Synchronizing with HPE ALM for Traceability Across Toolset
Questions and Answers
February 16, 2017

Q: What are your users asking for next?
A: It's been pretty quiet now with our existing syncs but we have several requests to set up new syncs between ALM <-> JIRA, JIRA (in house) <-> JIRA (outside vendor), ServiceNow <-> JIRA, CA Clarity <-> ALM, and more.

Q: Before you brought in Tasktop, how did your users deal with the lack of integrations? (duplicate entry, using multiple tools)?
A: Emails, reports, discussions during scrum calls are things I can think of. Those techniques can work but they aren't always as efficient as working with work items directly in the toolset you use for your regular work.

Q: Does ~~TaskTop~~Tasktop work with Rational Software Architect (RSA)?
A: Not currently but we've had some customer requests for RSA.

Q: How long did it take and how many people worked on the implementation of the synch project?
A: It took about 3 months to implement end-to-end but that was over the year end so holidays and PTO impacted it somewhat. We had around 10 people involved to some extent, but only 3 were key contributors. As the ALM and Tasktop admin I spent the most time on the effort.

Q: Could you control when requirements are synced vs. test cases & defects synced?
A: Tasktop Sync uses queries, filters, reports, whatever each end-point uses natively to specify the work items that are included within a sync mapping. To indicate when a work item should start syncing you can use a field or status value for instance.

Q: Have you synced any tools between different network domains. Ex HPE SaaS into internal dev tools or 3rd Party Developers?
A: Most of our tools are hosted in-house. We do sync with ServiceNow which is hosted externally. We're also looking at syncing to externally hosted JIRA end-points in the next few months.

Q: Is Tasktop compatible with ALM and Version1?
A: Yes, it is. A full list of integrations is available at https://docs.tasktop.com/tasktop/supported-repository-versions

Q: Only want to sync reqs when testers are ready.
A: You could use any of several types of triggers to indicate when a requirement should sync such as: move it to a special folder, set a field to a certain value, transition the status to a certain value, etc.

Q: Do you have any additional information that you can share on completing the scanning in QC to support the workflow?
A: It's a bit much to cover in this format but feel free to email me with any questions you have: mford@tiaa.org.

Q: If you have more than 1 sync operating, how do you police Multiple-change conflicts?
A: In a bi-directional sync, Tasktop Sync allows you to specify which end-point is the master and takes precedence if a sync field is modified on both end-points at the same time. If you have two or more different syncs involved with the same project on one end-point, then you need to use queries in Tasktop Sync to select which work items sync where. We have 35 RTC project areas that sync to the same ALM project for example and Tasktop Sync uses ALM filters that we've set up to control what goes where.

Q: Business Requirements in Blue Print can also be sync with ALM? If so is any training about that?
A: You can learn a lot on line by googling different topics. If you want to sync Blueprint via Tasktop Sync, here is a link I found: https://www.tasktop.com/integrations/blueprint.

Q: We are looking at Integrating ALM and JIRA. This is quite interesting and I am looking forward to that. Do you have any idea, how should we start that? Talk to HPE for help?
A: We are investigating the same thing. HPE ALM Synchronizer works with ALM and JIRA and does not cost extra although it is somewhat limited in its feature set. We are evaluating that tool right now for our ALM <-> JIRA sync. Tasktop Sync can also do it and I'm sure there are others out there as well. I would start with Vivit for more information. You can email the Software Lifecycle Integration SIG leader (Jeff Downs) - http://www.vivit-worldwide.org/group/SLI. I would like to see Vivit SIG leaders take questions and send emails to those who have insight or to the whole SIG if they don't know who the experts are. There are also Vivit SIG Group feeds that are under- utilized right now but might become more useful with the mobile app we are building. Of course you can also reach out to HPE regarding the ALM synchronizer and Tasktop regarding their sync offerings.

Q: Does ~~TaskTop~~Tasktop support specific tools, or can you sync anything with it?
A: Tasktop provides connectors to many products in today's market. In order to sync with Tasktop there has to be a connector available. If you have a tool for which no connector exists, they have the ability to build a custom one for you.

Q: How do you feel ~~Task Top~~Tasktop compares to the HPE sync tool?
A: I've evaluated the HPE ALM Synchronizer recently. It covers the basics well and I've heard from other users that it works fine for them in their environment. I'd say it isn't as polished as Tasktop Sync and the configuration options are more limited. You can use templates and custom scripting with Tasktop Sync to better manage your sync mappings which is huge for us. Tasktop has a new Integration Hub that makes sync setup even easier than the legacy Tasktop Sync product.

Q: How many users use the ~~TaskTop~~Tasktop integration?
A: We have hundreds of users that benefit from the various sync integrations we have set up. Most users don't know anything about Tasktop Sync or even what happens on the other end-points. They just work with the work items in their tool and respond to field updates as they occur – which is how it should be. Tasktop Sync sits behind the scenes and moves our data around as needed. There are only two of us who log into the server and perform admin tasks for Tasktop Sync – mostly just me.

Q: What is the best option to solve issues with synci when you use roles in HP ALM?
A: I'm not sure what issues you are thinking of. We have a service account with sufficient privileges on each end-point to perform the sync tasks required such as creating and updating work items. We typically give the service account full admin privileges to tools that our team supports. For tools

supported by other areas, we work with them to provide the privileges required. In the end, it's a user/password logging in to the tool and calling the tool APIs.

Q: Do you have any issues synching between JIRA and ALM QC? Which version of ALM QC are you using?
A: We are right now working on our first ALM 12.53 <-> JIRA sync. I'm evaluating both HPE ALM Synchronizer and Tasktop Sync. We haven't run into any issues at this point. I've talked to other customers at HPE Discover conferences who have done this successfully with HPE ALM Synchronizer.

Q: Will there be a recording available of this for download or viewing later?
A: Yes, it is available at this link: http://www.vivit-worldwide.org/?page=21617HPEALM

Q: What is the advantage of using ~~TaskTop~~Tasktop over custom programs that use exposed APIa?
A: Tasktop provides the framework that queries the tools at specified intervals, makes the appropriate API calls, and emails any sync errors detected. You would have to build that out yourself for a true sync setup. Tasktop also has done all the leg work figuring out which API calls to make and how to make them efficiently. When they build a connector to a tool, they work with the company that sells that tool to make sure they are making the best calls possible. They also update their connectors to be compatible with new versions of each tool they connect to. You can of course do it on your own but there is usually more to it than you realize and some vendor APIs can be very complex and challenging to figure out.

Q: What security considerations are there when syncing externally. Does TTSync address any security?
A: When you set up a sync mapping with Tasktop Sync you provide a URL, username, and password. So the server upon which Tasktop Sync runs needs to be able to hit each system's URL. You may need to open ports and so forth to make those connections. If the external tool uses an HTTPS URL then it will be secure. It's no different than a user hitting the URL with a browser and logging in (through APIs).

Q: How to prevent sync errors when people adding additional statuses (like Jira) to a field that is not recognized by HP ALM?
A: Adding new fields to one end-point or another is not an issue but modifying Status values or drop down list of values on syncing fields can be an issue. Tasktop Sync can adjust if the same named value is added on both sides in some cases but adding new values on one end-point but not the other is largely an education/awareness issue. If you can avoid using the standard work item type and create a new type on each system, that can give you more control. For instance, don't use the standard Defect type in a tool, create a new one that is only used with the sync process and that only the sync process can create. We do that for a few syncs.

Q: Integration with tools from external parties e.g. sync defects with other companies?
A: Yes, we are looking into this ourselves with two different companies. Instead of adding our users to their JIRA project we are going to set up sync mappings between our JIRA projects and theirs. That way there is only one single user common between the two systems and everyone else works in the tool in their own company. Tasktop Sync will keep everything up to date between the two.

Q: Why did you use Tasktop instead of the ALM Synchronizer?
A: We brought in Tasktop Sync years ago so we already owned it and were familiar with it. We're already using it for part of the sync solution I spoke about in the webinar so it made sense to use it for the new sync. We evaluated HPE ALM Synchronizer years ago and found Tasktop Sync to fit our needs

better. As with any tool though, you need to evaluate periodically to make sure a tool still fits your needs as both tools and needs change over time.

Q: But then when test cases and defects are being created, I want those to sync real time, but not reqs because those would be frozen?
A: Tasktop Sync allows you to use queries to control when work items sync with another system so you can control when they sync and when they do not.

Q: Did you have an instance where you implemented a qc that already had manually loaded user story requirements, then you turned on the synch - how did you keep duplicate user story requirements form coming over?
A: In our case, no one has been manually adding User Stories as requirements in HPE ALM so we didn't run into that issue. It's actually not very easy to link existing work items between two tools with Tasktop Sync. It's much easier to let Tasktop Sync create the new work item in the other end-point. Then I would move any info from the old manually created work item to the new syncing one and retire the old one. During initial go-live Tasktop can help pair any existing work items that have been manually synchronized between tools. Generally linking existing work items is an activity when you start new integrations, not an ongoing manual intervention.

Q: Did you maintain reusable user story requirements so you get the updated requirements at a point in time but maintained the original one to the original tests script?
A: I'm not entirely sure how they plan to handle this. We'll see how it goes. Sometimes you have to dive in to get a good feel for the process and adjust as you go.

Q: So, you can't manually sync on demand?
A: With Tasktop Sync you can use the admin console to select any work item set up for syncing and force it to resync. I have not found a way to do that with HPE ALM Synchronizer.