Flexagon FlexDeploy - Customer Case Study

Fueling the Growth in Demand for BI

Key Facts

Industry: Food Manufacturing

Employees: 8,000+

Environment

- OBIEE 11.1.1.7
- Informatica 10.1.1
- Oracle Database 12.1.0.2

Benefits

- 10X improvement in deployment speed
- Standardization across environments improved deployment accuracy
- 10% reduction in man hours, which was reallocated to more value-add project work
- Reduction in support and warranty calls because processes “just work”

Background

Via acquisitions, global expansion, and implementations, one global food manufacturer was growing rapidly. With the demand for both operational reporting and analytical reporting increasing, the Business Intelligence team saw their workload balloon. Adding to the pressure was the need to shrink outage windows to support users in many different time zones, and to do more work with the same headcount. To meet the demand, a drastic change was needed.

Challenges: Inconsistent and People Dependent

The company had undergone a strategic DevOps initiative to establish common processes for their delivery lifecycle in 2015. After an RFP that included IBM/Urbancode, CloudBees, and Jenkins, the organization chose FlexDeploy.

In 2017, the Business Intelligence team adopted the Flexagon platform. After reviewing their existing processes, landscape, and tooling, and defining their ideal state, this group identified their top challenges and needs.

First, inconsistent and manual build/deploy processes were error prone, and increased project development duration and cost. It often took the team days to move project code through different development environments.

Also, code movement responsibilities fell on a small group of administrators. This ended up being a bottle neck for project teams as they had to wait for an administrator’s availability to move code and bounce servers.

Once code was moved, additional time was always needed to address objects that were missed or not correct. OBIEE data source names, for example, needed to be changed manually after the repository or web catalog object was moved. This led to even more project development delays.

Custom scripts were built to move database objects through different environments, but they were often not maintained during testing leading to missing changes or incorrect table column definitions. Additional project development time was needed to create and maintain these scripts, and even more time was needed to run these scripts when project teams needed to move to the next environment.

In addition, with so many manual processes needed to move code objects, implementation planning became a spider web of scripts, steps, and resources. This web was challenging to create and execute due to dependencies which required coordination across groups.

These challenges prevented the team from moving at the speed required to keep up with the demands of the business. They needed to remove variation and speed up their deployment and release activities while maintaining and improving quality of work. They also needed to shift key resources to be working on more value-added activities, rather than administrative tasks.

Challenges before FlexDeploy

- → Inconsistent and manual build and deploy processes were slow, error-prone, and regularly lead to system outages
- → People-dependent processes lead to bottlenecks and team frustration
- → Custom built scripts required staff hours to build, test, and maintain

Life after FlexDeploy

- → Manual and scripted activities are replaced with automation, adding consistency, and reducing time spent doing non-development work
- → Increased control and empowerment
- → Release planning is simpler when everyone is working from the same tool

"Flexagon not only has an exceptional product in FlexDeploy, but their ongoing support is second to none. My team is delivering faster and higher quality solutions to meet our rapid business growth!" - BI/DW Manager

After: Automated, Repeatable, Streamlined

The team was able to build off work done in other parts of IT and were quickly up and running with FlexDeploy. With FlexDeploy implemented, the team saw improvements across three broad areas:

- **Faster development:** With FlexDeploy, the team was able to replace manual and scripted tasks with automation. That meant administrators no longer needed to do manual moves and server tasks, and drastically reduced the amount of time spent creating, testing, and maintaining DDL scripts. Adding automated, tested, and repeatable processes also reduced outage time, therefore reducing time required to investigate and fix. Removing those items from the team's workload allowed more time for project work.
- **Increased Control and Empowerment:** FlexDeploy gave the ability directly to the developer to move code when needed, rather than waiting for administrators. The movement of code, changes, and configuration are tracked historically in the tool; who moved what where, when, and who approved it. The team configured FlexDeploy so all moves to production require approvals, ultimately enforcing a framework that supported their software development lifecycle strategy.
- **Improved time to Production:** With FlexDeploy's preview option, the team was able to cut time previously spent validating large DDL Scripts. Instead the team can deploy the DDL changes in preview mode for validation before go-live. They also found that implementation planning for releases became simpler as all builds were centralized in one tool. Therefore code dependencies became easier to manage.

Results

After having FlexDeploy implemented, one BI Administrator said "FlexDeploy's out of the box support for OBIEE, Informatica, and Oracle Database has fully automated our deployment process. Now we focus on what we love to do, providing BI solutions vs. the manual work for administering changes across environments."

With FlexDeploy, the BI team was able to reduce or eliminate manual and scripted processes, resulting in:

- Deployments that previously took 3-5 days to execute now take 1-4 hours, for an average of 10X reduction in deployment time.
- Standardization across environments improved deployment accuracy, shrunk outage windows, and made deployments less person-dependent.
- 10% reduction in man hours, which was reallocated to more value-add project work.

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

FLEXAGON