What is Microsoft Visual Studio Team Services (VSTS)

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In brief

Visual Studio Team Services (VSTS) is a cloud-based platform that provides a comprehensive set of tools for application lifecycle management (ALM) and DevOps practices. It is designed to help development teams collaborate, plan, build, test, and deploy software applications efficiently.

Visual Studio Team Services (VSTS) is a cloud-based platform that provides a comprehensive set of tools for application lifecycle management (ALM) and DevOps practices. It is designed to help development teams collaborate, plan, build, test, and deploy software applications efficiently. VSTS offers a wide range of features and integrations, making it suitable for teams of all sizes and across various industries, including game development.

Key Features of VSTS

1. Agile Planning Tools : VSTS provides a set of agile planning tools, including Kanban boards, backlogs, and sprint planning. These tools help teams organize and track their work, visualize progress, and adapt to changing requirements.

2. Source Control : VSTS supports both Git and Team Foundation Version Control (TFVC) for source code management. Teams can choose the version control system that best suits their needs and easily manage their codebase, branches, and repositories.

3. Continuous Integration and Deployment (CI/CD) : VSTS offers powerful CI/CD capabilities, allowing teams to automate their build, test, and deployment processes. It provides cloud-hosted build agents for Windows, Mac, and Linux, as well as the ability to use self-hosted agents on Azure. VSTS integrates seamlessly with Azure services, enabling easy deployment to various environments.

4. Testing and Quality Assurance : VSTS includes testing features such as manual and exploratory testing, test case management, and load testing. Teams can ensure the quality of their applications by defining and executing test plans, tracking defects, and analyzing test results.

5. Extensions and Integrations : VSTS has an open marketplace with a wide range of extensions and integrations. These extensions allow teams to customize and extend the functionality of VSTS, integrating with third-party tools and services to meet their specific needs.

Getting Started with VSTS

Step 1: Create a VSTS Account

To get started with VSTS, you need to create a free account. Follow these steps:

1. Visit the Visual Studio website and click on the "Get started for free" button under the Visual Studio Team Services column.

2. Provide the necessary account details, including a unique name for your VSTS URL, which will be used to log in to your account.

3. Choose the version control system you want to use for your project (Git or TFVC).

4. Select the process template that best fits your team’s workflow (e.g., Agile, Scrum).

5. Click on "Continue" to create your project.

Step 2: Create a Project

Once your VSTS account is set up, you can create a new project:

1. Click on the "New Project" icon to create a new project.
2. Provide a name and description for your project.
3. Choose the version control system and process template for your project.
4. Click on "Create" to create your project.

Step 3: Invite Team Members

To collaborate with your team, you need to invite them to your VSTS project:

1. Navigate to the "Team" section in your project dashboard.
2. Click on "Invite" and enter the email addresses of the team members you want to invite.
3. Assign the appropriate roles and permissions to each team member.
4. Click on "Add" to send the invitations.

Step 4: Create Work Items

VSTS uses work items to track and manage requirements, tasks, bugs, and other project-related activities. To create work items:

1. Go to the "Work" section in your project dashboard.
2. Click on "New Work Item" and select the type of work item you want to create (e.g., User Story, Task, Bug).
3. Provide a title, description, and other relevant details for the work item.
4. Assign the work item to a team member and set the priority and iteration.
5. Save the work item.

Step 5: Set Up Source Control

VSTS provides two options for source control: Git and TFVC. To set up source control:

1. Open your project in Visual Studio IDE.
2. Go to the "Team Explorer" view and click on "Manage Connections".
3. Connect to your VSTS project by providing the VSTS URL and signing in with your account.
4. Create a new project or solution and add it to source control.
5. Commit and push your changes to the VSTS repository.

Step 6: Configure Build and Release

VSTS allows you to automate your build and release processes using pipelines. To configure build and release:

1. Go to the "Build and Release" section in your project dashboard.
2. Click on "New Pipeline" to create a new build or release pipeline.
3. Select the source repository and branch for your pipeline.
4. Define the build tasks, such as compiling code, running tests, and packaging artifacts.
5. Configure the release stages and tasks, specifying the target environments and deployment steps.
6. Save and queue your pipeline to start the build and release process.

Conclusion

Visual Studio Team Services (VSTS) is a powerful and flexible platform that enables development teams to streamline their application lifecycle management and DevOps practices. With its wide range of features, including agile planning tools, source control, CI/CD pipelines, testing capabilities, and extensibility, VSTS provides a comprehensive solution for teams to collaborate, deliver high-quality software, and continuously improve their processes.

By following the steps outlined in this article, you can quickly get started with VSTS, create projects, invite team members, manage work items, set up source control, and configure build and release pipelines. VSTS integrates seamlessly with various tools and services, especially Azure, making it easy to deploy and manage applications in the cloud.

Whether you are a small team working on a single project or a large enterprise with multiple teams and complex projects, VSTS can adapt to your needs and help you achieve your development goals efficiently. With its user-friendly interface, extensive documentation, and active community support, VSTS empowers teams to focus on delivering value to their customers while leveraging the benefits of modern development practices.