

JIRA FAQs

GENERAL JIRA INFORMATION

What Is JIRA?

JIRA is an affordable workflow management system developed by Atlassian. In use by 11,000+ customers in 107 countries, JIRA has a large following that includes dozens of notable companies and nonprofit organizations.

JIRA is ideal for organizations and professionals involved with [system](#) and [software development](#). Due to the flexibility in configuring JIRA applications, the JIRA user community has also used JIRA to manage a wide variety of business applications, including customer issue management, change control management, help desk request, work request and task management, and as a tool for managing [system and software deployments](#) (project management).

Who provides and supports JIRA?

Atlassian, a private company based in Australia, developed JIRA in response to a need for a more robust Open Source software defect tracking system. As JIRA developers continued to expand the flexibility of the application, the JIRA community found users for JIRA in other business areas that required a workflow management approach to managing issues and work requests. Today, Atlassian reports that JIRA is in use by over 11,000 customers in 107 countries. The JIRA user and development community includes dozens of notable companies and nonprofit organizations.

Can my organization use JIRA for free?

Atlassian allows JIRA software to be freely used by qualified non-profit and charity organizations through a [JIRA Community license](#). For nonprofit organizations that meet the definition of use via a JIRA Community License, this means JIRA can be accessed by an unlimited number of JIRA users (unlimited number of JIRA user accounts may be setup), with the JIRA application hosted on the nonprofits web application server. To qualify as a nonprofit or charity organization under the terms of a JIRA Community License, the organization must be: 1) non-profit, 2) non-government, 3) non-academic, 4) non-commercial, 5) non-political and 6) secular.

For-profit commercial organizations that require less than 10 users to access JIRA can purchase a special JIRA Starter License for \$10. This commercial licensing scheme is ideal for micro-businesses that want to automate their work/tasks and issue management processes.

All other organizations that do not meet the requirements for a Community, Academic or Open Source license will pay a per-seat JIRA license fee based on [JIRA's current pricing list](#). See [Atlassian's Licensing FAQ page](#) for more information on JIRA licensing, terms and conditions.

Why use JIRA?

JIRA provides significant benefits when there is a need for people to work together as a team to manage issues, work requests or implement a project. If team mates are geographically dispersed, JIRA's becomes invaluable as a remote collaboration tool, as team mates can easily collaborate wherever and whenever there is an Internet-enabled PC or "smart phone" (like Apple's iPhone- yes, there is an "app" for that!).

Isn't JIRA just for managing issues related to system and software development?

While JIRA began as an issue tracker solution for software development projects, JIRA users found that the application could be configured as a [work request management system](#), and even a basic [project management platform](#). JIRA's design supports third-party application "plug-ins". This design feature enables system administrators to easily expand JIRA's application scope, as well as its basic features, functions and capabilities.

How can I learn more about using JIRA in my organization?

To learn more about JIRA, take a [tour of JIRA](#) or peruse JIRA's [support resource page](#). Check out [JIRA case studies](#), peruse the online tutorials, visit the [user forums](#), and take [JIRA for a test ride](#).

JIRA Applications as SaaS/PaaS

I would judge a remotely-hosted, third party JIRA application server that is supporting users through custom workflow applications for a monthly service fee as an example of a Platform as a Service (PaaS) platform. Provide me with a third-party, remotely-hosted JIRA application server for a monthly fee, that I can use to develop custom JIRA workflow applications, as I would say that's a Software as a Service (SaaS) platform.

JIRA APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT

How can I learn to successfully design, deploy and manage JIRA applications?

The key to developing, deploying and managing JIRA Enterprise class applications is to treat each project as a system (or software) development initiative. This involves applying a structured development methodology when tasked to develop a JIRA application for a team, rather than viewing the task of delivering a JIRA application as a configuration task for your system administrator.

Using this approach to JIRA application development, I successfully designed, deployed and managed several dozen JIRA Enterprise class applications for a 1000+ user community.

Does JIRA application development require programming?

JIRA application development requires configuring JIRA according to stakeholders, managers and end-user requirements. While no programming along the lines of using programming languages like Java and C++ is required to configure a JIRA application, using structured system and software development approaches and methodologies to develop JIRA applications will yield scalable JIRA applications with happy stakeholders, project managers, department supervisors and end-users.

Large-scale JIRA application development (enterprise-class application development) oftentimes involves Subject Matter Experts (business process and workflow knowledge), Executive Sponsors, Business Analysts (JIRA application requirement specification), JIRA Developers and system administrators, to plan, design, develop, deploy and provide ongoing management and technical/end-user support for a JIRA installation. In addition, organizations will also employ JIRA User Administrators to manage the task of JIRA user account creation and support, for installations that have a large JIRA user community (greater than 100 users or 5-10 active applications).

One mistake to avoid: Most JIRA business applications or any significant to the organization cannot be designed, developed and deployed by a sole technical system administrator. (This is especially true if your sysadmin is responsible for administration of other systems within your organization.) Some managers get the idea that a system administrator can solely manage the getting JIRA up-and-running in an organization. Atlassian tends to support this perspective, as they draw no distinction between all of the business and technical roles that are actually involved in planning, developing, deploying and providing ongoing management of medium to large JIRA enterprise class installation.

Make no mistake about developing scalable enterprise-class JIRA business applications: such endeavors are truly a team effort. JIRA projects in most organizations require the experience, knowledge and skills of executive sponsors, business managers/supervisors, end-users and business technology specialists (business analysts, application developers and system administrators).

Treat the development of a JIRA application much the same as you would treat the development of a custom business system or software application that will be designed to serve your needs and objectives. Involve business and technical professionals from the start of a JIRA project. Apply project management best practices and principles, as well as system and software development methodologies and best practices, and you will enjoy good outcomes and few surprises with your JIRA project initiative.

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JIRA IN THE ENTERPRISE

How is JIRA typically deployed in the enterprise?

Most organizations will install JIRA on a application server. If you are a system administrator, have a look at my JIRA on Linux installation guide for an idea of what's involved to install on a Linux-based application server. (NOTE: The link to download the guide can be found on the Home page, under the "Reference Library" category, right sidebar.) If you are a manager or prospective JIRA application developer, forward the JIRA on Linux Installation Guide to your systems administrator. This guide, together with the information provided by Atlassian, should make installing your JIRA application on your server a snap for your sysadmin.

JIRA FOR THE SMALL NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

How is JIRA typically deployed for nonprofit organizations?

If you qualify by Atlassian's standards as a nonprofit organization, you are free to download, install and develop JIRA applications for your organization's use for FREE. As JIRA licenses for for-profit businesses can cost several thousands of dollars annually, you should consider taking advantage of using JIRA for free if you meet Atlassian's standard as a not-for-profit organization.

Small nonprofit organizations typically choose cloud computing platforms as a means to acquire needed information technology resources. As JIRA is a web-based application, it can be hosted remotely by a third-party Virtual Service Provider (VSP) such as Slicehost or Rackspace for a very modest monthly service fee. Some nonprofit organizations have negotiated free hosting of their "cloud"-based applications, so check with other nonprofit organizations before you go shopping for a service provider.

Atlassian also offers JIRA hosting (from a price perspective, this is best geared for medium to large organizations, as monthly hosting and application support fees are significant).

JIRA IN EVERY DAY USE

What's the difference between a JIRA "Project" and a JIRA "Application"?

A source of confusion between JIRA end users, JIRA application developers and system administrators stems from the use of the word "project".

JIRA application developers often refer to the custom workflow-driven business applications that they develop for end-users as "projects", as this is how JIRA represents applications being built. JIRA workflow applications are in fact, custom business applications that are delivered to end users via a web browser.

From JIRA's perspective, all of the applications that are developed are presented to JIRA application developers as JIRA "projects". Thus, there can be many different JIRA projects (think: "applications") managed by a single JIRA installation on a JIRA application server.

When among JIRA application developers, I use the term "project" to refer to a specific JIRA application. When I am among JIRA end-users, I use the term "application" to refer to a specific business application. While this may seem trivial, this practice avoids much confusion when in the company of both JIRA application developers and end users.

Could you open a JIRA ticket on that?

A source of confusion among some JIRA end users is the lingo that develops around the use of JIRA applications. In organizations, there are JIRA application end users who use only a single JIRA application (such as Customer Issue Management) and thus will hold a view of JIRA as a dedicated Customer Issue Management system. As their only user experience with JIRA is Customer Issue Management, they are led to the false conclusion that this is all that JIRA can do.

The fun begins when these users are among other JIRA end-users that use a myriad of JIRA workflow applications (Change Management, IT System Access Request Management, Software Product Line Issue Management, etc.) There may be discussion surrounding an issue with a product or service, where a user wanting to document and resolve the issue will say "Can you do me a favor and open a JIRA ticket for that?" If a user has experience with several JIRA Issue Management systems, he might respond "Which JIRA application do you want me to submit the issue to?"

One way to manage this issue is through training. JIRA end users need to understand that JIRA can be and is often configured to manage a variety of business applications. With this in mind, end users should name a specific JIRA application (such as the "change management" or "customer issue management" JIRA application when speaking with other JIRA end users about the JIRA system.

For example, you might have one JIRA application that manages employee requests for access to your corporate IT systems, and other JIRA application that manages requests from contractors that need temporary access to your IT system for the course of a project. Through training, you need to communicate to employees which JIRA application is to be used for IT access requests, depending on if the person is an employee or contractor.

For example, an organization may have developed two JIRA applications for managing customer issues. One JIRA application addresses issues relative to "Product A"; another JIRA application manages issues related to "Product B". Every JIRA project (application) has a "key" that is used to uniquely identify a specific application and issue within an application. Thus, the key prefix for the "Product A" Customer Issue Management application could be "CIMA" for Customer Issue Management, Product A.

The first customer issue logged into JIRA's CIMA application would have a key of "CIMA-1". Entering "CIMA-1" via the JIRA Search utility would display the first customer issue created in

the CIMA application. Likewise, CIMB (Customer Issue Management, Product B) would refer to the JIRA application that manages customer issues with “Product B”. Entering “CIMB-1” via the JIRA Search utility would display the first customer issue created in the CIMB application.

So, from a JIRA lingo perspective, an end user that is knowledgeable and experienced with JIRA will say “Open a CIMA ticket” if another user is referring to a customer issue with Product A.

I’ve found that end users typically name the JIRA application by using the JIRA application key as a cue. For example, a JIRA Change Control Management application that has a project prefix of “CCM”, is referred to by end users as the “CCM application”. The phrase “open a CCM ticket” is telling a JIRA end-user to create an issue within the JIRA CCM application.

About this Guide

This guide is updated periodically. Updates can be download by visiting the Jim Intriglia Consulting blog at <http://JimIntrigliaConsulting.wordpress.com>. If this guide has helped you in some way, please consider making a [small donation](#) in support of future updates to this guide. Your support is greatly appreciated!

I welcome comments and suggestions for improving this guide. Please send your feedback to Jim@JimIntrigliaConsulting.com).

Thanks,

Jim Intriglia