

Release Management Meets Social Media

BY BRIAN HOUSE

Effective communication is one of the toughest challenges when it comes to deploying applications. In today's fast-paced, always-evolving culture, communication has become more of a struggle than ever before.

“ The most important step in transitioning your Release Management practice to leverage social media is to get your teams aligned with the new strategy. ”

The increased frequency of deployments increases the risk of outages, bugs, and delayed releases. Therefore, it is important to establish a dedicated source of communication between delivery teams and the business. One of the most effective tools already being used by a majority of release managers is social media. However, they are only using it in their personal lives without transitioning it into their business practices. Social media is a powerful force that can help an organization communicate effectively and enhance everyday business practices that are driven primarily by traditional methods. One business practice that has the greatest potential to benefit from incorporating social media is Release Management, as it requires effective communication and the flexibility to make and communicate changes in a timely manner.

BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO ORGANIZATIONS



Stakeholders can choose how involved they want to be.

The most vital component of Release Management is communication across teams, which has proven to be a struggle due to cluttered inboxes and busy schedules. As email volume continues to increase, the efficiency of relaying pertinent information in a timely manner decreases. Social media offers the dedicated communication source that a successful Release Management strategy needs. Having one form of communication that relays all information regarding a release, ranging from schedule updates, Go/No-Go decisions, or successful deployment alerts will allow all stakeholders to be informed throughout the lifecycle of the release. These same stakeholders can choose how involved they want to be by how often they access the application.



Real-time updates are visible to all audiences immediately.

EMERGENCE OF MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

The primary goal and benefit of using social media in a Release Management strategy is the real-time updates that are visible to all audiences immediately. Leveraging social media applications with tablets or smartphones is a great way to create this desired effect. Social media channels provide the dedicated communication source that business teams are looking for to alert executives, teams, or even customers about release updates or impacts. Organizations can keep their email accounts reserved for everyday business activities by choosing a social media tool like Yammer to discuss release-related inquiries. With the rise of smartphones, a Yammer account dedicated to an organization's Release Management practice can notify all parties that an update involving an upcoming release has just been sent. Team members can adapt to this notification channel as a source for all release-related information.



Start by selecting one tool to use for an upcoming release.

START SMALL AND FINISH BIG

A less overwhelming approach to adapting social media into a Release Management strategy is the "Test and See" approach. Organizations can start integrating social media by selecting one tool to use for an upcoming release. Part of the post-deployment retrospective can be focused on the success of effectively utilizing the social media tool throughout the release lifecycle. Determining if the tool helped or hindered the actual release will provide management with the feedback necessary to integrate social media on a larger scale. If teams feel that it was beneficial, they will continue to use it and begin their search for their next segment of the release lifecycle that can benefit from leveraging social media.



A release manager can gauge the interest and adoption of their fellow team members and stakeholders.

MEDIA AND RELEASE PLANNING

The idea of integrating social media with Release Planning rather than integrating with Release Deployment is considered to be an easier path to adoption. Release Planning offers a much larger opportunity to revert back to how releases were managed beforehand. The planning aspects happen weeks, if not months, in advance which allows for a quick change. During a release integration a release manager can gauge the interest and adoption of their fellow team members and stakeholders. If there is negative feedback, the planning phases can be reverted back to the original methods. If a Release Management strategy utilizes social media during release deployment, there is less of an opportunity to revert back to previous deployment strategies.

Communication throughout the lifecycle of a release is the most vital part of any Release Management strategy. The most important step in transitioning your Release Management practice to leverage social media is to get your teams aligned with the new strategy. If your organization does not fully believe there are benefits to utilizing social media, then adoption will suffer. Experience shows that starting off small and slowly integrating more aspects of your Release Management strategy can raise adoption rates. This allows organizations to gather feedback in post-deployment retrospectives. Social media can be a powerful tool, and if used properly can benefit both the organization and its customers.

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