Atlassian Executes "Hands On" Training with CloudShare's Virtual Training Labs

ATLASSIAN

Company Background

Atlassian is a leading provider of team collaboration and productivity software with annual revenues of more than $600 million. Software development, marketing, finance and other teams at over 89,000 organizations – from Fortune 500 companies to small businesses – use Atlassian's project tracking, content creation and sharing, real-time communication and service management products to work better together and deliver quality results on time.

www.atlassian.com

Atlassian's Training Approach and Challenges

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Robert Bleeker,
Education Manager
at Atlassian

Atlassian's grass-roots business model, in which users download Atlassian's popular tools like Jira Software and Confluence directly from the website (for as little as $10/month), coupled with its technical user base, led customers to start using Atlassian software in the absence of formal training.

However, as the company grew, widened the scope of its product offerings and began to work with large enterprises, it recognized the need to establish an official Training department. So, in 2013, Robert Bleeker, Atlassian's Education Manager, and a colleague were tasked with creating and managing the company's new training and certification department. The two shared the philosophy that you learn by doing, so they knew from the outset that all their product training would have to be "hands on."

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Prior to CloudShare, Atlassian used another virtual training solution with unsatisfactory results. Installation of virtual machines was cumbersome and complex, while the logistics for organizing a class were tedious and time-consuming. With the goals of increasing operational efficiency and improving the user experience, Bleeker's team began to look for a new solution.

CloudShare Solution:
"Hands On" Labs for All

After evaluating a number of alternatives, Atlassian chose CloudShare's virtual training labs solution. CloudShare offers powerful tools and templates, along with advanced cloud-based resources and infrastructure, to enable the easy deployment and delivery of specialized training labs. CloudShare enables Atlassian to quickly and efficiently create hands-on IT lab environments for customers across the globe.

"CloudShare demonstrated a big edge in terms of technology and innovation vis-a-vis other products we evaluated," explained Bleeker. "We were particularly impressed by CloudShare's HTML5 in-browser functionality, as well as its smartly designed user interface and highly efficient scheduling component."

In keeping with their hands-on training philosophy, **Atlassian uses CloudShare's virtual training environment to support their customers training activities, including live virtual classes and recorded training.** Using CloudShare, Atlassian provides hands-on training for all products and verticals to hundreds of students every month. Bleeker and his team develop the course content and manage course registration and administration via CloudShare, while partners deliver the actual lectures.

Bleeker credits their flexible and budget-friendly recorded training option for helping their training program take off. Once a course has been tested and proven to work flawlessly, Atlassian creates a recording of the instructor (partner) giving the lecture, and bundles it with a workbook and lab time, enabling students to do the exercises themselves. "We sell twice as much of recorded version as we do of the live virtual version of the same class," comments Bleeker.

Bleeker also points out, **"CloudShare's innovative capabilities and determination to help us create an excellent user experience has resulted in some really nice features that would have been very difficult to do somewhere else."** A good example of this close collaboration is an RDP bypass feature designed for Atlassian customers in India, Latin America, South Africa and other regions that were experiencing severe performance degradation due to the bandwidth-intensive nature of RDP. The new feature allows students to launch training directly through their local browser over HTTP, a much lighter protocol, resulting in a much better response time and much better experience with the VM.

"The RDP bypass required a lot of tooling on the backend, and CloudShare's responsive R&D team was very helpful in making this happen," said Bleeker. "By working with CloudShare, we are able to proactively develop new features to address the evolving virtual training needs of our customers."

Battle-Tested Performance at Atlassian Summits

Twice a year, Atlassian Summit user conferences bring together over 1,000 students in one venue for two days of intensive training – once in California and once in Europe. These events allow users to get in-depth product training and structured preparation for certification exams. At the same time, they represent a major logistical and technical challenge for Atlassian's training department and are the ultimate scalability test for CloudShare's virtual training labs.

The event typically consists of 30-75 courses (depending on length) in 15 classrooms. All classes are based on live hands-on instruction and run on CloudShare's virtual labs. This can lead to hundreds of students launching virtual machines at once, and it's up to CloudShare to ensure that every user has a flawless experience.

"CloudShare is instrumental in helping us prepare for these business-critical user events, including course setup, launching virtual machines and on-site support," said Atlassian's Robert Bleeker.

"We've worked with CloudShare three years running to support these annual events, overcoming myriad challenges and producing a top–notch training experience for our customers."

Results and Benefits

"Despite the ever-increasing scope of our training operations, I still don't need a separate manager for CloudShare. I think that speaks volumes for the way they work, as well as the functionality and scalability of their solution."

Robert Bleeker,
Education Manager
at Atlassian

CloudShare has become an integral component of Atlassian's training operations. Its virtual labs solution and ongoing support enable Atlassian to execute its "hands on" training philosophy with maximum efficiency and minimum cost, while serving as a foundation for revenue growth. By using CloudShare's virtual training labs solution, Atlassian has achieved concrete benefits:

An improved student experience
CloudShare offers RDP in-browser functionality based on HTML5, so students can easily connect to virtual machines from their browser without having to install special software.

4-minute class setup
Prior to using CloudShare, it took Atlassian 1.5 hours on average to set up a class. These activities include student registration, scheduling, email communications, receiving passcodes and sending the virtual machine link. With CloudShare, Atlassian has reduced this time by 96% to four (4) minutes, a huge time savings that really adds up.

User interface designed for users
An advanced, intuitive and well-organized user interface optimizes the training experience for both students and instructors. All required features are readily accessible from a single view, so users never "leave" the workspace, even after refreshing the screen.

Reduced overhead through automation
CloudShare enables Atlassian to support its training operations with a lean 8-person team by minimizing the need for manual tasks. Automated processes include: class scheduling, replication of environments, preprogrammed activation, and auto-suspension of "idle" labs to save costs.

Future Plans

In looking toward the future, Bleeker explains that he has plans to add more automation. Atlassian just implemented a new LMS system and next up on his project list is to integrate it with CloudShare's virtual labs.

About
CloudShare

cloudshare

As the leading supplier of virtual IT environments in the cloud, CloudShare provides its clients with specialized solutions designed to meet a wide variety of business needs – including lab environments for virtual training, development and testing, and sales demos and POCs. All CloudShare environments are completely customizable and offer on-demand access to infrastructure resources such as servers, storage, networks, and software.

CloudShare customers include many leading software and cybersecurity companies, such as Palo Alto Networks, Atlassian, ForgeRock, Sophos, Dell and HP.

To learn more about how CloudShare's advanced lab solutions can benefit your business, visit us at www.cloudshare.com.