

# Generali France Achieves Greater Agility, Improved Performance and Enhanced Security in its Release Process with Serena

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**Cyril Thenon,**  
Manager of the Performance  
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Center

The insurance group Generali France has automated its application delivery process for greater agility, improved performance and enhanced security.

When performed manually, application release management is among the most onerous activities carried out by IT departments. There are four disadvantages to this process: it is highly time-consuming; it is expensive; the larger the company, the more complex it becomes and there are associated risks, as it can result in human errors and loss of release control. This can have potentially disastrous consequences for operating performance and for a company's image.

Melinda-Carol Ballou, an analyst at IDC, observes that "At a time when agile development is becoming increasingly necessary for companies, application deployment can create a bottleneck; it slows down the release process just as sectors are in urgent need of applications for business development."

## Cut Complexity and Costs: Save Time

The Solution? Standardize and Automate. This is the approach taken by the Generali Group, Europe's leading life insurer with more than six million policyholders. Generali is also the second largest insurance group in France, with 10,000 employees and general agents. "We had three goals: reduce release complexity, shorten the deployment cycle so that it could be done in just a few clicks, and comply with new regulations", said Cyril Thenon, manager of the performance and industrialization skill center within the Generali France Production and Services Division. In particular, deployment reporting has to comply with FARG (Financial Accounting Risk Governance) audits and the internal initiatives of the Generali Group, so as to meet enhanced traceability requirements.



The Generali application delivery calendar is extremely active, with a monthly average of 120 application changes, 200 production deployments for the mainframe and 190 for distributed environments, in addition to several thousand batch processing runs. Generali France manages a total of 470 applications, including 120 key and 85 critical applications. The Generali application portfolio is 80% due to internal developments, hence the relevance of automating deployments for greater efficiency.

The screenshot shows a web-based report titled 'Rapport de déploiement Serena en RECEITE Vendredi 03 Octobre 2014'. It features a table with columns for 'Application', 'Message', 'Stat', 'Date de passage', 'Version', 'Statut', 'No.', 'Log', and 'Action'. The table contains several rows of deployment data, with a green bar on the right side of the table indicating a successful or positive status.

An example of a deployment report generated automatically in the validation phase.

## A One-Stop Solution for all Deployments

The Generali Release Deployment project was launched in 2011 with two supported technologies (JBoss and WebSphere). These were supplemented by webMethods and Sybase in 2012, Oracle, Datastage and Dollar Universe in 2013, and SQL Server and batch deliverables in 2014. “Since June 2014, all production deployments have been carried out using Serena Software solutions. Requests are now handled simply, quickly and efficiently”, notes Cyril Thenon.

Generali France implemented the Serena Software platform in order to manage the release life-cycle post Development handover. Generali uses three Serena Software components:

- Serena Business Manager, for building request management and workflow orchestration interfaces with integrated audit and reporting capabilities.
- Serena Dimensions CM, for managing “Vault” versions, which guarantee integrity and ensure that an application package will remain unchanged in any environment.

- Serena Deployment Automation, for centralized automation of deployments via a technical deployment process model.

“Serena Software is a robust, easy-to-update and open solution in comparison to our existing processes. This was a key criterion for incorporating it into our environments,” confirms Thenon.

## Continuous Delivery Across Different Environments

Process automation means that complex deployments can be orchestrated in various environments within the company. The software provides end-to-end graphical design and visualization of the deployment process. In addition, re-usable process models make it easier to configure new deployment processes.

## Safeguarding End-to-End Control and Integrity for Application Deployment

The “Vault” capability is critical, as it safeguards deployment integrity. This capability allows for the centralized storage of all application packages and for the various versions to be managed. Above all, previous versions of the application can be retrieved or deployed easily to new application nodes (e.g. for a website ramp-up).

Another advantage provided by the Serena Software release deployment solution is its pre-roll out validation “airlock”<sup>1</sup>, which can be used by Research teams. “This is a real step forward in terms of agility for our project teams at this crucial stage between incorporation and pre-production, where quality has to be controlled and human errors avoided,” notes Cyril Thenon. The challenge, is ensuring end-to-end deployment control. This becomes indispensable where there are several stakeholders or a number of co-existing delivery methods, where different tools are required for different technologies, or where the results of deployments are difficult to identify, due to riskier manual deliveries.

<sup>1</sup> A structured delivery file system to upload into or download from the Vault.

The validation “airlock” offers a unique point of entry for all project deliverables, regardless of the technology used. Teams are provided with a repository portal for the validation of application deliverables. Packages placed in the repository are checked and a deployment report is prepared.

## High Fluidity, High Quality

This unique release management solution brings greater fluidity to the process, as deployments into an environment can be performed on an almost continuous basis, utilizing a “drag and run” system, with an option to perform several deliveries per day (from midday to midnight at Generali). “It has streamlined the deployment process and enhanced monitoring for project teams”, stresses Thenon, adding that “The flexibility offered by this solution made it easy for us to adapt it to fit our standards and processes.”



SBM screen, allowing for requests to be moved up the workflow.

Implementing an application release management solution offers a return on investment almost immediately, with a very significant leverage effect. Melinda-Carol Ballou, an analyst at IDC, highlights that “80% of software costs are incurred during the release and post-deployment stages; even small improvements to process efficiency can mean substantial gains throughout the application management cycle.” Cyril Thenon feels that the automation of application deployments offers three clear advantages: “Firstly, we have significantly reduced human errors, and quality standards are being met. Secondly, we are

fully in line with audit requirements: the deployment process is measurable, repeatable and auditable. The Serena Software solution provides comprehensive information on all applications moving into production, thanks to the use of a unique point of entry. Finally, the deployment teams were quick to see that this new process would make their lives easier; the technical validation phase is much more efficient, and release is of a much higher quality. This means that any authorized employee can easily transfer a validation and pre-production application, as we can be certain that no changes have been made.”

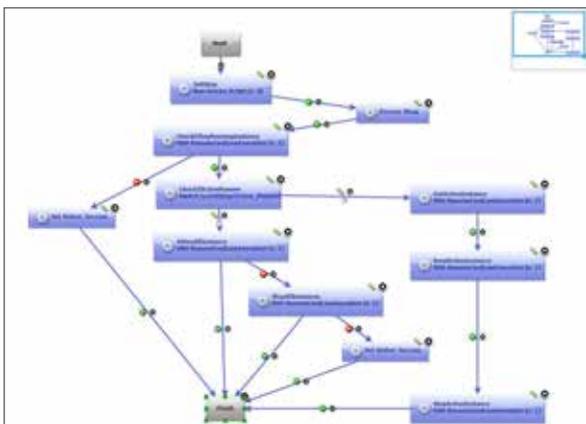
## An Essential Step Towards DevOps

Cyril Thenon has several good practice recommendations for the implementation of this kind of release management approach. “Split the project into batches, and iterate wherever necessary. Hire project staff with sound development skills and pair them with knowledgeable volunteers. Ensure that there is at least one “quick win” early in the project. This will demonstrate the value of the project to your teams, and help gain their support.” There are two very common pitfalls to avoid: “Firstly, underestimating the time required to implement standards and assess existing structures; secondly, the challenge of setting the optimal level of granularity for application packaging.”

### Industrializing Application Deployments—Six Advantages

- Shorter deployment timeframes
- An end to manual operations
- Greater process stability
- Repeatable processes
- Auditable processes
- An end to specific scripts

The industrialization and automation of application deployments is a key element and a central phase in the introduction of a DevOps-style (Development and Operations) approach, which strengthens collaboration between development and release management teams. DevOps ensures an orchestrated flow from the occupational sectors to development and operations. According to Thenon, “this is the next step for us, allowing us to move directly from our Software Factory over to Serena without manipulating the source codes. The goal is to make life even easier for our developers and production teams. “



An example of SRA processes.

### Main Advantages of the Serena Software Release Deployment Solution

- Environment management
- Error reduction in the deployment process
- Shorter delivery times
- Improved deliverables referencing
- Unique deployment management visibility
- Delivery orchestration
- Higher-quality service
- Deployment traceability



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Serena Software provides Orchestrated application development and release management solutions to the Global 2000. Our 2,500 active enterprise customers, including a majority of the Fortune 100, have made Serena the largest independent Application Lifecycle Management (ALM) vendor and the only one that orchestrates DevOps, the processes that bring together application development and operations. Headquartered in Silicon Valley, Serena is a portfolio company of HGGC, a leading middle market private equity firm.