



Necessary DevOps skills for the next normal

By Eveline Oehrlich, Research Director Research In Action.

Many IT organizations are moving out of the triage and stabilizing phases of their response to the COVID-19 crisis and are entering the transformation phase.

In recent months, organizations had to learn to quickly shift into virtual operations and interactions not just with their employees but with their entire ecosystem. This rapid shift to virtual resulted in swift adoption of technologies they helped organizations with security, usability, and scalability.

As organizations settle into their new remote normal, there are three main skills we believe that will be rising in importance in the next normal. These are skills that many DevOps practitioners have already adopted because of the need to continuously learn and be resilient in the face of change. Others in IT can benefit from these areas as well.

Collaboration is essential today and even more so in the next normal.

The DevOps Institute, [2020 Upskilling: Enterprise DevOps Skills](#), (completed just before the COVID-19 outbreak) found that collaboration and cooperation was the number one must-have human skill globally. While many people refer to skills such as “collaboration” as “soft” or “core” skills, I prefer to call them “human” skills because of the importance they play in our day-to-day, human work lives.

While DevOps itself has had a great impact on developers and operations teams working together, collaboration and cooperation must be extended to work across all groups within IT and other areas of the business during this next normal. Collaboration is the next source of value for IT. Here is why: One of the key challenges to support the next normal while adopting digital channels and services is that of scale and speed.

Let’s take, for example, a retailer that envisions the rollout of a new application across a large geographic area to different consumer types. This rollout requires the testing and scaling of many different parts across the customer journey. Therefore, it is essential to ensure collaboration with multiple parts of a business and technology teams to understand the interaction among multiple variables in times of crisis or beyond. This is collaboration that must happen beyond the developer and operations teams. It must happen company wide. In the next normal, companies that fail to extend collaboration skills beyond IT will not be able to scale their digital efforts at the speed needed to succeed.



Empathy is the pillar for a great culture

Many thought leaders agree that the key challenges to DevOps adoption and transformation are not technology related but organizational and cultural. The DevOps skill research shows that leaders must invest in their DevOps organizational change capability and their cultural people strategies to both remain competitive and deliver continuous value at scale.

Creating cultures of high trust and collaboration, enabling continuous experimentation, improvement, and upskilling are key investments that support DevOps return on investments.

But to lead or change culture one must possess empathy, a trait that each one of us must remember in the next normal. In a 2017 commencement speech, [Apple CEO Tim Cook said](#), “People will try to convince you that you should keep your empathy out of your career. Don’t accept this false premise.”

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Our current frame of reference across the world is the pandemic, with each one of us able to place oneself into the position of others. This is true for all of us no matter what company, role, culture, or country we are from. We can take this empathy with us to the next state to help us build and change the culture of our teams, organizations, and ourselves.

Certification to ensure survival and the continuous work in the next normal

This can be the optimal time to consider how you can best support the ways your talented employees learn, but also enable them to certify their knowledge so that it is tracked and acknowledged.

Certifications should be made available within the boundaries of your own company, from across technology providers, vendors, and your suppliers to improve learnings to ensure the survival and next normal state. This type of upskilling is not just for your already-trained workforce but for your entire team to be able to work with or continuously develop digital products leveraging new technology and processes.

A large group – 43 % of respondents from the 2020 Upskilling: Enterprise DevOps Skills by the DevOps Institute – confirmed that certifications are nice to have. The topics of certifications vary greatly depending on the different levels of DevOps capabilities, environment, existing tools and technical debt, but from our technical skills gap we know that certifications around continuous integration/continuous delivery, cloud platforms and environments, knowledge around APIs, analytical knowledge, multiple programming languages, frameworks such as .NET, CSS and AJAX, UX design are just a few of the high ranking ones.



New capabilities such as SRE and DevSecOps are on the rise as well which might be additional candidates for certifications.

All of us have been thrust into the next normal due to the worldwide pandemic. While the COVID-19 crisis has caused challenges for businesses, families, and individuals worldwide, there has been an accelerated and bold move by many organizations to shift towards digital channels and new ways of working. By embracing these three areas, employees and employers have a better chance of transforming themselves and their organizations in the next normal.

Always enjoy life to the fullest!

Eveline Oehrlich