

Huzzah!

A Case Study for Zappos Expertise - Custom App Development

Challenges

For several years after implementing Holacracy, Zappos utilized a third-party application that kept track of “circles” (akin to teams), “roles” (positions) and other holacratic nuances.

Though it recorded and stored the organizational structure accurately, it lacked customizability and flexibility. New features needed to be requested from the third-party developers, and not all requests were approved.

Solution

In order to accommodate the rate at which circles and roles change within Zappos, a new scrum team was formed to tackle the challenge of creating a highly customizable and extendable application. The project kicked off with three technologists: a backend architect, senior full-stack developer and senior user experience (UX) designer.

Along with the product owner, this concise team crafted a short-term plan for an initial product launch to the Zappos employee audience, as well as a long-term roadmap for a Software as a Service (SaaS) product called **Huzzah!**

To achieve feature-parity with the sunseting third-party application, the small cohort quickly grew into a 12-person agile scrum team of senior-level frontend and backend developers, QA and DevOps engineers, and UX/UI designers. Armed with a strong team of seasoned technologists, the roadmap was segmented into three buckets: Core Tool Hardening, Third-Party Integrations and SaaS Offering, while keeping sights on maintaining technical debt, building automated test coverage, and conducting periodic usability testing.

Results

Huzzah! launched its first version to the Zappos organization in April 2018. In the subsequent year, the development team added productivity features such as capturing meeting output and integrating with Asana to capture projects and tasks.

There are highly customized notification options for application events, microservices to power customizable widgets for the User Dashboard, and a robust developer API. Internal usability testing proves immensely valuable and help direct the user experience of the application.

Huzzah! is designed to be configurable to any type of organization, whether operating traditionally (hierarchically) or utilizing a framework such as Holacracy. This key product development tenet will allow the tool to be a SaaS offering to a wider audience in the near future.

Background

Zappos is structured and operates under Holacracy, an organizational framework where people and teams are self-managed. Responsibilities are distributed across the organization, rather than in a top-down hierarchy.

A traditional organization centers on people, managers, and reporting structures. Employees may be segmented into teams based on functional skills, but requests and projects typically funnel through managers and can live or die by their sole approval. Holacracy allows an organization to structure itself based on the work people do and roles they hold—not who they report to.