

REVIEW: ManagementStudio

Part V- Exploring the 4C's Methodology for Delivering Projects - COLLABORATE

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The Fourth 'C' is for COLLABORATE

Welcome to the final article in this series of ManagementStudio reviews of the 4C's methodology where I am going to take you through the last of the 4C's: COLLABORATE.

To finish off my theme of projects being like books and having taken you through that journey of telling a story, collaboration is twofold in my book. See what I did there? First it could be asking people to add their experiences in the example of writing a non-fiction title. Talk to subject matter experts and get their input. Then secondly, and once the book has been written, you work through the review process, ensuring accuracy and completeness. As you can see, the same applies to a project.

However, for me there is a fine line between collaboration and communication. To explain what I mean, I want to just highlight the subtle differences in the use case when it comes to ManagementStudio. Communication for me is more about engaging those end users. The people that the project focuses on, not only to make sure they are up to date on the project progress, but also to help the project team collate additional user-focused information and data that, as we have discussed, can only come from that human interaction.

But that is where the line becomes much finer as they now also could be seen as collaborating. But in reality, they are just reading questions and providing answers. They are not part of the project team, and that is where collaboration comes in.

Collaboration is aimed at the project team, those individuals who are managing and delivering the project and is enabled by ManagementStudio's ability to deliver a collaboration platform with the features that enable you to create a roles-based project team that have access to maybe more than one project, but all share a single source of data - that data being collected and collated during the capture phase.

From here you can start to allocate tasks to the team based on their role and also which project they are working on. In this article I am going to talk about those collaboration features and techniques integrated into the ManagementStudio platform.

Starting from the same set of data

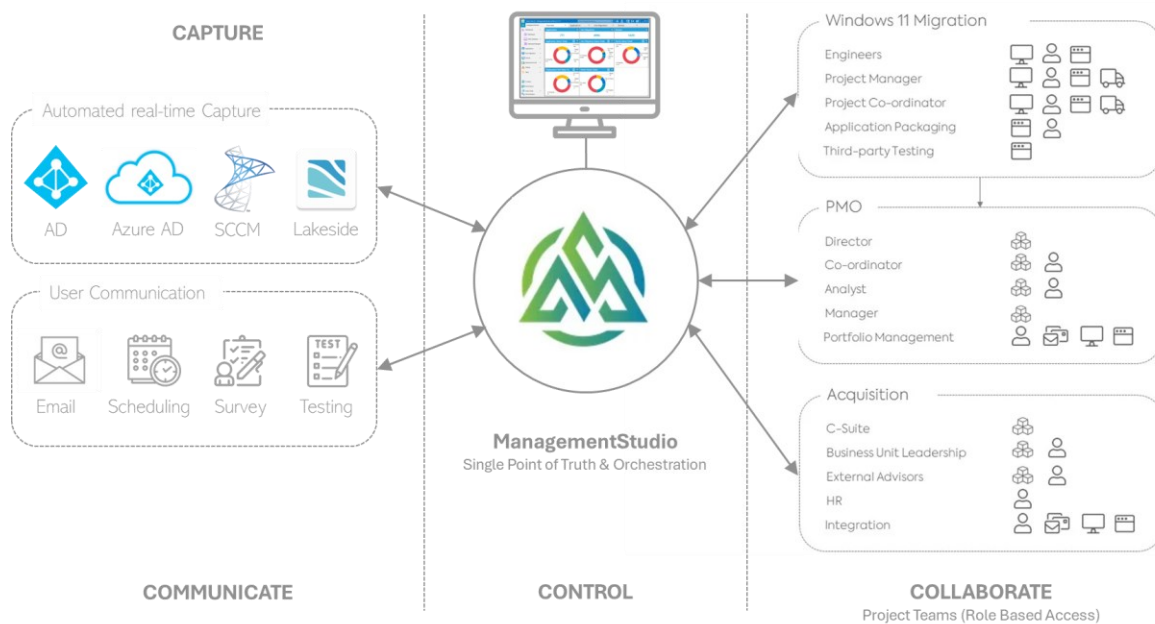
Let's quickly wind back the clock to the first article I wrote and the first of the 4C's, which is for Capture, just to refresh your memory.

To recap, Capture is the phase in which all data and information about your environment is collected by ManagementStudio. This is either automated or collected from communicating with the end users and gathering their input.

All captured data is stored centrally and provides that single point of truth, which is also automatically updated in real-time, managed by the Capture process or by asking end users additional questions.

So why am I covering old ground again? The reason being is that Capture is the very heart of where Collaboration begins. Every project starts from this single point of truth rather than different sources of information that potentially could be out of date or irrelevant. It means everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet, as the saying goes. But, more importantly than that, it means that you can guarantee the outcome and come up with the same answers, as they are all based on the same data.

From here you can control who has access to what parts of the data. Think of it as role-based access. For example, project leaders can see everything in all modules, whereas somebody working on a particular application migration project can only access the modules that are relevant for their application. I've created a diagram to better highlight this:



In addition, ManagementStudio allows those different project team members to have different access levels. Maybe just read only access on some of the information but full control on the

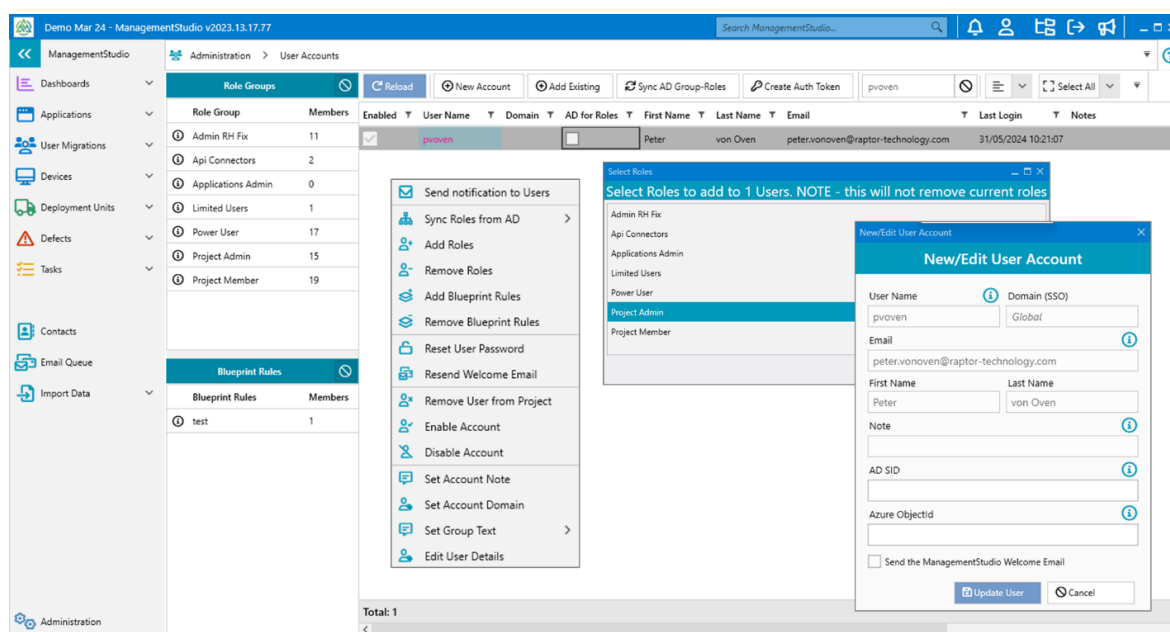
parts relevant to their project. So now you can see how ManagementStudio has the ability to manage multiple projects simultaneously using one real-time set of data.

That, in a nutshell, is collaboration in the ManagementStudio world. But it goes much further than that and I am going to look at some of the other collaboration features in more detail.

Who can I collaborate with?

An obvious question but who can I collaborate with on a project?

The answer is easy; anybody you want to, using the **Contacts** feature of ManagementStudio. Whether that person is inside your organisation (you can add them manually or use your existing directory services) or, using myself as an example, an outside third-party contractor where you can add them manually using email address and name details, as I've shown in the screenshots:



You will see that I have been added to the project and then the project manager, when creating my account, added a role to my account to reflect the part I play in the project. Once I was added as a user, and by checking the box for sending the welcome email, I received the welcome email that I showed you right back at the start when we talked about the Capture process.

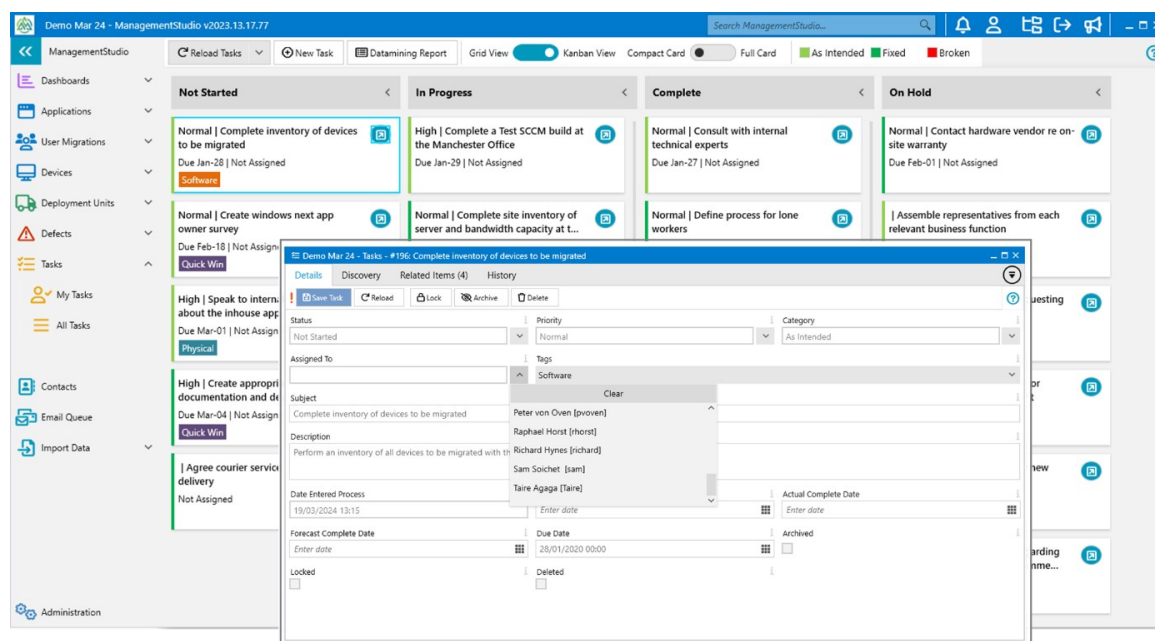
So now I have a centralised set of data, I've invited people to collaborate on my project, what's next? What can they collaborate on?

Assigning project tasks

We briefly touched on this back when I discussed the Control phase of the 4C's, and in particular I am referring to the **Tasks** feature of ManagementStudio. In that article I showed you

how you could create a task and then manage that task through its journey, from first being created to all the way to completion.

But the part I didn't tell you is that you can assign tasks to other members of the project team so you can work as a team to resolve them. It also means there is an audit trail and, using the reporting and datamining feature we've already discussed, you can see where perhaps there are tasks that are holding up the project.



To demonstrate that, in the screenshots above, I've shown the main tasks page again but this time also how to assign a task, set the priority, the category it relates to, a description of the task, as well as set the task due dates.

Once assigned, ManagementStudio will alert the assignee when they log into the ManagementStudio client but, in addition, you can set automatic reminders that, for example, tell the assignee that the due date is approaching.

As you can see, this is collaboration at its best and allows the team to work together to achieve the project goals by collaborating on project tasks. But it doesn't stop here, you can collaborate on another type of task that is more specific rather than the more general tasks we've just discussed. That is of course management of defects.

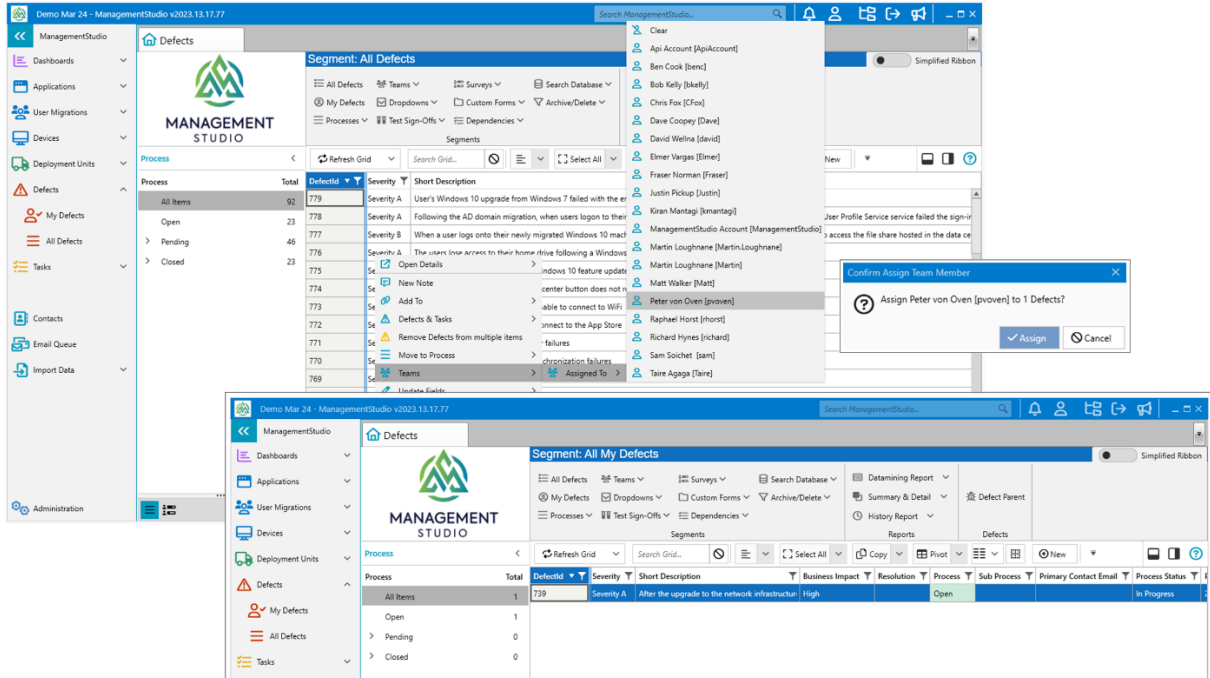
Collaborating to resolve project issues

Something else I've touched on previously too is the **Defects** feature where ManagementStudio enables you to log project faults and issues that prevent the project from moving forward. Think of it as your project helpdesk.

I showed you previously how to create a defect and how you could create an automated workflow around resolving that defect, or create dependencies, so that defects are looked at in the right order.

For example, you need a new device driver, and the dependency is that the vendor sends you that new device driver so the defect can continue through its journey to resolution.

I did touch briefly on assigning a defect to one of the project team members back in the Control article, but not wanting Control to steal Collaborates thunder, I've saved the detail for now.

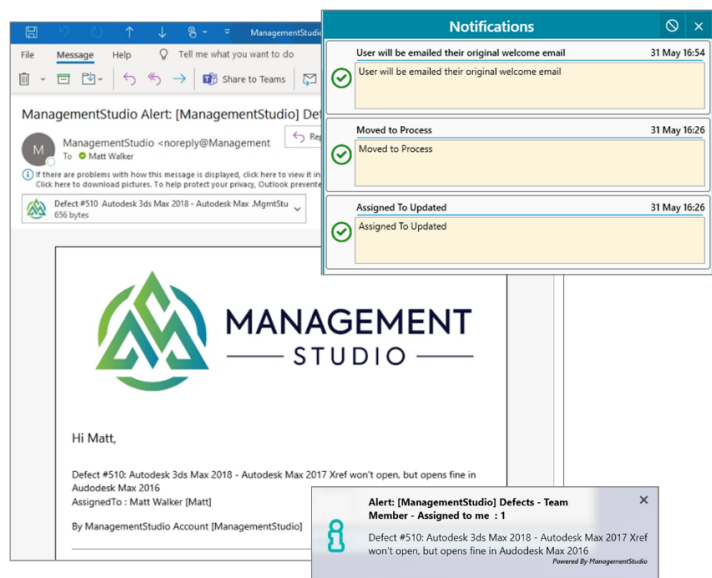


In the screenshots I've taken from the demo environment I had access to; I was able to see all the recorded defects; all the things that are stopping the project moving forwards. I then was able to pick a team member, me in this case, and assign the defect to me.

I would then be notified I have been assigned a defect and it then appears in the My Defects page of the ManagementStudio client. From here I can work on the defect, update it, create sub tasks to define the resolution process and essentially manage the whole defect process to the point of resolution, whereby the project can continue.

It's also possible to run a defect readiness report of applications for example, or any other module for that matter, so you can quickly identify if defects are holding up any application from moving forwards. This can be automatically emailed to the appropriate project stakeholder or admin teams, further enhancing the collaboration opportunities!

Just to finish up on that theme of notifying project team members, obviously end users are notified via email about project milestones or other requests.



However, with ManagementStudio users - aka the project team - not only will they receive email notifications, but they will also receive pop-up notification messages within the ManagementStudio client.

There is then a notifications dialog box that also provides an audit trail or history of previous notifications.

Summary

We've now reached the end of the story and in this final article we discussed the last of the 4C's, Collaborate, and what that means for ManagementStudio.

Collaboration is key part of any project and helps to build that true project team environment. After all, as the saying goes, there is no 'I' in team.

Building on the ManagementStudio communications platform, Collaborate takes that to the next level, enabling project team members to work together through project tasks, whether those tasks are general tasks or are more specific tasks such as issues and defects. All with the goal of ensuring the project or projects are on track.

Finally, don't forget that ManagementStudio allows multiple projects to run simultaneously.

Conclusion

As with all good books there is always a conclusion and hopefully a happy ending. Or maybe a cliff-hanger that leads to the next book.

In ManagementStudio terms the happy ending is of course a successfully completed project. It might be stating the obvious by saying the overall outcome is clearly important, but it is also equally important that the journey to get there was also smooth and without too many bumps along the way.

In my series of reviews, I hope I have demonstrated that ManagementStudio is an enterprise-class solution for ensuring the smooth transition through the various different project phases.

It brings together a single source of captures and collated data that enable project teams to make project decisions defining the steps to complete the project. While, along the way, all involved in the project, from those who are directly affected by the project to those who are delivering the project, everyone is kept engaged and up to date.

To use one final analogy - ManagementStudio is like the conductor of an orchestra. It can bring in all the right things at the right time with simple yet precise instructions. So, in those terms think of ManagementStudio as a project orchestrator.

But projects don't sit still for too long. The next one is just around the corner waiting and with ManagementStudio by your side you are ready to tackle this lifecycle of continuous transformation.

Whats Next?

The proof of the pudding is in the eating as they say. For the next steps I would suggest, in true Four Tops fashion, “reach out” to the team at ManagementStudio and take the solution for a test drive and see how you can bring order to your projects.

You can also see ManagementStudio in action, by heading over to their web site for a demo following this link: <https://managementstudio.com/demo/>



About the Author

Peter von Oven is an experienced technical consultant working closely with customers, partners, and vendors in designing technology solutions, to meet business needs and deliver outcomes. During his career, Peter has presented at key IT events such as VMworld, IP EXPO, and various VMUGs and CCUG events across the UK.

He has also worked in senior presales roles and presales management roles for Fujitsu, HP, Citrix, and VMware, and has been awarded VMware vExpert for the last ten years in a row including vExpert EUC, vExpert Pro, and now the new and, as yet unnamed, Omnissa EUC Expert community.

Today he works with partners and vendors helping drive and deliver innovative technology solutions. He is also an avid author, having now written 18 books and created numerous videos on the subject of VMware end-user computing solutions.

In his spare time, Peter volunteers as a STEM Ambassador, working with schools and colleges, helping the next generation develop the skills and confidence in building careers in technology. He is also a serving Royal Air Force Reservist currently working as an instructor with the Air Cadet organisation.