

# The U.S. Space Force switches to DevSecOps for agile development

At Atlassian's Team Tour: Government 2022, a panel on agile service delivery discussed how the U.S. Space Force is modernizing their launch operations. At the same time, they are increasing transparency, incorporating risk tracking, and integrating reusable assets into legacy systems. In this session, panelists shared how the Space Force is leveraging modern, agile methods to deliver systems and tools that support their mission, without the long development timelines that often plague government organizations.

Although the U.S. Space Force launched in 2019, it was previously a department within the U.S. Air Force. When existing personnel moved to the Space Force, they brought legacy systems, culture, and processes with them. The Space Force set about transforming the way their personnel work from the ground up.

The legacy development methods they inherited were having a negative impact on meeting their mission. Development ran over time and budget. And often, mission needs changed before the project had finished. Once the Space Force dedicated itself to becoming a fully digital service, changing development styles became a top priority.

Panelists in this session shared their insights into what has made the Space Force's digital transformation a success and how they adapted for agility.

## Discovery is the most important part of the process

The panelists agreed that the most important part of their digital transformation was doing a thorough ecosystem exploration or discovery phase. Discovery consists of digging through the entire staff hierarchy to identify the issues users have and understanding the processes they use from start to finish.

## Prioritize innovation

Captain Jacqueline Smith says, "Commanders must make innovation one of their top priorities if they want innovation to be successful. One way to do that is creating a position dedicated to innovation, but you can also staff up teams to get after some of these innovation pain points." This ensures someone is always looking to remove obstacles, drive innovation, and foster collaboration across the organization.

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CAPTAIN JACQUELINE SMITH,  
SLD45 Digital and Innovation Officer,  
U.S. Space Force

## Fail fast

Waterfall development methods were stagnating development for the Space Force. They changed both systems and culture by embracing the concept of “failing fast.” They’re now using DevSecOps and working in two week sprints, collecting user feedback before starting the next sprint. With each sprint, they can decide to continue down the same path or change directions entirely. As an added bonus, they found the approach improved innovative brainstorming. When embracing the smaller failures earlier on, people aren’t shy about proposing something new.

## Silos cause redundancies

Before the discovery process, the Space Force had redundancies they weren’t aware of. “We had a really good example from discovery where someone was working on the same darn thing as the person next to them. And they had no idea!” Michael Downard of Silicon Mountain Technologies shared. Alerting staff to redundancies and “getting out of the way” became key to accelerating solutions.

## What benefits has the Space Force seen with Atlassian?

The Space Force has found that using modern tools, like those from Atlassian, helps them manage their services and streamline workflows. The Space Force’s Weekly Activity Report (WAR) serves as an overview of all existing missions and launches. WAR is built in Atlassian’s Jira and gives everyone situational awareness at all times without the need for meetings.

In the 15 years before the Space Force was formed, a risk assessment tool was being used in launches. But now, the age of the tool was causing problems. The team knew the launch process would continue to iterate every month, and they needed the flexibility to adapt with it. Atlassian’s Jira Service Management became the solution as it could decrease error risk by allowing visibility into details previously hidden by existing data organization methods. Jira Service Management meets security requirements, allows for cross-coast collaboration, can be quickly updated, and captures insights into launch data.

## Watch the panel for more insights

The U.S. Space Force has been using agile methodologies and tools to eliminate redundancies, unclog workflow bottlenecks, and change the organizational culture to encourage iteration and creative solutions. To learn more about how the Space Force is leading the way with innovation, watch the “Agile service delivery in the U.S. Space Force” panel discussion on-demand at [Atlassian Team Tour: Government 2022](#). And join the discussion in the [Atlassian Government Community Group](#).

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