Dassault Aviation jet-propels deployments, boosts developer satisfaction with Digital.ai

The environment

- Digital.ai Deploy, formerly XebiaLabs XL Deploy
- Jenkins
- Git
- Jira/Confluence
- SonarQube
- SpiraTest
- Ansible

The challenge

French-based Dassault Aviation needed to reduce the cost of deploying business and IT applications used by their engineering teams to conceive of, manufacture, and support the company's high-end military planes and commercial jets.

The solution

Dassault Aviation chose Digital.ai Deploy for its unique ability to not only automate the configuration and deployment of applications, but to track which version of an application component is running where in highly complex deployment environments.

> " It was the first time I heard a developer say that they were happy with our deployment process and with tools supporting this process. They love XebiaLabs XL Deploy [now Digital.ai Deploy] and say that all our developers should be using it.
>
> **Pascal Foucher,** DevOps Leader in Charge of IT Teams

Results

- Approximately 50% of application deployments automated using Digital.ai Deploy
- Time to deploy to production decreased from weeks to hours
- Deployments happen more frequently
- Standardized deployment processes between development and operations
- Autonomous developers, high level of satisfaction

The imperative: get releases and resources under control

It's extremely rewarding when you succeed at meeting hard-won goals, but even better when success comes with some surprising extra benefits. That is the case with Dassault Aviation, a leading aerospace company with a presence in over 90 countries across five continents. Dassault Aviation not only dramatically increased the efficiency of their software delivery process, but also experienced a remarkable boost in developer satisfaction.

Dassault Aviation's journey began in 2015 when the company's IT team in charge of application release management was tasked with finding ways to reduce the cost of application deployment and bring resources under control as part of a company-wide digital transformation. The IT team is responsible for operating and industrializing the release management process for all of Dassault's business and IT applications. These applications are used by the various engineering groups who build Dassault's technically sophisticated military and commercial aircraft.

At the time, Dassault was endeavoring to build an "automated software factory" for producing code. The automated software factory, which consists of Git, Jenkins, BitBucket, Jira, and so on, would be the company standard for all Dev teams, and would support a continuous integration process.

However, the automated software factory did not extend to deployments. After handoff from the development teams, IT operations team needed to manually deploy applications, which meant that deployments needed to be planned three weeks in advance. The challenge was to set up a fully automated process for developing and deploying code. The solution would need to reduce the cost of deployment and improve the deployment process. Bringing together the automated software factory and a deployment solution was key to enabling Dassault's digital transformation and reducing IT costs, despite the growth in the company's IT resources.

The team's initial focus was on improving the deployment pipeline for their JBOSS and PostgresSQL applications. "Deploying applications results in managing a whole release, which involves a set of multiple application components and multiple infrastructure and middleware configurations. For each version of a release, deploying the release on a specific targeted environment generates a range of unitary deployment instructions, for each component, for each configuration, on targeted servers," said Pascal Foucher, DevOps Leader in charge of IT teams.

> From the beginning, XebiaLabs [now Digital.ai] experts impressed us with their high level of competency about the whole deployment process, and it was a real added value knowing that we could depend on their support.
>
> **Pascal Foucher**

Shedding light on the deployment "black box"

The team began researching popular tools for continuous configuration and automation (CCA). But whereas these tools were excellent for the automation of deployment tasks, they did not fit Dassault Aviation's needs. With the help of the **Digital.ai Periodic Table of DevOps Tools**, the team discovered Application Release Automation (ARA) tools, including Digital.ai Deploy, which they chose after a comparative study.

Digital.ai Deploy provides a one-of-a-kind deployment model that not only automates the configuration and deployment of application components, but makes it easy to see deployment status across applications and environments and track which version of a component is running where. According to Pascal: "XebiaLabs XL Deploy [now Digital.ai Deploy] offers a clean view of each step in a set of deployment instructions, and this was clearly an asset that convinced us to choose this tool."

Dassault Aviation began using Digital.ai Deploy in 2017. Today, Dassault deploys 200 times per month, half of which are automated deployments of applications that change frequently. The team chose Digital.ai Deploy to automate these deployments — and now they're deploying faster than ever. With Digital.ai Deploy, the time it takes to deploy code into production has decreased from weeks to hours, and the team is deploying much more frequently. As an example, during a period of six months, Dassault Aviation's developers deployed their code 250 times for one application, 25 times in pre-production, and five times in production. "In light of these results, we have started to use XebiaLabs XL Deploy [now Digital.ai Deploy] to deploy our 3D Experience software customization, which is our core application for designing our aircrafts," added Pascal.

Dassault Aviation's confidence in Digital.ai comes not just from the quality of Digital.ai Deploy, but also from the exceptional service they receive. "From the beginning, XebiaLabs [now Digital.ai] experts impressed us with their high level of competency about the whole deployment process, and it was a real added value knowing that we could depend on their support," said Pascal.

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Digital.ai Deploy sets the standards for development and operations

The enthusiastic adoption of Digital.ai Deploy by technical teams — both development and operations — is yet another reason Pascal would recommend it to others. Digital.ai Deploy provides a structure for defining the standards between development teams and operations teams for the delivery of application components. It also enables a common language and definitions between teams, and everyone can see what the necessary pieces are and know what to agree on. According to Pascal, everyone from development teams and operations teams alike sees the benefits of Digital.ai Deploy and chooses to use it.

"One surprise is the extent to which developers have embraced XebiaLabs XL Deploy [now Digital.ai Deploy]," Pascal noted. "I've done this job for 20 years. About a year ago, I had a meeting with a group of developers, and it was the first time I heard a developer say that they were happy with our deployment process and with tools supporting this process. They love it, and say that all our developers should be using it."

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Release orchestration

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Deployment automation

Automate and standardize complex application deployments

DevOps intelligence

Get unprecedented insight and decision support for your software delivery process

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