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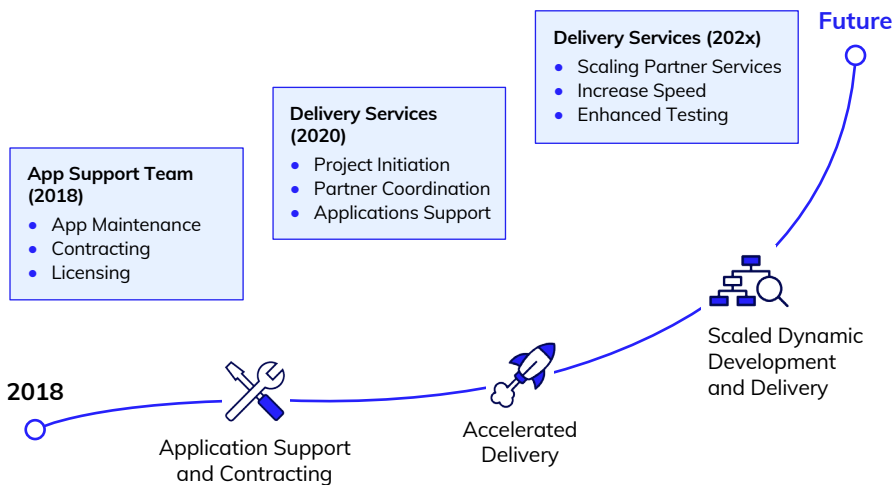
Profiles in Appian Excellence: Astria's Delivery Services CoE

Astria* is a global pharmaceuticals company whose CoE is managed by IT and provides application development and delivery services to distributed business lines. Their CoE resources work closely with a pool of preferred partners, allowing the team to influence outcomes across a portfolio of projects.

Astria's CoE journey.

Astria began their Appian Journey with small projects, the success of which helped build confidence across business partners for future investment. Soon other business units started using Appian for their own, independent project.

By 2018, Astria was working with multiple external partners on Appian projects and "needed a central group to support those applications", says the IT Manager and CoE Lead. "While our CoE initially had a limited focus on application support, we realized the benefit of a more centralized group coordinating between the partners that do Appian development and internal Astria business units."

App Support Team (2018)
- App Maintenance
- Contracting
- Licensing

Delivery Services (2020)
- Project Initiation
- Partner Coordination
- Applications Support

Delivery Services (202x)
- Scaling Partner Services
- Increase Speed
- Enhanced Testing

Future

2018

Application Support and Contracting

Accelerated Delivery

Scaled Dynamic Development and Delivery

"Over the past year, we've shifted our approach from one of support to become more of a delivery services provider, advising business partners on potential projects, coordinating delivery with partners, and sharing knowledge across internal and external teams. Like an external services provider, we are funded via project costs ultimately billed back to the business."

In the future, Astria wants the CoE to expand its delivery services offerings to more effectively scale as partners take on a greater number of projects. They also want to increase speed by working with other Astria teams on automation initiatives such as RPA, IDP and AI.

ASTRIA*

Industry:
Global Pharmaceuticals

Number of employees:
+100,000

Revenue:
$50+ billion

* Astria is a pseudonym case profile.

CoE overview and roles.

Astria's CoE has 8 total FTEs, works with four external development & delivery partners with 70+ individuals on those teams. They also work directly with business partners and support over 15 applications. In the near future, they would like to double their team's resources and further invest in functional stability (governance) to more effectively support Appian initiatives across the business. "All our funding comes from the delivery of projects, so it's hard to justify spending on foundational group capabilities that are necessary for our group to scale effectively".
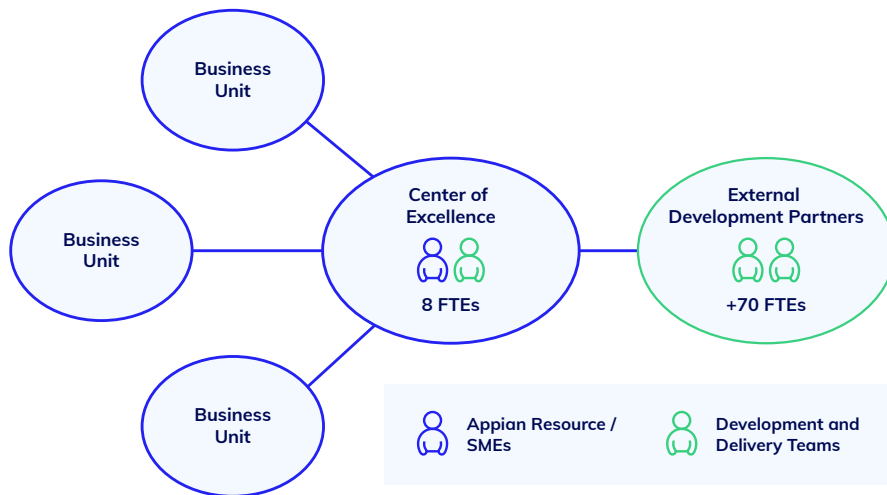
Current roles on the team include: architects, scrum masters, developers, testers and a contracting/licensing expert. The goal is to embed delivery expertise into distributed projects and fully map against SDLC needs - ecosystem, platform and development experts that can guide both business partners and delivery teams end-to-end.

CoE responsibilities.

The CoE's services include:

- **Project initiation services.** The CoE works with business units to scope projects based on business needs. They also assess fit with Appian and recommend potential delivery options back to business partners.

- **Partner coordination services.** The CoE ensures partners develop and deploy applications according to Astria's specific requirements. They will periodically conduct partner audits to ensure appropriate oversight and will also manage relevant contracts and licenses.

- **Applications support services.** For the most part, the CoE does not directly support applications after they are built. Instead, they provide advisory services to lines of business about how to effectively manage and maintain those applications. For example, the CoE team often advises on application enhancement requests.

> Developing good talent and building out the base of skills in a team can be a challenge, but is something you can't skimp on. Having a team with a blended skillset has helped us accelerate development with partners.

IT Manager and CoE Lead

> We want to work together with business partners to help them see the art-of-the-possible. Appian has a lot to offer, but if a business partner is unfamiliar, we want to make sure we're using Appian for the most appropriate fit projects.

IT Manager and CoE Lead

Lessons learned.

Don't just take orders, shape them. "If given the chance, 90% of the time business units (BUs) will just ask for their backlog to be completed without much informed prioritization or knowledge sharing around what's best. The CoE needs to serve as a trusted advisor to help BUs shape their direction."

Promote a product mindset. "The team must have a 'product mindset'. This means they need to understand the business problem the app needs to address end-to-end. If they don't they tend to become 'feature focussed'… and risk producing an app that does not, in the end, have the desired business impact."

Blended teams accelerate partners. "Having a team with blended skills is critical when working with a partner ecosystem. Astria folks know the company and the environment, the partner staff tend to be more technically capable, but don't always know much about Astria. Setting our CoE to be a one-stop for everything Astria helps partners get to work faster and accelerates time to value."

Think you have an Appian best practice? Interested in sharing it with the Appian Community? Email us at bestpractices@appian.com to schedule a research call with our team.

> We're able to improve the quality and shorten cycle time of core SDLC phases, such as testing. This gives us more confidence to complete these activities effectively and mitigate project risk.
>
> IT Manager and CoE Lead