PRO GUIDE

TO MANAGING MULTIPLE PROJECTS

HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY JUGGLE MULTIPLE PROJECTS USING JIRA.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

So, you're the one in charge of juggling multiple projects. Pulling this off successfully can ensure the delivery of high-quality products and services; a flourishing business in the long run; and of course, adoration for your capabilities!

The fact is that many project managers (PMs) like yourself are increasingly responsible for managing multiple projects. The 2014 State of the PMO study found that PMs from high-performing companies handle up to 8 projects. The reasons for this are aplenty, from ongoing business expansion to increased project complexity.

But all this is easier said than done. In fact, that same PMO research found that firms experience poor performance when handling multiple projects due to misaligned business objectives, poorly prioritized projects, and poor optimization of resources.

The key to successfully managing multiple projects is to have a robust project management platform and the right strategies.

That's why we prepared **Pro Guide to Managing Multiple Projects**. In it, you'll:

- Discover the perfect platform (hint: Jira) to handle all your projects
- Understand the fail-proof way of kickstarting multiple projects
- Learn how to get your many projects ready for execution
- Ensure your projects are running like clockwork
- Find out the best way to monitor your many projects

Continue reading and you'll be on the fast-track to mastering the art of managing multiple projects.

PLANNING
MULTIPLE PROJECTS

ONE PLATFORM TO MANAGE ALL PROJECTS

Managing multiple projects isn't for the faint of heart. You'll face many challenges along the way, from deciding which projects to prioritize to distributing resources in the most economical manner.

Nevertheless, successfully managing multiple projects is all about having the right strategies and tools.

In this chapter, we explore the key capabilities of a project management solution that can make your multi-project juggling act that much easier. And how you can go about setting one up.
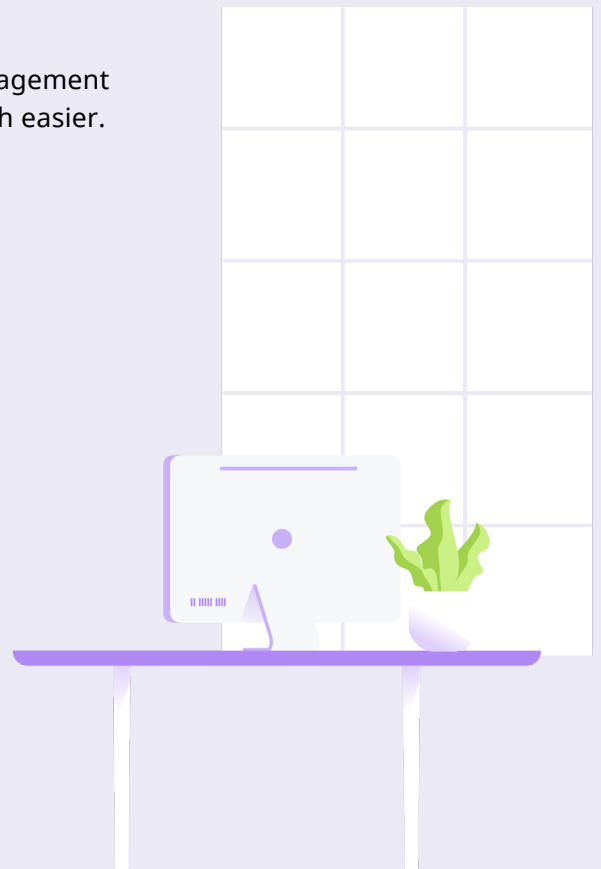
PROJECT-MANAGEMENT PLATFORM REQUIREMENTS

If you're tasked with ensuring the completion of various projects, you need a robust project management platform. One with the following requirements.

Maximizes Efficiency and Minimizes Blockers

When juggling various projects, you can't pick and choose which one gets completed successfully. Ideally all projects—regardless of their urgency, importance, and complexity—should be delivered with high quality. Even if friction points (e.g. change in project scope, overcommitted resources, etc.) appear, they should quickly be highlighted for efficient correction, allowing you to deliver valuable project outputs.

Enterprise-Wide Participation

Multi-project management often means that you're not only in charge of your own functional team. In some cases, you may even need to regulate and govern cross-department activities for countless projects. This calls for an enterprise-wide involvement that should be done with full transparency.

Complete Scalability

Another important capability is scalability. Think of it this way: you're managing various projects now and may be required to manage even more in the future. A scalable solution ensures that there's always capacity to support expansion in terms of resources, end users, etc.

JIRA: THE PLATFORM TO MANAGE MULTIPLE PROJECTS

Jira meets all of these requirements, and more, for projects of all shapes and sizes.

This [award-winning project-management solution](#) from Atlassian empowers companies and PMs from various industries to effectively initiate and complete many projects. From software to marketing projects, Jira can help you manage them all well.

Jira's transparency gives project stakeholders and teams access to important project information. Renowned for its scalability, Jira also enables you to expand its features and functionalities to meet the demands of multiple projects.

But a platform alone isn't enough. As stated earlier, strategies are imperative to help you successfully start and complete many projects simultaneously.

In the following chapters, let's learn how you can align your Jira with the best strategies for managing multiple projects. And see how you can use other Atlassian apps to take it to the next level.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION FROM THE START

Whether you're managing one or many projects, one thing is for certain: communication is vital. Failure to do so effectively can result in frustrated team members, increased budget risks, and stilted project progress.

However, unstructured communication is equally bad too.

Think about it, as you're managing many projects, various teams and departments come together. Without structure, communication overhead is bound to occur. You and your teams may spend more time trying to work than actually working to complete projects.

Continue reading to know how Jira (and its sibling software) can make for effective project communication and collaboration.
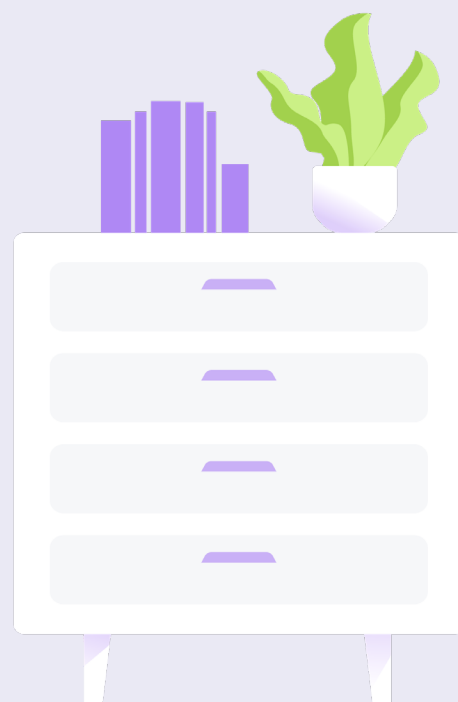
DEFINE THE STATEMENT OF WORK (SOW)

Changing scope and requirements is one of the major culprits for project delays, especially if you're already halfway through. So, wouldn't it be better if you iron out the important details for your various projects first before you kick-start them?

This is where a Statement of Work (SOW) comes into the picture. It's a comprehensive document that captures crucial project requirements like:

- **Goals**
- **Deliverables**
- **Tasks involved to produce deliverables**
- **Timelines**
- **Resources required**
- **Pricing models**

Beyond the information above, be sure to communicate with your stakeholders about the things that aren't covered in the project.

Wondering how to create and document your SoW? Well, you could always leverage Atlassian's other equally powerful offering: Confluence.
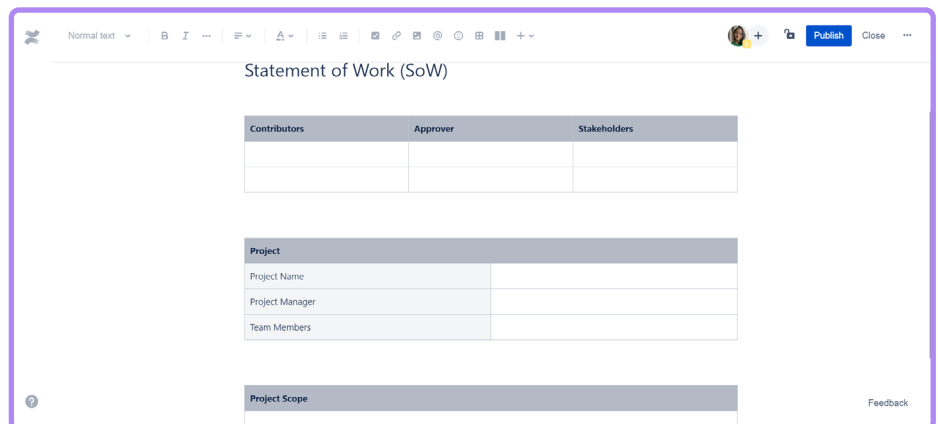
It's an online wiki space that allows you to effectively collaborate on project requirements with your stakeholders. With its dynamic content editor and built-in templates, quickly create your SoWs and share them for approval.

Allocate different Confluence spaces (or pages) for different projects so that no information gets mixed up. Once the plans have been confirmed by project stakeholders, create actionable Jira issues straight from the Confluence documentation.

Integrate your Jira instance with Confluence to document your SoW.

Jira + Confluence

PREPARING FOR SUCCESSFUL EXECUTION

Remember that poor project planning is <u>one of the seven causes of project failure</u>. So, once you've confirmed your project's requirements, don't rush into assigning tasks just yet! Take time to break down the nuts and bolts of your projects.

In this chapter, you'll learn how to realistically plan projects in terms of initiative prioritization, resource allocation, and more using Jira (and a handful of powerful Atlassian apps).

" FAILING TO PLAN IS PLANNING TO FAIL. "

-ALAN LAKEIN

PRIORITIZE HIGH-VALUE INITIATIVES

With tons of projects to manage, which one should you prioritize? Start with the high-value ones first. But if you ever feel like all projects are of high-value, then leverage the Value-Complexity Matrix.

Value here refers to the customer and company benefits that your completed projects bring about. Some examples include increased customer satisfaction, revenue, and so on.

Complexity is another aspect that must be considered for successful project completion. Some examples are expected man-hours, operational costs, technology involved, etc.

This method helps you to perceive the complexity of implementing projects and prioritize the ones that pay the most dividends to your company.

Make use of a Value-Complexity Matrix to prioritize your high-value projects.

VALUE-COMPLEXITY MATRIX

CUSTOMER-COMPANY VALUE		
High-Value, Low-Complexity — Easy Wins **1**	High-Value, High-Complexity — Major Projects **2**
Low-Value, Low-Complexity — Minor Projects Worth Pursuing **3**	Low-Value, High-Complexity — Deprioritize **4**

IMPLEMENTATION COMPLEXITY
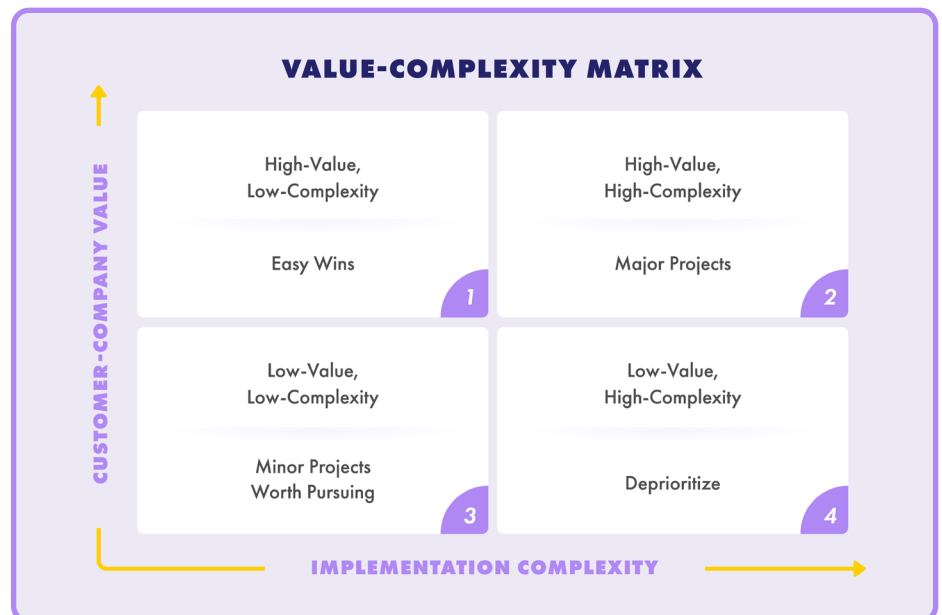
Now, let's look at the examples of projects for each category above and their order of priority:

High-Value, Low-Complexity Projects These are the easy wins that should be prioritized first.	Updating your company's desktop software with improved user login interface.
High-Value, High-Complexity Projects These major projects should be prioritized next unless they're urgent.	Developing the mobile version of desktop software.
Low-Value, Low-Complexity Projects Since they can be implemented rather easily, these projects are worth pursuing if you don't have other higher value projects in the pipeline.	Updating the emoji library for the desktop software.
Low-Value, High-Complexity Projects In short, they're not worth it now. Deprioritize until further notice.	Upgrading the desktop software design.

CREATE COMPREHENSIVE USER STORIES

In some cases (especially in product development), you may manage two or more projects that are closely related to each other. Here, it's best to prioritize the projects chronologically according to the journey that customers take through the product.

Chronological organization of various projects makes more sense in product development.
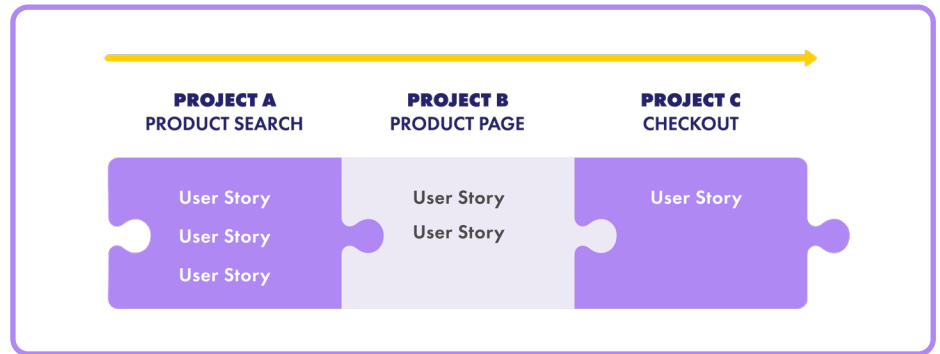
But doing that alone isn't enough.

If you teams don't fully understand the "why" behind their work, they may deliver the wrong thing. So, always provide adequate context in the form of user stories so that they are well-aligned with the overall project goals. Do this by pairing your Jira with Easy Agile User Story Maps for Jira.

The result is a solution that allows you to organize your projects chronologically. Most importantly, you can provide useful details (e.g. estimates, summaries, etc.) to each Jira issue.

Aided by better understanding of the project, your teams can now jump into work right away and complete the stories that provide the most customer value.

The app's in-line editing feature lets you quickly update many projects with important information.

Jira + Easy Agile User Story Maps for Jira
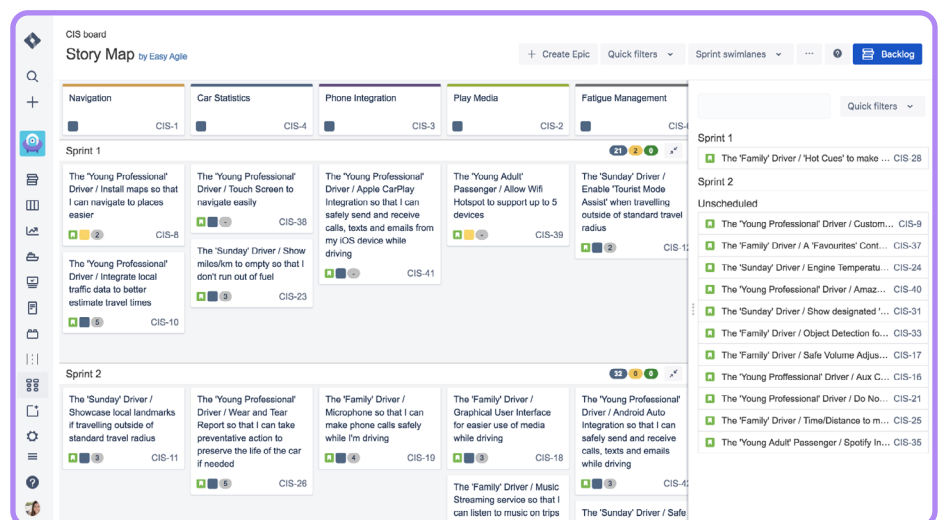
INTEGRATE VARIOUS PROJECT PLANS

So, you've prioritized your projects. What comes next is visualizing the project's resources, deadlines, and activities required on a timeline. But that works if you're only managing one project at a time.

With multiple projects, the key is to integrate various project plans into one timeline to get a big-picture view of your projects. This helps you to avoid scheduling conflicts, synchronize business activities, and optimize the quality of deliverables.

A Gantt chart works wonders here to visualize all your projects on an integrated timeline. To access this capability in Jira, simply supercharge it with Ricksoft's WBS Gantt-Chart for Jira app. Integrated project plans in the app will help ensure that you don't accidentally schedule two resource-intensive projects hitting their milestones at the same time.

Integrate and visualize all your projects (e.g. Smart Health and Sora Bot projects) on a single Gantt chart.

Jira + WBS Gantt-Chart for Jira
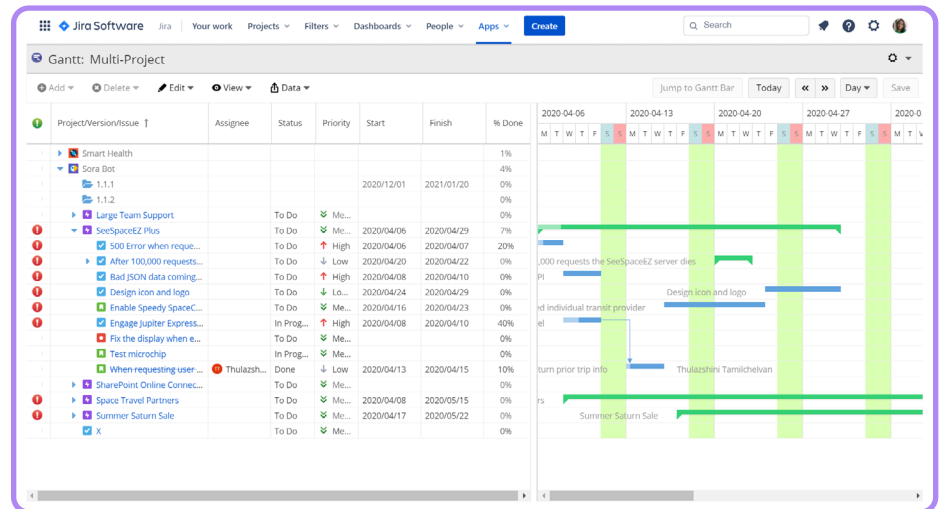
BALANCE RESOURCES LOGICALLY

Successfully managing multiple projects also depends on logical resource allocation.

Whether it's scheduling tasks or delegating work to team members, do them in the most practical manner. Otherwise, you may end up with loss of productivity, employee burnout, and declining project quality.

Your Gantt-based integrated project plan also serves as your command central.

From there, find out projects that may be dependent on one another due to shared resources (e.g. team members). Then, set project schedules and workload distributions according to the needs of various projects.

The app has a smart resource allocation feature that'll notify you if your team's workload is too much. Adjust it until the resource allocation bar is no longer highlighted in red.

Balance resources logically for various projects using WBS Gantt-Chart for Jira.

Jira + WBS Gantt-Chart for Jira
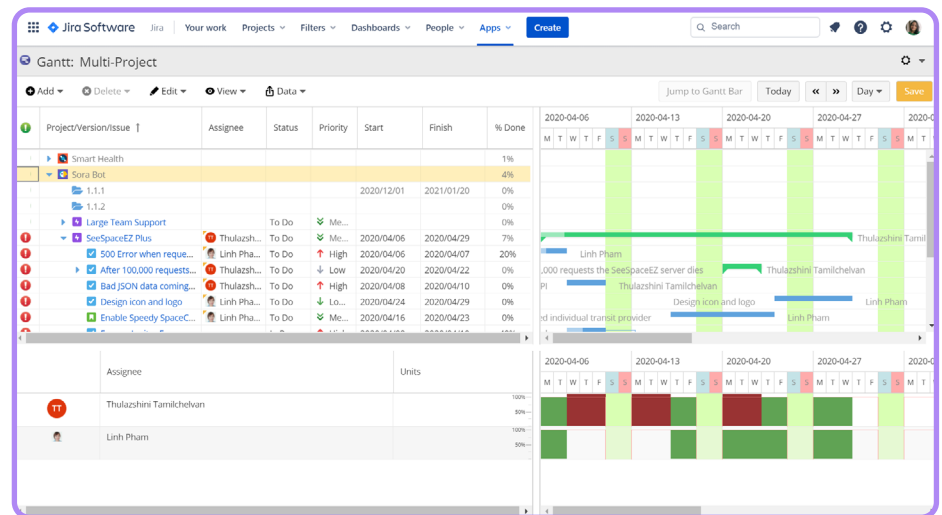
PART 2

EXECUTING AND MONITORING MULTIPLE PROJECTS
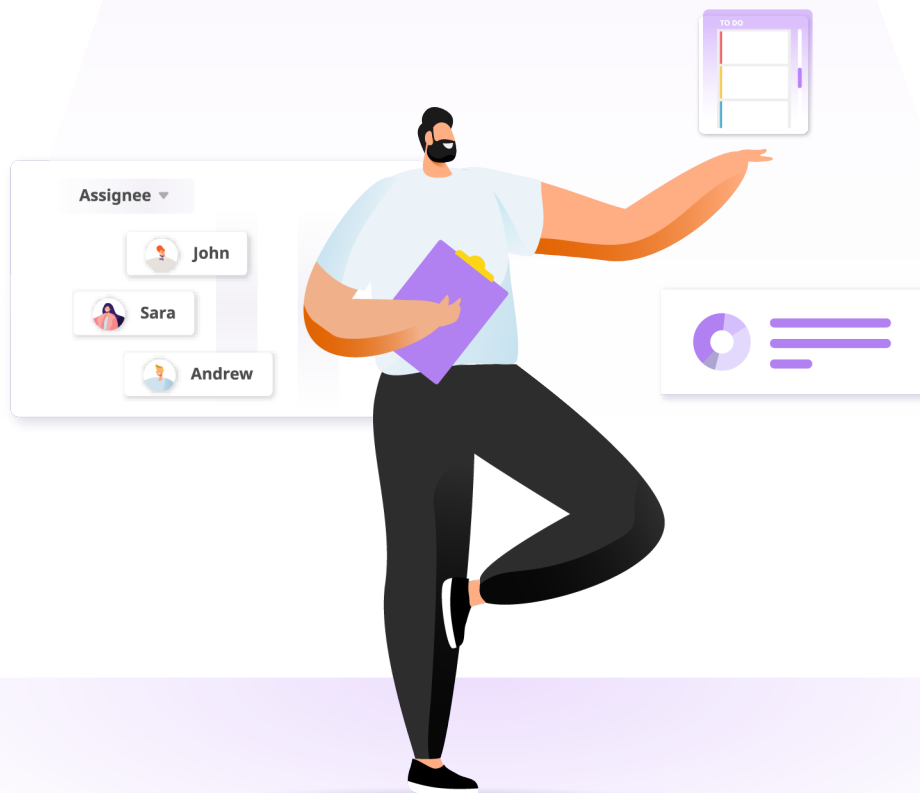
FACILITATING SMOOTH-RUNNING PROJECTS

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3
Plan projects.	Execute projects.	Complete projects.

If only it was as easy as that! The reality of managing multiple projects is very different.

Of course, strategic planning paves the way for effortless execution of projects. But you still need to keep a close eye on project implementation activities like customizing workflows, updating issue data, and reporting. Only then will your teams be able to develop the right deliverables at the right time.

In this chapter, you'll discover the best way to ensure that your projects are running like clockwork in Jira.
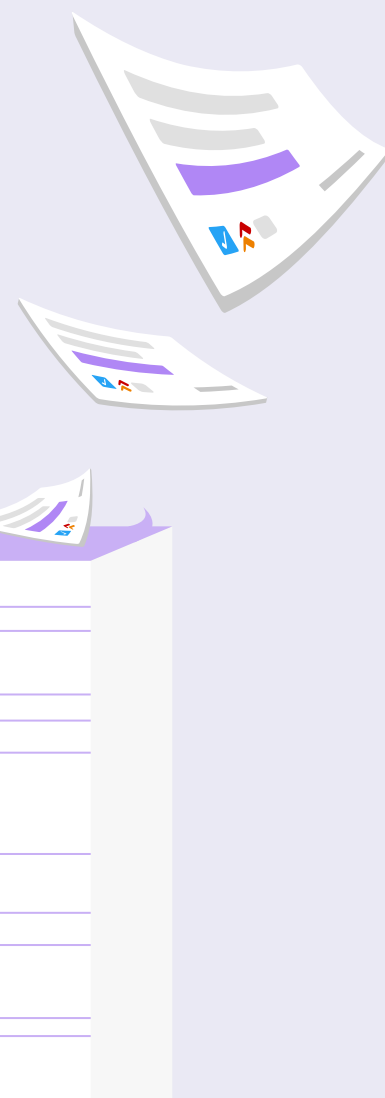
CUSTOMIZE PROJECT WORKFLOWS

An example of a (very) straightforward workflow (source).
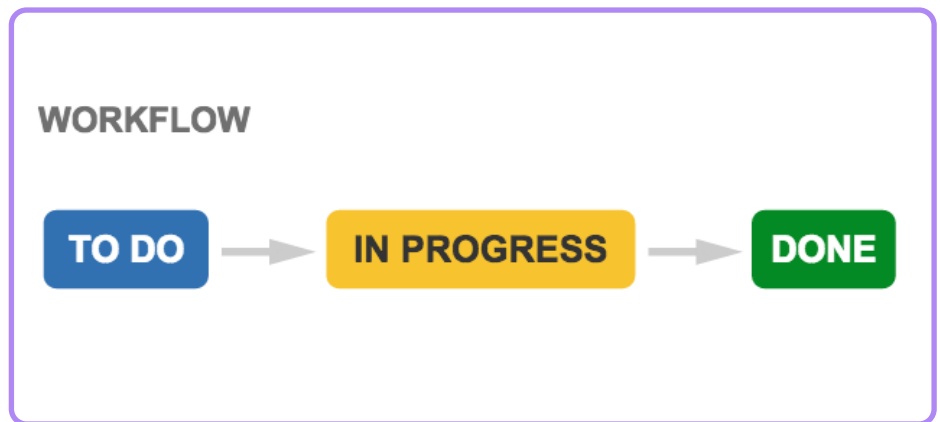
Let's be real. Not many projects have that simple of a workflow. In the real world, projects often have complicated workflows, or even multiple workflows.

So, imagine trying to manage multiple projects (and issues) with their different workflows concurrently? It can be quite daunting. Fortunately, you can customize workflows right within Jira.

With this native feature, you can quickly modify workflows based on how projects (and Jira issues) actually progress within your company. Or take it one step further using workflow automation rules that are made of:

- Triggers: Events that initiate the execution of rules.
- Conditions: Factors that must be met for your rules to continue running.
- Actions: The doers of your rules that can perform many project tasks.

An example of a workflow automation rule (source).
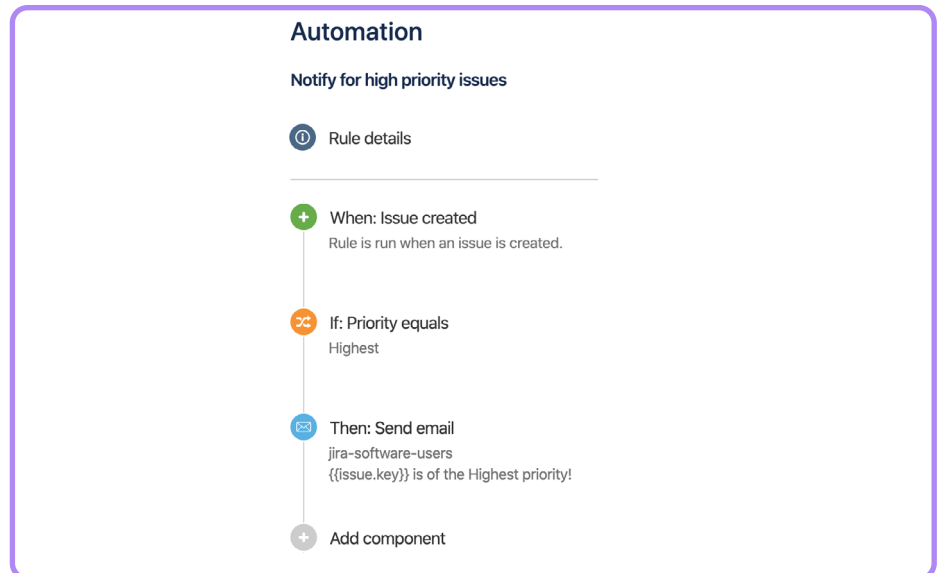
With the process running smoothly, you don't have to spend too much time on manual operations. Instead, you're able to focus on useful business strategies and development.

Additional Read: Jira Automation Basics

UPDATE ISSUE INFORMATION

Updating issues with the latest information is critical to ensure that your projects are running smoothly. Yet, manually updating a lot of issues—one at a time—is painfully inefficient in Jira.

Meanwhile, Jira's bulk change operation can be quite frustrating to use with its additional configuration steps and unforgiving restrictions. You can bypass this using Excel-like Issue Editor for Jira. It's a spreadsheet app that enables you to edit issues from various projects in one go.

All changes will be reflected in Jira in real-time; thus, allowing team members to work on their tasks without a hitch.

Issues from two different projects (e.g. Smart Health and Sora Bot) are aggregated on a single spreadsheet for easy editing.

Jira + Excel-like Issue Editor for Jira

MULTI-PROJECT REPORTING MADE EASY

However mundane it may be, the reporting process ensures that you're managing expectations and making informed decisions. That said, you can't always report on everything to everyone.

The key is to report your projects findings concisely in a way that is understandable to your select audience. While still making sure that everyone is still on the same page.

Continue reading this final chapter to discover an efficient reporting method for multiple projects.
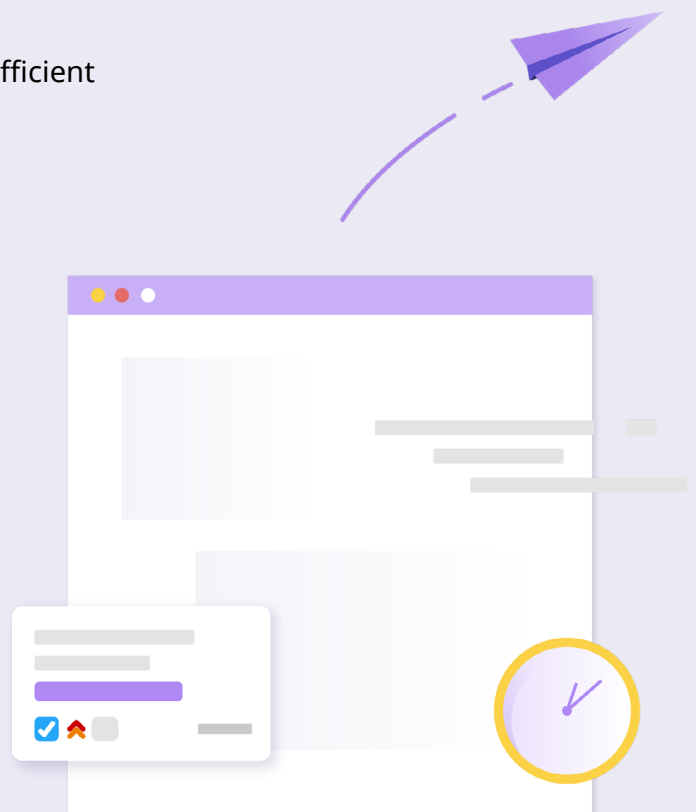
CREATE AGGREGATED REPORTS ACROSS PROJECTS

The thing with Jira is that reports—by default—are specific to a project. While you can add reporting gadgets for different projects in one dashboard, your dashboard may then be populated with redundant data.

A good way to get a reporting overview across your projects is by creating aggregated reports. Accomplish this by taking advantage of Jira's advanced search and filter features.

Using JQL, create a customized filter based on the projects that require active reporting. Then, add that filter gadget to your info-packed Jira dashboard for an instant overview of what matters.

Jira's search and filter function.
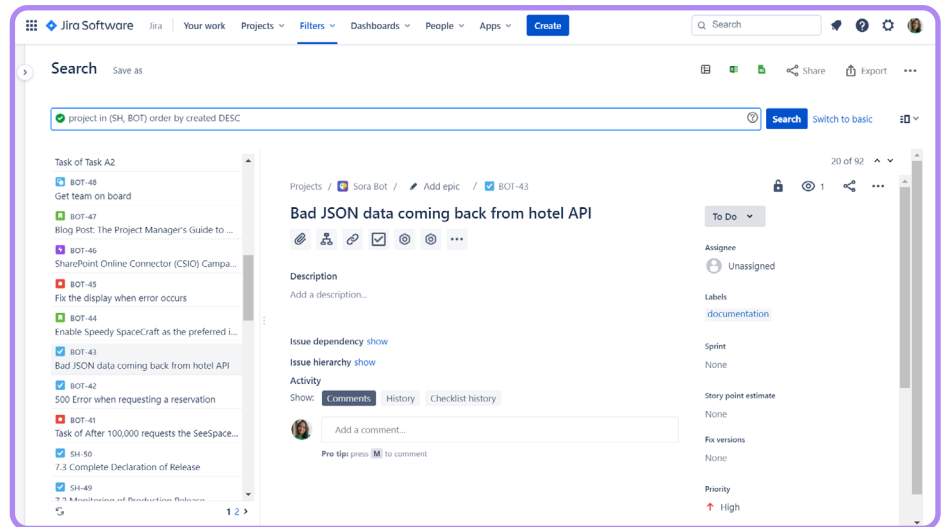
DEVELOP A REPORTING PLAN

So, you have aggregated reports across projects all set up. But you can't possibly communicate the findings to everyone as the information may not be relevant to all parties.

Overcome this through a reporting plan. It's a standardized approach to sharing project progress with your team members and stakeholders.

Make sure that your plan consists of the following elements:

- Reporting goal (e.g. review blockers, present deliverables to clients)
- Reporting medium (e.g. in-person meeting, conference call)
- Reporting frequency (e.g. every Monday morning, during every project kick-off meeting)
- Audience (e.g. teams, stakeholders, sponsors)

The reporting plan will guide you to share the right information at the right time to the right people through the right means. Most importantly, you and your teams can proactively fine-tune the quality of projects and outputs.

FINAL THOUGHTS

A powerful project management software combined with the right strategies can empower you to successfully manage all your projects.

For a robust platform, Jira is your best bet. Whether through the native capabilities or additional app features, Jira can handle the needs of multiple projects.

As for the strategies, always start by confirming the details of your projects with stakeholders first. Then, prioritize them either in terms of business value or project chronological order.

While you're at it, integrate different project plans into one and balance resources across them. All this helps to minimize blockers and maximize the quality of deliverables.

When your projects are a go, make use of Jira workflows and quick issue updates for smooth development. Concise reporting is a must to ensure successful completion of projects.

You're now ready to manage multiple projects like a pro! Check out our blog for more expert insights on successful Jira project management.

RELATED RESOURCES

How to Facilitate Cross-Functional Collaboration Using Jira Gantt Chart

5 Steps to Scale Agile at Ease with Jira Gantt Charts

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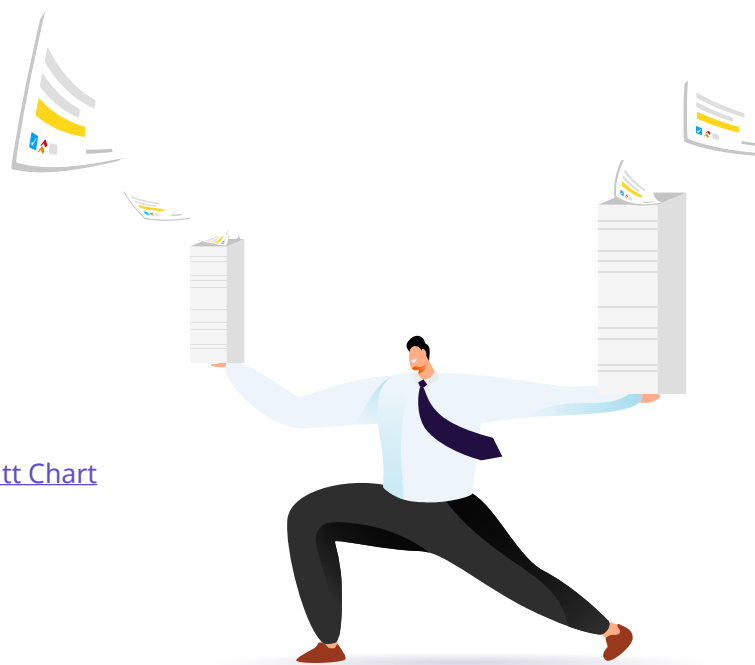
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