jira Align and why you need it in your company! Even though all solutions are geared to different use cases and thus meet different requirements, they all help you to manage your agile journey faster and more successful.

Due to the large scope and the numerous implementation possibilities of the presented solutions for Agile at Scale, our analysis of the individual solutions will be limited to the general value proposition, the core benefits and our top 10 features.

Agile at Scale with Advanced Roadmap for Jira Software

Formerly known as Portfolio, Advanced Roadmap is an extension that is included in Data Center and Cloud Premium. It extends Jira with a roadmap. Advanced Roadmaps for Jira Software allows you to plan and track work across multiple teams and projects. Also, it is designed to empower teams at scale and thus helps you to plan based on capacity, track dependencies, manage competing priorities, and explore alternative scenarios.

Our Top 10 features:

- Easy and straight forward visualisation in a Gantt tool manner
- Easy and flexible definition of scope for planning
- Committing of Changes: This allows you to prepare planning scenarios before updating your original data in Jira Software.
- In one click you can establish your plan's critical path, explore different variations, and update your Jira Software interface.
- You can manage dependencies between Jira Issues
- Create a custom hierarchy within Jira: This allows you to create higher planning levels e.g. Initiatives
- Capacity Planning of Teams, Sprints and Versions
- Plan and Track Jira Version Releases via Auto-Scheduling feature
- Create multiple scenarios e.g. worst case and best case
- Save views to get quick access to your important planning information

Advanced Roadmap is for bottom-up, team-driven, agile scaling organisations. It should not be used for more than 20 Teams. Based on our analysis, Advanced Roadmap is a suitable tool to take the first step on your agile journey, but not sufficient to fully implement agile frameworks such as SAFe®.

Core Benefits

Our analysis has revealed three core advantages that we would like to point out. The biggest advantage for you as a user is that Advanced Roadmaps is already included as a free feature within Jira software in Data Center and Cloud Premium. This feature provides a comprehensive high-level overview of how projects are progressing and shows their resources as well as their specific project management. The individual views can be customized to meet your specific needs.

Agile at Scale with Agile Hive as an extension of Jira Software

Agile Hive is an external extension for Jira software that can be installed through the Atlassian marketplace. It extends Jira with tools for implementing and running the scaled agile framework SAFe®. This extension is currently only available for Data Center. Agile Hive provides automated reports for all SAFe® levels and supports PI Planning through Program and Breakout Boards. You can also create new teams, ARTs, solutions or portfolios in just a few seconds. Configuration and boards are created out-of-the-box. A dynamic navigation menu can also be created based on individual company levels. Also, calculated fields can be created for WSJF and accurate SAFe® artefact hierarchies & transparency are ensured for each issue.

Our Top 10 features:

- Jira Projekt Templates for all SAFe®-Hierachies
- Important automatic SAFe® Reports are included
- Automatic calculation of due dates visualisation of dependencies between Teams, Programs and Tasks
- Capacity planning for Sprints
- Add a Program Board and Breakout Board for PI Planning
- Presents the Context for each Task
- Create, Plan and Track PI Increments within Jira
- Integration with Confluence
- WSJF rating support

Core Benefits:

Also, the analysis of Agile Hive as an extension to Jira Software has shown that the implementation of this solution offers several advantages. The most important benefit is that implementing Agile Hive enables the implementation of SAFe with Jira Software. Thus, the extension ensures agile structures across different teams and enables even large companies to scale agile. In addition, all data can be collected and managed in one platform. By linking Jira and Confluence, information can also be created and managed jointly. Linking the two tools and extending Jira with Agile Hive enables maximum transparency across your organisation. Of course, this solution can also be customized to meet your individual requirements.

Agile at Scale with Jira Align

Jira Align is an enterprise-ready solution that enables management to link current developments to business outcomes without disrupting the work of agile teams. With built-in features, Jira Algin helps increase the efficiency of your transformations. It offers built-in features that facilitate scaling, such as lightweight, customisable governance or the "WHY" button. It also helps break down the barriers between portfolio management, product management and engineering. This allows all areas of the organisation to work together more agilely and thus more efficiently. Additionally, Jira Align supports all scaling agile methodologies like SAFe® or LeSS. This makes it easier to align all your teams with agile development practices. Finally, it enables organisations to scale more efficiently, just as Jira Software enabled organisations to make a more seamless transition to Agile/Scrum.

As a top-down, executive-driven, agile tool, Jira Align is best suited for large teams or even an entire organization. Consider using Jira Align if you want to solve the complexity of a large scale agile approach. If you want to be able to link business goals across the organization with a unified view of each portfolio, product or project, Jira Align is an essential tool. If you already have multiple instances of Jira Software, Azure DevOps or other planning tools, then there is also no comparable alternative to Jira Align!

Our Top 10 features:

All features listed for Advanced Roadmaps and Agile Hive are supported by Jira Align as well. Jira Align offers all necessary functions to align and scale your Business. It creates transparency from the company vision and strategy down to every task executed by the team. Besides, the tool offers all required functions such as the dependency map between portfolios, teams and tasks, resource planning, budgeting, and reports.

- Makes all work visible and transparent. Why button explains why a Task is important right now.
- Fulfil the Lean Portfolio Management Requirement through Budget possibilities Plan, Track and Monitor budgets on each level
- Create a dashboard for each hierarchy level of the company
- Idea Portal to allow the whole company to submit features
- Capacity planning and reporting
- Realtime cost tracking over all elements and hierarchies of the company
- Depencymap to display dependency on different levels between tasks and teams
- Extensive Dependency tracking with Approvals of Dependency
- Value Tracking: Measure results in real-time

Core Benefits:

Unlike the previously presented solutions, Jira Align is a dedicated business tool for Scaled Agile. Due to this fact, it is not limited to a Scaled Framework like SAFe®, but it is an important tool to scale Agile in any way. Our analysis clearly showed that no other solution offers so many and at the same time different features, covering all requirements of all enterprise levels. An extensive permissions scheme allows you to use the tool across the entire organization. Thus, Jira Align enables agile practices to be implemented in all teams - not only in IT, but also in Portfolio Management, Product Management, HR, etc.

Jira Align is also designed to handle Big Data that can be imported from various sources such as: Jira, Trello and Azure Dev Ops. This allows you to centralize all your data in one platform.

To highlight the differences of each solution again, you will find a comprehensive comparison of Advanced Roadmaps, Agile Hive and Jira Align on the next two pages. Here we differentiate between a general comparison and a comparison in terms of the agile features offered.

General Comparison of all tools

Jira Align	
Loading limits	Unlimited
Methodologies supported	Scrum, Kanban, Scaled Agile Framework® (SAFe®), Lean Startup, Spotify, LeSS, Value Engineering, Scrum @ Scale, hybrid or custom frameworks
Who can benefit?	Organizations utilizing a scaled Agile framework such as SAFe®, DAD, Scrum@Scale, LeSS, Spotify, etc Executives aligning strategic goals and objectives through to the team level
Permissions	Role-based permissions. Users can be assigned to roles on teams. Each role has distinct levels of access that can be configured.
Size of Organization	Starting from 1k employees
Number of teams	20+ teams Product or Portfolio Team Cross-organization
Data Sources	Multiple Data Sources: Jira, Trello, Azure Dev Ops
Deployment	Cloud and Private-Cloud
Role-based (Features)	Executives, Portfolio Manager, Program Manager, Product Manager, Release Train Engineer (RTE), Finance, Transformation Teams, Delivery Teams
Level of Reporting	200+ Reports
Types of Reports	Dependency, Financial, Capacity, Roadmap, Scope, Release Schedules, Team Level Reports, Sprint Report, Program Reports, and many more
Visibility of Dependencies	Yes – Cross-program, Cross-project, Cross-portfolio, Cross-team Different types of dependency maps
Investment Tracking	Yes
Agile Methodologies Supported	Scaled Agile Framework (SAFeTM), Lean Startup, Spotify, LeSS, Value Engineering, Scrum@Scale, Custom/Hybrid
Out of the box features to support Agile	Program Board, PI Progress Reports, Agile Assessment, Sprint Metrics, Backlog Management across Program/Projects, and more

Advanced Roadmaps
(formerly Portfolio)

Loading limits	Loading limits prevent plans from becoming too large and hindering performance
Methodologies supported	Scrum, Kanban, custom
Who can benefit?	Organizations utilizing Scrum, Kanban, custom methods
Permissions	Set unique user permissions to manage access and ability to make changes to Portfolio plans.
Size of Organization	works best for collections of up to 20 agile teams working together (about 50-150 people at a time)
Number of teams	4-20 1 Line of Business
Data Sources	Only one Jira instance
Deployment	Cloud, Server or Data Center
Role-based (Features)	Executives, Portfolio Manager, Program Manager, Product Manager, Release Train Engineer (RTE), Finance, Transformation Teams, Delivery Teams Cross-project management – not customized to each role
Level of Reporting	Limited reporting – Minimal customization – No dashboards
Types of Reports	Scope, Capacity, Releases, Sprint and Dependency
Visibility of Dependencies	Yes – Cross-project
Investment Tracking	No (need third party plugin)
Agile Methodologies Supported	Scaled Agile Framework (SAFeTM), Scrum, Kanban, Waterfall, Custom/Hybrid
Out of the box features to support Agile	Backlog Management across Projects

AGILE HIVE

Loading limits	No known limits
Methodologies supported	SAFe®
Who can benefit?	Organizations utilizing a scaled Agile framework such as SAFe®, Scrum@Scale, LeSS Program managers tracking roadmaps, risks, and dependencies at a feature level
Permissions	Jira based Permissions
Size of Organization	Size not determining factor but at least 1+ Release Train(s). At least scaling (several dozen teams)
Number of teams	1+ Release Trains (5-10 teams)
Data sources	Only one Jira instance
Deployment	Server or Data Center
Role-based (Features)	Epic Owner, Portfolio Manager, Solution Architect/Engineer, Program Management Team, Product Manager, Release Train Engineer (RTE), Product Owner, Scrum Master, Team Member
Level of Reporting	Customizable, including dashboards
Types of Reports	Capacity, Roadmap, Release Schedules, Team Level Reports, Sprint Report, Program Reports
Visibility of Dependencies	Yes – Option to get Cross-program, Cross-project, Cross-portfolio, Cross-team
Investment Tracking	No (but customizable upon request)
Agile Methodologies Supported	Scaled Agile Framework (SAFeTM), Scrum, Kanban, Waterfall, Custom/Hybrid
Out of the box features to support Agile	Program Board, PI Progress Reports, Agile Assessment, Sprint Metrics, Backlog Management across Program/Projects, and more

Comparison of all solutions in terms of the scaled agile features offered:

Legend definition:

- ✓ capable
- ○ limited
- ✗ not possibile

	Jira Align	Advanced Roadmaps (formerly Portfolio)	AGILE HIVE
STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT			
Surface strategic objectives to teams	✓	✗	✗
Map work to business strategy	✓	○	✓
Map delivery team schedule to business schedule	✓	✗	✗
Use a common naming convention	✓	✗	✓
Associate financials to work	✓	✗	○
Create, manage and map work to OKRs	✓	✗	○
PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT			
Portfolio management support	✓	○	○
Lean principles support	✓	✗	○
Strategic success metrics (i.e. OKRs, KPIs)	✓	✗	○
Pivot-or-persevere guidance	✓	✗	✗

Comparison of all solutions in terms of the scaled agile features offered:

	Jira Align	Advanced Roadmaps (formerly Portfolio)	AGILE HIVE
FINANCE MANAGEMENT			
Lean budgeting & dynamic investing	✓	✗	✗
Investment vs Actuals	✓	✗	✗
Measuring growing revenue, reducing costs, proving ROI		✗	✗
DEPENDENCY MANAGEMENT			
Between individuals	✓	✗	✗
Between teams	✓	○	○
Between teams of teams	✓	○	✗
VISUALIZE WORK			
Individual level		✓	✓
Team level	✓	✓	✓
Team of Teams (program level)	✓	✓	○
Network of Teams (portfolio level)	✓	✗	○

Comparison of all solutions in terms of the scaled agile features offered:

	Jira Align	Advanced Roadmaps (formerly Portfolio)	AGILE HIVE
PLAN WORK			
Roadmapping	✓	✓	○
Plan future work/set dates	✓	✓	○
Keep plans up-to-date	✓	✓	○
Demonstrate the impact of change	✓	✓	✗
Team management	✓	✓	○
Capacity planning	✓	○	○
Break work into quarterly events	✓	○	○
PROGRESS TRACKING			
SAFe® Checklists	✓	✗	✗
Individual work item	✓	✓	✓
Flexible hierarchy	✓	✓	✓
Release management	✓	✓	✓
Work on schedule	✓	✓	✓
Managing risks	✓	○	○
Progress metrics		○	○

Comparison of all solutions in terms of the scaled agile features offered:

	Jira Align	Advanced Roadmaps (formerly Portfolio)	AGILE HIVE
REPORTING			
Sharing	✓	○	○
API	✓	○	○
Configuring dashboards	✓	✗	✓
Business intelligence/ analytics	✓	✗	✗
Data export	✓	○	✓
3rd-party integrations	✓	✓	✓

Which product is suitable for your company?

Use Cases for Advanced Roadmap:

- Your Company is struggling to align multiple teams in Jira across multiple projects.
- Your Company is starting to lose the benefits that come with agile.
- Your Company wants to understand and unblock challenges on their projects.
- Your Company has a single instance of Jira.
- Your Company has less than 20 Teams and Products
- Your Company plans to introduce a Scaled Agile framework earliest in a few years

Use Cases for Agile Hive:

- Your Company is struggling to align multiple teams in Jira across multiple projects.
- Your Company is starting to lose the benefits that come with agile.
- Your Company wants to understand and unblock challenges on their projects.
- Your Company has a single instance of Jira.
- Your Company plans to introduce a SAFe® or using SAFe® and need the basics of SAFe® within Jira
- Your Company wants to use Jira only for a small area of the company or the company is smaller than 1000 People

Use Cases for Jira Align:

- Your Company wants to solve the “whole of organization” complexity challenges of an agile approach at scale.
- Your Company wants to be able to link business goals to a unified view of every portfolio or project across the organization.
- Your Company is implementing SAFe® or other Scaled Agile Frameworks
- Your Company want to create visibility and Alignment at the entire enterprise scale
- Your Company has multiple Jira, Trello and Azure Dev Ops instances
- Your Company wants to practice lean portfolio management
- Your Company bigger than 1000 People

In summary, the analysis of the individual solutions for scaling Agile and the detailed comparison of each solution showed that Jira Align is the best way to implement Agile transformation across your company. However, implementing Jira Align requires deep expertise and management resources. To take a first step towards agile, we recommend using Advanced Roadmap. Agile Hive is suitable for initial scaling approaches. For agile scaling on a large scale, however, there is no way around Jira Align. We are happy to help you with the implementation of all solutions. We look forward to driving your agile transformation together!

You want to start the agile transformation of your company?

Let's talk!

www.veniture.net

info@venITure.net

instagram.com/veniture/

facebook.com/veniture/

twitter.com/veniture

linkedin.com/company/veniture