Best Practices for Veeva System Release Management

Delivering frequent regular releases with your Veeva application

Delivering a great application is one thing but maintaining greatness through release after release is another. After leading large Veeva release management processes, Spotline experts know that every successful project shares a few common attributes. The following aspects are important during release management.

Define and stick to a process for regular releases

A process that delivers a quality release on a regular basis instills confidence in all users. With cloud-based applications such as Veeva, users expect frequent application updates. Keeping a fast pace can be a balancing act between speed and quality. With every release, there is a certain amount of overhead, including documentation, approvals, and testing. Hence, when choosing a regular release interval, be sure to factor this in when defining your process. Choosing an interval spaced too far apart means users become frustrated with the length of time needed for an issue fix or enhancement.

Application enhancements, application issues, and product enhancement requests

To most end users, the differences between these three are unclear. But for the release team, understanding the differences is crucial. It is because each needs to be handled separately. Ideally, these are entered into a single system where all stakeholders have visibility. Upon entry into the system, these needs would be triaged into their appropriate category:

Application enhancements are requested to include new functionality in the application through configuration and/or custom coding. Often, the group making these requests is not aware of the impact the change could have on other teams. A simple process must be in place to manage these so that impacts can be discussed with all affected users. In addition, the cost and benefits of the request should be evaluated and ranked according to priority. This will ultimately assist in deciding whether to proceed with the request.

Application issues are behaviors in the customer-specific application that deviate from the requirement description. If no requirement exists, then how do you know it's an issue? When a requirement does not exist it is considered an application enhancement for new capabilities.

Product enhancements are requested changes that are accomplished through a change to the Veeva product itself. Like application enhancements, product enhancement requests should be discussed with all user groups that would be affected by the change. Once consensus is achieved within the business, enhancements should be ranked according to priority and presented to the Veeva product team for possible inclusion in a future Veeva release. The business should review and reprioritize these requests regularly, at least once every 4 months, to keep pace with Veeva's release schedule.

Product release versus application release

Again, everyone on the release team should understand product and application releases. Product release refers to the Veeva product itself, while application releases involve customer-specific configuration changes. A new Veeva product version is typically released once every four months, while Veeva Align is released five times a year. Consider having your internal application releases align with Veeva's product releases to reduce user confusion.

The need for speed in release management should never be at the cost of a quality deliverable. Speed is nothing without quality. Balancing these two provides a great experience and a user base that is confident and happy with the application.