



4 Steps To Scaling Agile Across The Enterprise

The Guide To Agile At Scale





Portfolio for Jira is a powerful Jira Software add-on for large organizations that want to scale agile practices, linking agile development execution to business priorities.

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First, let's acknowledge: scaling agile is hard.

What starts with a team or two quickly spreads to twenty, or two hundred. And since each new team often adopts a slightly different flavor of agile, “controlled chaos” can ensue. Buying tools isn’t a magic bullet that will solve all your agile scaling woes, either. Although the right tools can help a ton, and so can the right approach.

In this short guide, we’ll cover both — and show you how one major enterprise used the powerful combination of Jira Software and Portfolio for Jira to scale agile to meet the needs of their 21,000-employee workforce.

The growing pains of scaling agile from 1 team to 400

Meet **ABN AMRO**. They're a large Dutch bank serving major retail corporations, with over \$8.5 billion in annual operating revenue, 21,000 employees, and 400 teams working in a single Jira Software instance. They loved Jira Software, but usage of the tool and the adoption of agile practices had taken off far faster than they had ever imagined. The primary challenges ABN Amro faced scaling agile across 400+ teams were: a few common growing pains set in when scaling agile, including:

- **Lack of flexibility**

Teams were using too many tools & processes, creating confusion and frustration for users already doing a bulk of their work in Jira software. With each team embracing slightly difference agile flavors and workflows, alignment remained out of reach.

- **Poor visibility and alignment**

With no clear way to look at work across multiple teams and projects, tracking status and capacity is resource intensive and time consuming.

- **Ineffective communication**

When each team uses different tools, there is no shared reporting infrastructure nor approach. With engineering teams working in Jira, it becomes increasingly difficult to track against high-level deliverables. Non-integrated reporting tools simply make it difficult to know if information is up-to-date, resulting in no reliable single source of truth, effectively disabling meetings and the program management function.

Sound familiar?

If you're reading this guide, you may be suffering similar challenges. On the next page, we'll reveal some methods to help you prevent these problems altogether.

Set strong foundations

ABN Amro’s rapid adoption of Jira resulted in the organic emergence of an extremely large, complex Jira instance, with 65 administrators, 70 issues types, upwards of 500 unique statuses and, incredibly, over 800 workflows. Implementing a new approach to executing agile at scale meant taking a big step back to reflect on the current state of affairs, and to benchmark their environment against best proven, established industry best practices.

ABN Amro partnered with an Atlassian Solution Partner, with proven experience in scaling agile in world class organizations, including deep experience with both the organizational and the tooling change management that go hand in hand for doing anything at scale in a large, complex organization.

Working with their Solution Partner, ABN AMRO selected a single, diverse team, “one team to rule them all”, to represent all stakeholder teams, in leading the transformation towards a successful approach to agile at scale. With the help of product owners, scrum masters, and Jira champions from across the company, they were able to achieve alignment and dramatically improve organisational & systematic simplicity. The table below illustrates the dramatic reduction in complexity.

	Before	After
Administrators	64	10
Issue Types	70	30
Statuses	500	40
Work Flows	800	200

“ Simplicity drives alignment and shared understanding. ”

- Atlassian Solution Partner



By building a leadership team with representation from key stakeholder groups, each group still retained much of the freedom and autonomy they loved about agile, while gaining a more management system.



Tips for establishing a strong foundation

- **Recommit to basic, core agile practices**

Start by ensuring that all your teams are embracing the core principles of agile. Look at team structures and even agile ceremonies like sprint planning and retrospectives — and don't forget to call out what isn't working too. That way, you can easily identify what's working well from team to team, and work to apply it systematically across all levels of the organization.

- **Reduce complexity, empower autonomy**

The goal is to reduce complexity, not remove autonomy. Include representatives from each team in your cleanup planning effort. Introduce minor customizations to accommodate unique needs. Make sure you have eyes and ears at the team level, to empower them to continue working the way they prefer (e.g. Scrum vs. Kanban) - something that is easy with a tool like Portfolio for Jira.

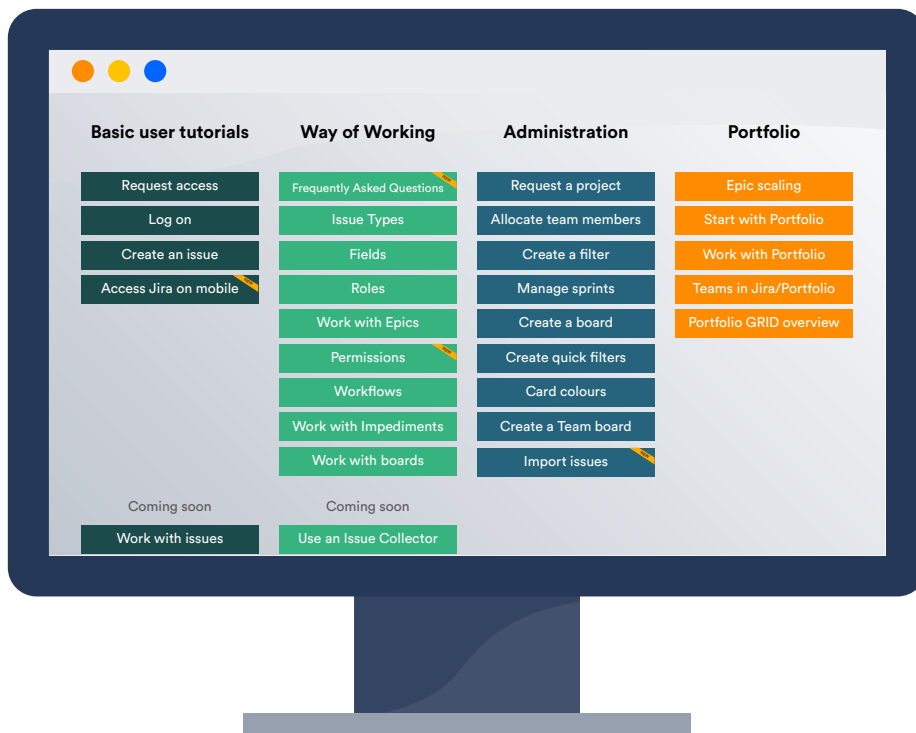
Training & Support - Teach Your People Well

Support and training for users of all levels is a big part of scaling agile.

New users need a place to learn about your organization’s agile culture, get up to speed on Jira, and get answers to common questions. Seasoned users need a way to stay up to speed on how Jira is configured and what’s changed as you scale.

ABN AMRO created a dedicated support and training community, complete with basic tutorial videos, FAQ’s, and even the ability to request projects, create team boards, and submit support questions. Today, the community has more than 8,000 members, with 30,000 visits and 200+ support questions fielded each month.

Agile Support & Training Community Example



A dedicated online support and training community is a critical resource for a large enterprise deployment and the successful adoption of organizational agile at scale.

ABN AMRO have even expanded their training program to include advanced courses for scrum masters and product owners, covering topics like Jira Software dashboards and Portfolio for Jira.



Training & Support Tips

- **Offer education for every level**

You'll need Jira 101 training for beginners as well as training for experts who know agile inside, like product owners and scrum masters and out. Keep in mind that even the most seasoned agile practitioners will need to know what's new and what's changed.

- **Turn power users into trainers**

The same Jira champions and 'wizards' that helped you transform your approach to agile at scale can also help you train the broad user base, becoming valuable agile coaches to new teams and users, critical to the broad adoption of a shared, standard approach.

- **Add in-person training**

Online training is an essential part of every rollout plan, since it's cost effective, has a long shelf-life, and is perfect for widely distributed workforces. Consider adding in-person training options at your largest offices with the highest concentration of users. ABN AMRO's in-person seminars attracted more than 2,000 users, and are a huge hit.

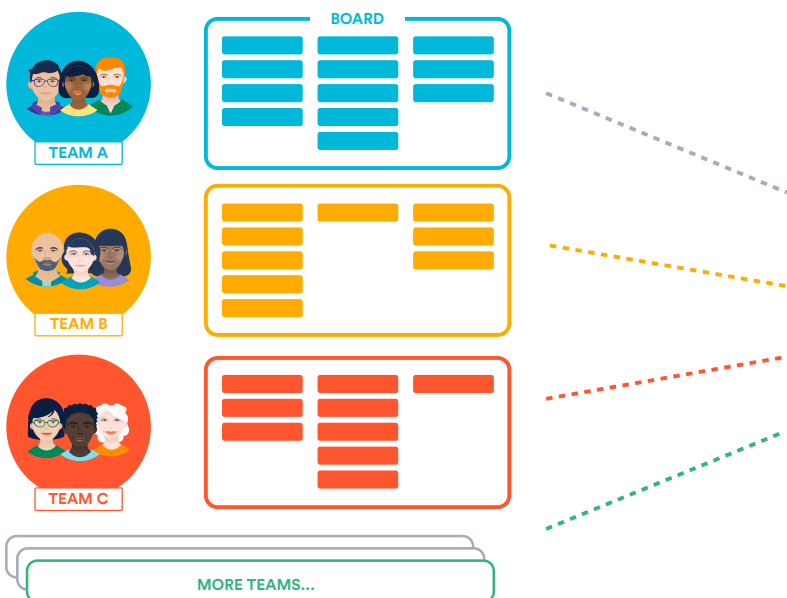
Plan to plan

You'll also need to up-level the way your teams plan and collaborate with each other across multiple projects — even at the sprint planning level.

Scrum of Scrum meetings are a great way to do that, with each team sending a delegate to ensure alignment across the big picture. But you'll also need to introduce large-scale planning meetings (yearly, quarterly, or even monthly) to ensure every team's development stays on track with company-wide "big rocks."

And with so many different teams using agile, it's common for each team to try to track long-term plans and strategic goals with disconnected tools like spreadsheets. But that's not scalable. Standardizing on a consolidating planning tool (like ABN AMRO did with Portfolio for Jira) helps streamline strategic planning, regardless of how many teams are involved in the process.

◆ Jira Software



Portfolio for Jira





Planning Pro Tips

- **Get a visual view**

It's easier to organize and prioritize your team's work — and your entire organization's — when you can visualize it. Use tools that let you plan visual roadmaps, and that give you easy visual views of scope and target release dates. You'll build more realistic roadmaps as a result with access to comprehensive reports that aggregate this information.

- **Establish a single source of truth**

Establish a single source of truth for work items, projects and programs. It's critical that you have aggregated visibility across every team, and that plans stay up to date. Ideally, development and product teams should plan in the same place, with the same data, ensuring development teams have a clear roadmap and a realistic workload. Jira Software with Portfolio for Jira offers a single source of truth providing visibility, alignment and, critical to any holistic system, offers the autonomy needed for individual team flexibility.

- **Adopt scenario planning**

For big projects, it can be helpful to create a few different plans before you commit to one, to see which portfolio plan works best for your team before making a decision. Portfolio for Jira lets you select, save, and compare different scope and team combinations for this exact purpose.

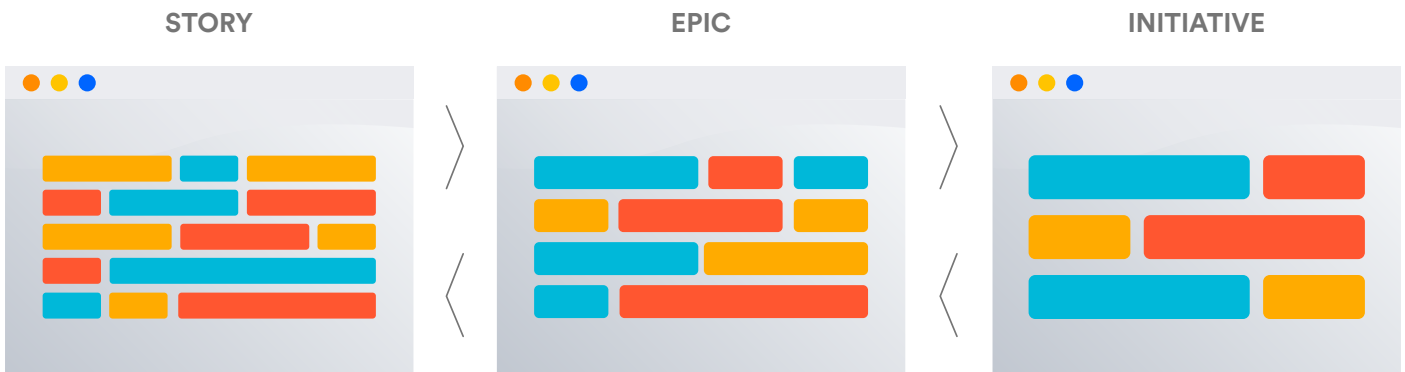
See the big picture

In large-scale Jira implementations, getting the “right” level of visibility can be challenging.

Program managers, product managers, and anyone within the layer between upper management and development, often have a hard time tracking dependencies and constraints across multiple teams, and business leaders often find it challenging to monitor enterprise-wide progress against top business goals.

Here, ABN AMRO turned to Portfolio for Jira’s ability to support unlimited custom hierarchies, creating high level “uber initiative” issue types at the business-line level. Now, multiple teams from different areas of the business track their work via epics and stories that roll up to these master objectives. In this way, they’ve completely aligned Jira’s issue hierarchy around their own internal org structure.

The big picture and the small picture



In Portfolio for Jira, you can create infinite levels of custom hierarchy and visualise your roadmaps

This gives their managers an aggregated view of all the company and team-wide progress against high-level initiatives, letting them see total progress and estimates at each hierarchy level.



Visibility ‘Pro-Tips’

- **Get real with delivery and release dates**

In the beginning, manual forecasting is fine. But as you scale agile across the corporation, it's helpful to have a way to continually stay on top of the most realistic release dates. You can use Portfolio for Jira to do exactly this — dynamically loading your Jira issues and forecasting if your team will deliver on time.

- **Find the true limits of your team's capacity**

When every team plans and allocates resources in the same place, it's easier to get a true view of who is at capacity and who isn't. As you scale, make sure it's easy for each team to assign and schedule the right resources and see their skill sets and availability.

- **Give all stakeholders the information they need**

Executives, managers, and even PM's should be able to easily analyze different aspects of your plan — whether it's by scope, capacity, releases, schedules, sprints, or themes. To properly scale agile, you need easy roll-up reporting with cross-team and cross-project visibility, to keep everyone on the same page.

Scale early, for the love of agile

No matter where you are in your agile journey, it's never too late to start planning for scale.

It's true that agile multiplies rapidly, which makes it easier to equip your teams with the right processes and tools for growth at the offset of the journey than it is to retrofit them after the fact.

Yet even then, it's never too late to take a step back and think about the agile principles you want within your organization then how that can translate to organizational and workflow structure. At ABN AMRO, they used a powerful combination of coordinated foundational cleanup, training and support, and agile-at-scale solutions like Portfolio for Jira, together with the help of an Atlassian Solution Partner, to quickly realign 400 different teams around a more powerful, scalable agile approach.

The important thing isn't when you do it: it's that you do it, so you can plan and forecast more realistically, make better decisions, and keep everyone in the know.

Ready to scale?

Try Portfolio for Jira today
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