Five Best Practices for Adopting a DevOps Culture

Implementing DevOps in your organization isn't as simple as buying a tool and making sure that everyone uses it. DevOps is more than a person or even a team of resources; it's a culture of constant evolution. In essence, it's not a destination you arrive at, it's a journey of improvement. Daunting? Yes. Worth it? Most definitely. It's a necessary foundation that enables you to innovate, learn, and improve to drive your business forward.

How do you adopt a DevOps culture? Here are five best practices to help you get started.

Understand Your Motivations and Move Beyond Your Current Metrics

What do you hope to get from a DevOps culture? How do you quantify how much you'll gain from it? With DevOps requiring different processes and environments than what you have in place, comparing your existing state to your desired state isn't applicable. Trying to leverage your current metrics for the shift is resource -intensive and, in most cases, not cost effective. To move forward, you have to take into account what you're measuring now and couple it with qualitative justifications and goals. Simply put, you need to identify what's important to your organization and define your metrics accordingly. Don't forget to collect data from all sources, including your team and your users.

Take an Intelligent Approach to Your Goals

The benefits of adopting a DevOps culture are numerous. Many organizations implement it to reduce risk and become more agile, collaborative, and efficient. Although these goals have metrics tied to them, most organizations don't move beyond the macro level. If they're pushing to move faster, they may measure a release date. But do they take into account functionality that was dropped to meet the goal?

If your goal is to become more efficient, how do you measure that? Make sure that you're diving deeper into the pieces of your processes that affect your end goal. Look at the outcomes, not the outputs of your efforts. Consider a foot race, for instance. Winning isn't about simply running faster; it's about your increased training levels, your improved gait, and numerous other factors (both predictable and unpredictable) that affect your end result.

Paint the Picture for Your Team

Identifying your ideal DevOps outcomes is important, but that planning is meaningless if you don't share your vision with the teams that will execute it. Breaking down silos between people, data, tools, and processes should be your top priority. Moving from an environment focused on fixed project cycles to iterative, ongoing processes is an organizational shift. Consider starting with smaller pilot projects to prove success and show the benefits of working in new ways.

Remember that your team members may fear the change. Shifting roles and new responsibilities can create discomfort and uncertainty. Sharing the vision of what their jobs will look like in a DevOps environment and providing the training to set them up for success (both in your organization and in their careers) will help alleviate some of the growing pains that can hamper your progress.

Build the Right Infrastructure

Without the right architecture in place to build, manage, and distribute your data to the people and places it needs to reach, you won't meet your goals. You need to evaluate your current infrastructure and identify your gaps. Move toward an environment that can support the automation, integration, and monitoring you'll need to be more agile and efficient wherever your business requires it, on-premises or in the cloud.

Reinforce the Organizational Shift (Walk the Walk)

Communication is key. Because DevOps is iterative, and there isn't a true endpoint, you need to share metrics and empower your teams, motivating them to move forward. Be open to new ideas and encourage outside-the-box thinking across all levels of your organization to encourage the innovation that will drive your business forward. And then, of course, measure your results.

For more information on adopting a DevOps culture, watch an insightful NetApp Insight 2018 presentation by DORA CEO and Chief Scientist Nicole Forsgren. Then, check out "Measuring and Justifying DevOps", an Insight 2018 presentation by 451 Research's Chief Analyst Eric Hanselman.

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