

Stater successfully implements DevOps with Digital.ai



The challenge

Speed up time to market for new features and applications, and reduce the number of production problems caused by new releases.

The solution

Agile DevOps process featuring Digital.ai Release, formerly XebiaLabs XL Release, and Digital.ai Deploy, formerly XebiaLabs XL Deploy, to automate, standardize, and orchestrate the software delivery process.

The results

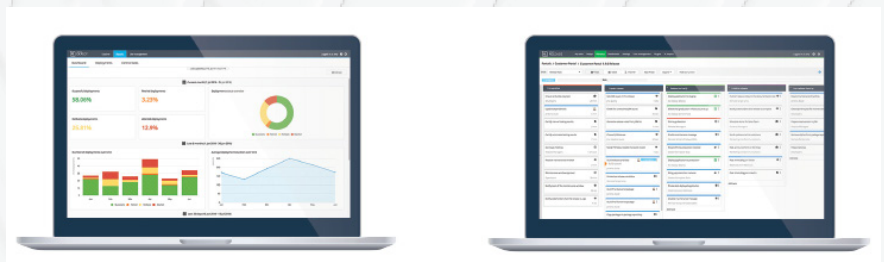
- Time to roll out new machines reduced from 1-2 days to 30 minutes
- Software deployment time dropped from 1-2 weeks to 30 minutes
- Accelerated release process. Stater aims to release software four times more frequently in the next six months
- Releases have substantially higher quality. Already, Stater has greatly reduced the number of post-release production issues

The environment

Tools: Digital.ai Release, Digital.ai Deploy, Jenkins CI, Sonar, FitNesse, Selenium, Subversion, and many others

Middleware: IIS, JBoss, SQL DB (mid-office), Sybase DB (back-office)

Multiple languages: Java, .NET, Uniface, Blueriq



Digital.ai Deploy

Digital.ai Release



Most importantly, the team has improved their release quality, and the number of post-release production problems has dropped substantially.

Ton Kueter, Manager, IT Development for Stater

Grow fast, help customers, and get it “first time right”

Stater, the Netherlands’ #1 mortgage broker, handles mortgages for premium financial services companies and is aiming for double digit growth in their market share over the next three years. To do that, they know they need to move fast and execute flawlessly.

Stater’s IT department works hard to provide applications that support the end-to-end mortgage process — for customers, for agents, and for the banks themselves. They are currently focused on two major initiatives:

1. Improving their systems to onboard new customers
2. “Digitization,” which involves creating portals that consumers, brokers, and the banks themselves can use to manage their mortgages

Also, their team has a vision — they call it the “Accello Project” — to speed up the acceptance process for mortgage seekers, so people know in only one hour if their application will be accepted.

Overarching these goals, the IT group has a mantra for quality: they want to get it all “first time right.”

Old school or continuous delivery?

About two years ago, Stater started taking a long, hard look at their software delivery process. They were having challenges getting software into production quickly, and even more challenges in production after new releases were deployed. Releases were sometimes delayed a week — or even two — and more than once resulted in post-production fire fighting for several weeks after deployment.

At first, Stater looked to improve the process with old school methods:

- Multiple checklists were created to ensure proper steps were taken
- “Four eyes” principle was applied — everyone’s work was checked by someone else to ensure correctness
- Reduce velocity — to improve quality, the team considered slowing down the release process from six major releases per year to 2-4

And then Stater realized that old school steps were the opposite of what they really needed to do.

Stater learned about continuous delivery at a Digital.ai seminar and had an epiphany: **release smaller chunks of code, more often. And if you have manual steps in your process, automate them!**



There are not many tools like either Digital.ai Release or Digital.ai Deploy. Both tools have an excellent UI, are easy to use, and do a great job of presenting information visually, which gives us much needed insight into the state of our releases so we can better serve our customers.

Continuous delivery with Digital.ai

Continuous delivery became a high priority for Stater. They first focused on automation and automated deployment, and are also worked on automated provisioning, continuous integration, and improving test automation. Stater started implementing Digital.ai Release and Digital.ai Deploy in the fall of 2014 with several goals in mind:

1. Speed up time to market for software delivery to better service customers with innovative tooling
2. Automate processes
3. Improve the quality of code that goes into production, and get it right the first time

Now all agile/DevOps teams at Stater are using Digital.ai Deploy and Digital.ai Release — about 300 people across 25 teams. In addition, their PaaS, IaaS, and release management teams all use both tools.

Digital.ai Release manages Stater's automated software delivery pipeline and platform automation pipeline. Most steps are now automated, but Stater prefers to keep some steps manual for now, such as waiting for approval by their cross-functional Change Advisory Board. Fortunately, Digital.ai Release is designed to allow just such flexibility. Digital.ai Release also gives insight into Stater's 25 test environments.

Now the whole team rallies around constantly updated information: giant flat-screen TVs around the room constantly show the status of Stater's Digital.ai Release pipelines, including testing and build statuses.

On the deployment side, Digital.ai Deploy is called on by Jenkins to automatically deploy all of the software for Stater's mid-office, back-office, and corresponding interfaces. The team will be adding additional applications for both Digital.ai Release and Digital.ai Deploy, such as their document processing engine and data warehouse, over the coming year.

Achieving “first time right” and other goals

Stater's agile/DevOps initiative with Digital.ai Release and Digital.ai Deploy is ongoing and has already yielded good results.

“First time right”: According to Ton Kueter, Manager, IT Development for Stater, “Perhaps most importantly, release quality is now substantially better, and the number of post-release production problems has dropped. The team is thrilled to be able to move on to the next release rather than fighting production crises, and the entire organization is happier with the quality.”

Faster release cycle: For now, the team is more focused on ensuring quality and improving testing, but in the next six months, they expect releases to happen every two weeks, which is four times more often than when they began this initiative.

Lower costs: Finally, overall IT costs have already been reduced on a recurring basis!

Specifically...

- Time to roll out new machines has been reduced from 1-2 days to 30 minutes
- Software deployment time has dropped from 1-2 weeks to 30 minutes
- Accelerated release process. Stater aims to release software four times more frequently in the next six months
- Releases have substantially higher quality. Already, Stater has greatly reduced the number of post-release production issues

Stater has also noticed several secondary benefits:

- DevOps teams can work more autonomously, which makes team members very happy
- The process is much more transparent to everyone involved
- The engineers get quick feedback, which helps them create more value and make fewer mistakes. When they do make mistakes, they are able to fix them faster
- Now they fail early and learn faster. All of the teams see a big benefit in learning from their mistakes so they can improve the process

“There are not many tools like either Digital.ai Release or Digital.ai Deploy. Both tools have an excellent UI, are easy to use, and do a great job of presenting information visually, which gives us much-needed insight into the state of our releases,” Kueter continued.

“As well, both products fit well into our current landscape and make it easy to integrate the different platforms and languages we use. We love the flexibility. It’s easy to adjust the process to add new steps, and easy to add new systems.”

Digital.ai provides continuous delivery at enterprise scale



Release orchestration

Orchestrate, automate, and get visibility into release pipelines



Deployment automation

Automate and standardize complex application deployments



DevOps intelligence

Get unprecedented insight and decision support for your software delivery process

About Digital.ai

Digital.ai enables enterprises to focus on outcomes instead of outputs, create greater business value faster, and deliver secure digital experiences their customers trust. The Digital.ai Value Stream Platform seamlessly integrates all the disparate tools and processes across the various value streams, uses data and AI/ML to create connective tissue between them, and provides the real-time, contextual insights required to drive and sustain successful digital transformation. With Digital.ai, enterprises have the visibility they’ve been seeking to deliver value, drive growth, increase profitability, reduce security risk, and improve customer experience.

Learn more at [Digital.ai](#)