ATLASSIAN

The complete guide to enterprise user management with Crowd

Everything there is to know about managing your Atlassian Data Center users at scale with Crowd

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Introduction

Enterprise user management is the ability to manage and maintain user access to various resources implemented across the entire organization.

In today's broader IT landscape, user management solutions are well-established but varied in terms of involvement. At its most basic use, a user management solution satisfies essential security requirements of user authentication and authorization.

At its most complex use, it centralizes oversight of user activity across the enterprise, covering anything from two-factor authentication to selective synchronization of directories to multi-domain single sign-on (SSO). Most companies have different needs when it comes to user management, whether it be because of size or complexity of the organization. However, it's safe to say that in the majority of scenarios, user management can be defined as a solution that enables admins to provision or remove user access based on need and role.

At the enterprise level, the need for a great user management solution can often grow exponentially. Large user bases, multiple directories, and different levels of access and permissions make it a huge task to keep track of and manage access for all your users. But how do you identify the right mix of capabilities that would make an enterprise user management solution a good fit for your organization? Well that's what we're here to help with.
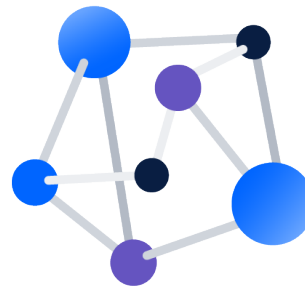
User management options for your self-managed Atlassian products

If you choose to host your Atlassian products yourself, you have a few options for managing the users of those products.

The two main options are with:

- built-in user management capabilities in Data Center products

- Crowd Data Center

It's important to understand the differences between your options and when it's time to consider Crowd Data Center for your user management needs.
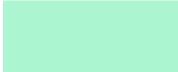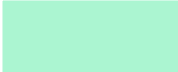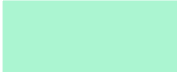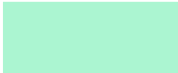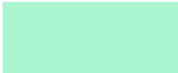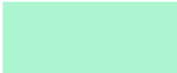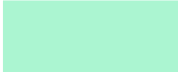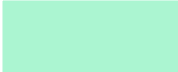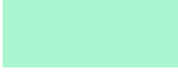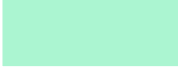
Built-in user management in Data Center

To help you make the most of your enterprise products, we've included a number of user management features in all of our Data Center products - Jira Software, Jira Service Management, Bitbucket, and Confluence. You can manage your users within the products themselves either with an internal directory or through an external directory by using your own IdP. However, this option is generally more limited in terms of capabilities and may not be a suitable solution for organizations dealing with particularly large or complex user bases.

Crowd Data Center

Crowd is Atlassian's user management solution for self-managed products. It offers a robust feature set to help you efficiently manage users at the enterprise level. In particular, Crowd Data Center is built for high availability, performance, and effective administration at scale. Features like centralized license visibility and delegated administration give you enhanced visibility and control while the ability to cluster your Crowd Data Center deployment helps ensure your user management solution doesn't suffer from any downtime.

User management for self-hosted Atlassian products: A feature comparison

	Crowd Server (no longer available as of 2/2/21)	Crowd Data Center	Built into Data Center products
SSO	🟩	🟩	🟩
Built-in audit log	🟩	🟩	🟩
Local groups	🟩	🟩	🟧
Multiple user directories	🟩	🟩	🟩
Delegated group admins	🟧	🟩	🟧
Centralized license visibility	🟧	🟩	🟧
Multi-domain SSO	🟧	🟩	🟧
Azure AD user filtering	🟧	🟩	🟧
User provisioning (SCIM)	🟧	🟧	🟧
Enforced 2FA	🟧	🟧	🟧
API token access	🟧	🟧	🟧

A closer look at Crowd Data Center

Comparing Crowd Server vs. Crowd Data Center

If you've used Crowd Server in the past - or are still using it - you may be wondering what exactly the difference is between Crowd Server and Data Center. Both provide you with control over your data and infrastructure - as well as secure user identity authentication - but the main distinction comes in how Crowd Data Center meets the unique needs of enterprises.

For one, Crowd Data Center ensures high availability, providing uninterrupted access to Crowd and the other systems connected to it. If your Atlassian products are mission critical for the teams using them, then it's imperative to have an authentication method that is always on. Data Center's active-active clustering model eliminates the single point of failure that could result in your server node going down.

When it comes to visibility, it's true that both Crowd Server and Data Center give you a centralized space for your products and instances, however the Data Center edition provides additional capabilities to monitor and manage license usage with features such as centralized license visibility and Azure Active Directory (AD) user and group filtering, which we'll discuss in more detail soon.

Lastly, when it comes to control, Crowd Data Center includes exclusive features that give the admin more flexibility such as the ability to delegate group-level administration to other team members, and additional controls for governing local group permissions.

We built Crowd Data Center with enterprise customers in mind. It supports you as you grow and mature by providing the infrastructure and capabilities to ensure consistent performance as you scale. And it allows you and your teams to work faster and smarter so that you can both efficiently and effectively manage your users at scale.

Externalizing user management efforts from individual products

Externalizing and centralizing user activity matters.

A single location

Perhaps one of Crowd's biggest draws is that it enables admins to oversee all user management under one roof. That means an admin can see who's logged into what instance of what application when, regardless of what subsidiary or region they're a part of. Gone are the days spent synchronizing directories or cycling through audit logs by individual products

Reduce replicated actions and improve product performance

For large organizations managing tens of thousands of users across multiple instances of multiple products, reducing replicated actions can go a long way. It gives back time to focus on other valuable activities, and more importantly it takes the weight off of individual products and improves their performance.

Some Organizations choose to manage users within each product they own, and this can be a sound method when dealing with a relatively small user base or only a few instances of 1 or 2 product(s). However, this job can become tricky and repetitive when having to track thousands of users from various areas of the business. It also means having to configure potentially hundreds of directories on a per-product basis. Removing this strain on the individual product can result in positive gains for performance.

Control and flexibility

One of the most popular features of Crowd Data Center is the ability to govern local group permissions. What does this mean for an enterprise? It means you can keep your users in LDAP and define their authentication permissions in Crowd, effectively making group changes within your directories. By setting up new users to be automatically added to specified groups, admins can save a significant amount of time.

How to know when it's time to consider Crowd Data Center

Whether you're currently using Crowd Server or or the built-in user management capabilities in Data Center products, you may be wondering when is the right time to consider Crowd Data Center.

> In general, we see the need for Crowd Data Center being greater when you're managing increasingly large and complex user bases and your organization requires reliable access to your user management solution. If you're facing any of the following situations, it may be time to make the move to Crowd Data Center.

We have two or more Atlassian products

How are you trying to streamline your administrative processes for individual products? Some of you may be using a federated environment or trying to meet your needs on a single server. However, your job quickly becomes more complicated when your single server is overloaded, or your federated servers aren't working together the way you'd like. Are you spending too much time managing simple tasks like password reset requests?

We have a growing pool of users

How many users do you have accessing your Atlassian applications each day? Is this number growing? As your user base grows, you may find it more difficult to manage those users without a dedicated user management solution.

We cannot afford downtime

Is downtime unacceptable in your organization? Do you know what an hour of downtime costs you? If high availability is critical for any of your Atlassian products, then it should be crucial for your user management solution as well. Any amount of downtime in your user management solution could impact access to all of your products and lead to lost productivity from your employees being unable to work. It is essential to consider how many of your employees rely on Atlassian products to get their jobs done and what that hour of downtime may cost you.

> If any of these concerns apply to your organization, it may be time to start using or upgrade to Crowd Data Center for reliable user management at scale. Our Crowd Data Center offering simplifies your job by centralizing your user management efforts and giving you the tools you need to manage continued growth.

Customer spotlight

Why our customers choose Crowd Data Center

Administration at scale

At Uhub (the technology team behind WPP, the world's largest advertising agency), Crowd Data Center helps them manage complexity. With 9,200 employees across 360-plus global business, efficient and effective user management is key. As Opher puts it, Crowd has been their "saving grace." The Uhub team love how Crowd Data Center makes it easier it is to manage so many users, licenses, and permission levels. In-depth auditing and increased transparency into user access and permissions give them the visibility and control that they need to effectively manage their large and complex user base.

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>
> **Our saving grace has been Crowd. We utilize it heavily, and we couldn't make things work the way they do without Crowd.**
>
> **OPHER LICHTER, GLOBAL EVP**

High availability

Many customers also look to Crowd Data Center for the reliability it provides. High availability is critical for many organizations in lots of their products, but it's particularly important in a user management solution. When your user management solution is down, access to all of your products can be hindered. That's why customers rely on Crowd Data Center for maximum uptime.

ATLASSIAN CUSTOMER TESTIMONIAL

> 66 We chose Data Center for Crowd due to a desire for high availability on that service.
>
> — IT Manager, Medium Enterprise Computer Software Company

Source: IT Manager, Medium Enterprise Computer Software Company

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Purpose-built features for the enterprise

Crowd Data Center not only allows you to centralize user management and ensure reliable access, but it also helps you simplify administration and license management with a number of enterprise-grade capabilities.

With features like advanced SSO, centralized license visibility, and more, you can save both time and money while managing your users.

SSO 2.0

Single sign-on that's built for the enterprise

As an organization grows and transforms, so do its applications and user base – but it doesn't stop there. The number of instances you have to manage also grows, and some of our customers manage as many as fifty. Whether it's triggered by a merger, an acquisition, organizational changes, or plain old user growth, user management at scale calls for a single sign-on solution that satisfies enterprise needs.

Multi-domain access

We see more and more customers centralize processes to gain visibility across the many layers of their businesses. Not only do they see benefits from increased IT efficiency, but they also recognize the advantages of centralizing the administrative experience to mitigate support needs. However, a challenging byproduct can be thousands of projects spanning multiple instances in separate domains. With multi-domain access, users and admins alike can use SSO across different domains, no matter where they deploy or what team they're on. This means avoiding roadblocks across function, region, or subsidiary, and getting through your work faster.

A seamless experience

The crux of SSO will always be a seamless user experience for both admins and end-users. SSO 2.0 for Crowd Data Center offers this and more, with improvements to configuration, support for third-party integrations, and an optimized login process.

You can now configure SSO in just four clicks. We've eliminated any potential interruptions caused by lengthy restarts or the need to modify any files within Atlassian products during the configuration process. Admins will now enjoy the same configuration experience for Crowd and all Atlassian Server and Data Center products.

We've also made it easier to integrate third-party or custom apps into Crowd for authentication by connecting to major identity providers that implement the SAML 2.0 specifications, including but not limited to Microsoft Azure AD, Microsoft ADFS, OneLogin, OKTA, and PingOne. This means easier access to all of your go-to apps.

Last but not least, users have one standard login page to access all applications that are connected to Crowd Data Center.

License management and optimization

Identify license waste to save on costs and delegate responsibilities to get time back.

Centralized license visibility

For many of our customers, managing users across the multiple instances they own becomes more challenging as their enterprises grow and mature. When you're dealing with a large organization – one with various teams across different functions or subsidiaries – you'll find a significant number of users who log in to Jira, Confluence, or Bitbucket once and then never again. Those users add up and can bloat your estimated license usage, resulting in inaccurate reporting or, worse, a higher cost for a user tier that's not representative of actual usage.

With centralized license visibility, admins can see which users are inactive across all of the Server and Data Center licenses they own for Jira, Confluence, and Bitbucket. Easily accessible visibility like this not also serves as a foundation for optimal license usage, but allows you to identify potential cost-saving benefits from a financial perspective.

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> **Users are coming and going – some of them only log in once – and we don't want our licenses going to waste.**
>
> CUSTOMER QUOTE

Delegated group-level administration

While centralization is undoubtedly helpful to an admin, there is still an abundance of monotonous tasks that fill up an admins calendar. With delegated group-level administration, admins can empower group owners who manage their teams and ultimately delegate tasks to them. On top of saving time, your teams will no longer have to wait for you to make group membership changes.

With Crowd Data Center, you can assign an individual or even an existing group as a group-level administrator in just a few clicks so that he or she can add or remove group members just as quickly.

Selective synchronization for Azure AD

To help reduce the friction of synchronizing Active Directories, Crowd Data Center gives you the ability to filter users by group membership for Microsoft Azure AD. Not only does this prevent unnecessary license usage in connected Atlassian applications, but it spares you the time and effort of having to synchronize the whole AD. Similar to centralized license visibility, Azure user filtering is an additional layer that helps you clean up and optimize your Atlassian instances, making your job a little easier in the process.

Managing enterprise-wide usage doesn't need to be a complicated experience, and if done right can improve performance, visibility, and costs.

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We know that enterprise user management will continue to evolve and we're here to support you at each step.

Start the conversation

Find more information about Crowd Data Center on our website:

https://www.atlassian.com/enterprise/data-center/crowd

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