

Faster-Moving SAFe Teams. How? Integrate Toolchains with Cisco Spark

The Cisco Customer Care IT organization uses the Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe), which allows development teams to practice Agile methodology at scale. With SAFe, agile scrum teams with 7-9 members take full responsibility for a particular feature or feature set and each team works in parallel. SAFe tools then automatically bring the completed code for each feature set together into a single working application for faster delivery of a completed application code release. SAFe helps us speed up releases, increase productivity, and improve quality. “Our ultimate goal with SAFe is to continuously improve the customer experience with our software,” says Heather Yurko, service owner for Cisco Global Service Logistics and Operations IT.

To move quickly, team members need information from each other—and also from DevOps tools. For example, the software tool Jenkins automatically reports whether a build succeeded or failed. SonarQube and CheckMarx analyze source code quality. Artifactory tracks artifacts produced during software development. Before, developers received status updates from DevOps tools via email.

But email alerts delayed the pipeline. Suppose an engineer in Bangalore pushes code to Jenkins before going to sleep at 11:00 p.m. If the code compiles in two hours, the engineer is fast asleep. Meanwhile, it’s the middle of the workday in San Jose, California. What if California engineers could find out the instant that DevOps tools completed a task—without having to constantly check email? Then we’d have follow-the-sun development, speeding up new feature introduction. “We wanted to have one place to go to see toolchain data, send messages, and hold group meetings,” says Anand Sharma, Cisco IT architect.

One Place to Communicate with Humans and Machines

We quickly built a simple, powerful solution by integrating our toolchain with Cisco Spark, using the Spark API. Cisco Spark is a cloud service that provides an unlimited number of virtual rooms for messaging, meeting, and calling. Now our DevOps tools also push status notifications into the Spark room. Engineers receive a Spark notification on all of their devices whenever a new message arrives—either from a human or a DevOps tool. The tools we’ve integrated with Cisco Spark include Git, BitBucket, Jenkins, SonarQube, CheckMarx, Artifactory, and uDeploy. Integration took less than 10 minutes for each tool.

“Now when I talk to peers in different locations, I no longer have to ask if they did this or that,” Sharma says. “I can see what they’ve done in the Spark room, so we can immediately begin talking about next steps.”

One happy customer: the Global Service Logistics and Operations IT team (GSLO-IT), which writes the software that supports the movement of \$10.6 billion of inventory through 1700 depots each year. Developers work in two U.S. locations, Bangalore, and Jerusalem. “As soon as we wake up, we can see all the communications and toolchain status updates that we missed overnight,” Yurko says. “Spark rooms help us keep our scrum teams connected and happy. They also save developers from digging through email to gather information. We’re giving teams the tools and environment they need to be self-directed.”