Redfin redefines real estate with Atlassian cloud

How America's top brokerage site adopted agile and migrated to Atlassian cloud to lower costs, boost efficiency, and dedicate more resources to innovation.

ATLASSIAN REDFIN

INDUSTRY
Real estate

LOCATION
North America

COMPANY SIZE
3,000+

NUMBER OF USERS
1,000

PRODUCTS
Jira Software Cloud
Confluence Cloud
Atlassian Access
Atlassian Support
Bitbucket

INTEGRATIONS
Slack Jira Integration

Redfin, America's top brokerage site, is on a mission to "redefine real estate in the customer's favor." From making every transaction smoother to saving families thousands in fees, their team has built a customer-first company from the ground up.

Technology has been the key to achieving this mission. According to CEO Glenn Kelman, "Technology is how we sell homes for more money and charge half the typical fee, and why our agents can tell the truth about a home without worrying about scuttling a sale." For example, Redfin got its start inventing map-based search, making it easier for prospective homeowners to visualize the properties available in specific geographic areas. They have also invested heavily in technology and automation to make the whole process (e.g., initial search, home tours, listing debuts, escrow, etc.) faster and easier for customers, as well as their agents.

In fact, while many real estate tech firms are solely focused on cutting agents out of the process, Redfin's core business is using technology to support them and, as CTO Bridget Frey puts it, "free our agents to focus on service." As a result of their unique approach and products, the company has become the top real estate website in the U.S., gone public, and experienced hockey-stick growth.

> " We have large competitors, and we need to be smart about the technologies we use and where we spend our time. We trust Atlassian to help our team deliver world-class products that redefine real estate in the customer's favor.
>
> Evan Lerer
> Director of Engineering

In a hyper-competitive market that's in the midst of disruption, those who innovate and take a customer-first approach will get ahead, and those who don't will get left behind. That's why Redfin's engineering team looks for any opportunity to streamline and automate: so they have more time, budget, and brainpower to focus on innovating for their customers. This was the catalyst for exploring a move to a more agile culture and collaborative, cloud-based solutions.

Redfin had used a variety of tools for development, communication, and collaboration in the past, which worked fine when they were a small company. But as the staff, stakes, and number of offices grew, so did the challenges that come along with remote work and disparate systems. To transform the real estate experience for their customers, they needed to transform their own practices and platforms.

Fast forward a few years, and Redfin is now well on their way to accomplishing that goal. Since going agile and implementing Atlassian cloud with the help of Atlassian's migration services, the company has not only **captured $60,000 in immediate savings, but also freed up valuable engineering time – once spent maintaining servers – to increase their speed to market.**

SCALING SPARKS A SEARCH FOR A BETTER SOLUTION

When Redfin launched in 2004 with a small engineering team, times were much simpler. Each employee could use whichever documentation and communication tools they liked most, and it wasn't hard to collaborate – even across teams – because there were only a few people involved in each project.

But then, the company grew to more than 3,000 employees. Small, focused projects multiplied to hundreds, each with many stakeholders scattered across disciplines, all needing to work together. And on top of this exponential growth, new competitors are constantly entering the market, nipping at Redfin's heels.

With all of these changes converging, the engineering team grew to understand their processes and systems weren't cutting it anymore.

> **"Before, there wasn't a unified place to get anything. We couldn't really track where the work was, especially when people who are not in engineering are involved,"** explains Director of Engineering Evan Lerer. **"At a certain point, we needed a different level of communication and sharing, and a better way to manage big, cross-team projects.... We needed a centralized workflow to enable that, and none of the tools we had could do it."**

Since Evan and other team members had used Atlassian for similar purposes in the past, and engineering has relied on Bitbucket as a code repository for years, Atlassian was a natural fit. Once leaders and engineers saw how they could use Jira Software to create custom workflows and share them across teams, along with Confluence for documentation and collaboration, they were confident Atlassian would meet their needs.

When it came time to choose a deployment, Atlassian cloud was Redfin's first choice. "We are managing too much of our own infrastructure. I would much rather be building new things that help us improve than maintaining old things," Evan says. "Frankly, having our engineers or IT professionals manage our systems on-premise is a waste of time and money. If there's a company that already has amazing products, why not have them do it? That way, we can spend our time working on the things that we're good at and reduce maintenance and toil." With clear advantages for employees and the business, the team agreed Atlassian cloud was the way to go.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE INBOX

As engineering started their implementation by standardizing and onboarding onto Jira Software Cloud, they seized the opportunity to integrate a more agile approach too. Several employees had worked on agile teams at previous companies and knew the practices could support better collaboration, more innovation, and faster delivery.

> "Teams started building their own processes, and it created this agile mindset across all the different teams," Evan recalls. "They started running scrum and kanban. They started having standups. They started really moving into that mindset, and Atlassian helped us get there. It was really powerful."

As engineering got Jira Software up and running, the first item on their wish list was creating repeatable, agile workflows. They set up the system to make it easy for engineers to pull in epics, stories, and tasks from their backlog to work on during each sprint. These standardized, centralized workflows can be shared across teams to provide visibility into what's being worked on and what's been completed, save time, and make handoffs smoother.

Redfin also leveraged several features and integrations to improve communication and speed. For example, they use Jira Software's tagging feature to notify employees throughout the organization (such as the agent or customer support teams) when they need to know about or respond to an issue. They also integrated **Slack** to see real-time alerts whenever an update is made to a ticket and enable users to comment, edit, or create new tickets right in Slack. Improvements like these have streamlined communication and relieved employees from inbox overload. "What is email?" Evan jokes. "I barely even check it anymore."

> **❝ Confluence is our linchpin for everything**
>
> Evan Lerer
> Director of Engineering

Once their new workflows were established, Evan says they turned to Confluence to "solve a documentation mess." Engineering started with their own department and transferred all of their documentation into Confluence. When IT saw how Confluence made life easier for engineering, they asked to use it too. Now, IT uses the platform for everything from onboarding to documenting to collaborating.

"Confluence is our linchpin for everything," Evan says. "On their first day of work, new hires who are onboarding go to Confluence and start reading. 'How do I set up my dev box?' 'How do I get my work going?' Whatever they want to know, it's all there."

With a more agile, cloud-based development ecosystem and a centralized documentation system, Redfin quickly saw their teams working faster and collaborating more effectively than ever before.

COMING HOME TO THE CLOUD

Redfin's team initially chose a cloud deployment so they could focus more on innovation and less on administration. As the company's headcount and Atlassian adoption increased over time, they eventually reached the old 2,000-user limit. To continue scaling with the needs of their business, the team switched to Atlassian Data Center. Fortunately, user limits increased for Atlassian cloud a few years later, and Redfin was first in line to, as they say, "come home to cloud." The migration would boost efficiency, save money, and enable them to once again dedicate even more resources to innovation instead of server maintenance.

To support a smooth migration and set up their cloud instances for success, Redfin partnered with Atlassian Support for guidance and troubleshooting. They also wanted to concurrently integrate their custom single sign-on solution with **Atlassian Access** to make user provisioning and management easier.

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>
> Greg Lee
> Systems Administrator

After a kickoff with both teams, an Atlassian Cloud Migration Manager and Migration Support Engineer started working on a migration plan, leveraging Confluence Cloud Migration Assistant and other queries to clean up the Server instance, and collaborating with the Atlassian Access and other Atlassian teams to ensure proper setup. Every other week, Atlassian and Redfin met to discuss progress, solve any issues that arose, and plan next steps. Just five months after the kickoff meeting, Redfin's cloud solution was ready to launch.

The migration was fast and painless. "The amount of support and the level of urgency from the Atlassian team was awesome. Nothing was ever too much, and they far exceeded our expectations," said Systems Administrator Greg Lee. Alasdair Thomson, Senior Manager of IT Development and Operations, added, "It was nice being so close to fast-moving development of the migration tools. A dedicated team is a really nice thing to have. I wouldn't change a thing."

DELIVERING ON A CUSTOMER-FOCUSED MISSION

Since completing the migration, Redfin has seen undeniable improvements in their current operations and has even more confidence in their ability to change real estate forever. Cost savings topped $60,000 within just a few months, and total cost of ownership has decreased even more when accounting for labor savings.

> "If I'm spending one-eighth or one-half of an engineer managing our infrastructure, that's a very high number compared to a year's worth of licensing. Atlassian cloud saves our team time, which saves us money."
>
> Evan Lerer
> Director of Engineering

"A lot of people, including myself, work here for Redfin's mission and values. It's not just about building cool technology. It's really about helping the customer," Evan says. "That's the bigger reason for the technical improvements we're making. We have large competitors, and we need to be smart about the technologies we use and where we spend our time. We trust Atlassian to help our team deliver world-class products that redefine real estate in the customer's favor."
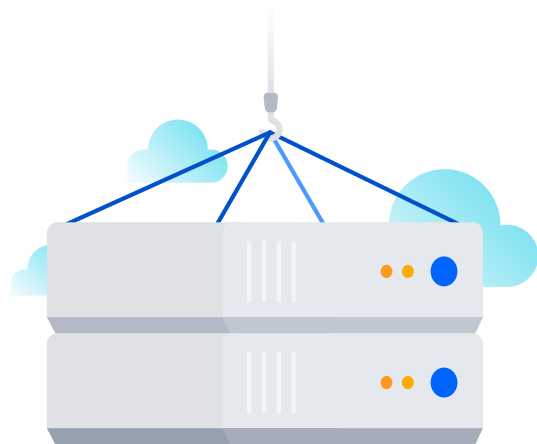
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