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Transcript:

In July of 2021, I started a job as a junior AWS cloud engineer. But a few months later, I started to notice some things that hadn't fully considered. While I still love my job, I began to see how this career path comes with own unique challenges that people often don't consider. In this video, I'll go over a checklist of five things you need to accept before going into a cloud engineering career, starting with perhaps the most painful. Imagine you're a superhero, but instead of a cape, you wear a pager, and that pager can go off at any moment day or night, summoning you to save the world, or at least the cloud infrastructure that power. As a cloud engineer, this is something you unfortunately may have to accept. There will be times where you're always on alert, even if it's the middle of the night, or you're out enjoying your weekend. Being on call is tough for anyone in tech, but it can be especially challenging for cloud engineers. We're often the first line of defense when something breaks. And because so many companies rely on cloud platforms to power their most important applications, any issues can have massive effects on their business. And I think this is something that a lot of aspiring cloud engineers don't fully consider. It's not just the middle of the night wake up calls that can get to you. It's the constant feeling of being on edge, never quite knowing when that next alert is going to come in. You could be out grabbing dinner with your friends, and then suddenly you have to drop everything and jump online to start troubleshooting. Sometimes the issue isn't even something you can fix, maybe the cloud provider is having an outage in a certain region. As a cloud engineer, you're still on the hook to respond to alerts and give status updates. Even if there's nothing you can actually do to resolve the problem yourself. Now don't get me wrong, not all cloud engineering roles will come with on-call expectations. And even if you do have to be on-call, most companies provide some form of additional payment. So it's not all horrible. For me, despite being on-call, I still think cloud engineering is a great career. I've learned to set boundaries where I can, and leaning on my teammates for support during tough shifts has been a big help. But the reality is, this is something important you need to consider. Now although being on-call may not apply to every cloud engineer, the next issue will do. See, the thing is, companies are realizing how important the cloud is becoming, but the problem is, a lot of them don't really understand the differences between various cloud related roles. So they'll just slap the cloud engineer title on a job posting, without really knowing what specific skills and responsibilities should go with it. That's why for aspiring cloud engineers, it's important to really consider the specific role you're applying for. I make sure it actually aligns with your skills. Don't just go by the job title alone. I think this reddit experience sums it up quite well. The title is a good one, and may help open doors in the future, but just know that what some companies consider using the cloud, is just a glorified hypervisor. I've had my fair share of interviews with companies who thought they were cutting edge only to hear that they're spinning up VMs in Azure, and that's the extent of their cloud usage. The reality is, cloud engineer is not a clearly defined job title. At one place, it might mean designing and building cloud infrastructure, while at another, it could be more of a help desk role. Some companies figure, hey, the cloud is hot right now. So if we call this position a cloud engineer, we'll get a bunch of applicants, but then you join the company and find out you're really just resetting passwords and logging tickets for other teams all day. Although those roles are definitely important, they're not really what most people have in mind when looking for cloud engineering roles. This lack of consistency can make the job search process more painful than it needs to be. You might see a bunch of platform engineer or system development engineer job postings and think that there's no demand for your cloud skills. But in reality, there's plenty of demand. It just means you have to really dig into the details of each job posting and try to determine if the role actually matches your skills and experience. The good news is, as companies gain a better understanding of the cloud, these job titles and descriptions should become more standardized and be used more consistently. But even if you find

a perfect role, you need to accept that your day-to-day life won't be easy. Let me explain. I remember having dinner with one of my friends a few months ago. He had just gotten a job as a cloud engineer. At first, everything seemed great. He was learning a lot and starting to work on really interesting projects. But as time went by, he felt more and more pressure. Deadlines were coming up and he was struggling to keep up to date with all of the different things he needed to learn. This highlights an important point. Working as a cloud engineer can be challenging and stressful. You're often under immense pressure to deliver results quickly. Sure, lots of tech roles involve working in a high pressure environment. But I think this is particularly relevant for cloud engineers. When you're dealing with critical infrastructure that the entire business depends on, there's little room for error. A mistake or delay can have huge effects across the organisation. And when things do go wrong, unfortunately, often a cloud engineer bears most of the blame. But maybe the most challenging thing is the constant feeling of being in over your head. One day, you feel like you've got everything figured out. And the next day, you realize just how much yet you still have to learn. It can be a humbling experience and it requires a certain level of resilience. I think this really adds to the intensity of the high pressure working amount. Now, I'm not saying all this to discourage anyone from being a cloud engineer. In fact, I love it. For the right person, I think it's incredibly rewarding and exciting. Technical skills are undeniably important if you want to be a cloud engineer. But in my opinion, it's also really important to have the right mindset. You have to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. Imagine you're a character in a game. You constantly have to level up. Well, being a cloud engineer is kind of like that. You can't just learn some skills once and be set for your whole career. Services are always changing. New features are always being added and APIs evolve. It's like the moment you think you finally master the certain skill, the developers push out a massive update and you have to start again. As a cloud engineer, you have to accept that you always have to learn new things. You can't just do it for a few years and start to relax. And this constant learning isn't just about staying current. It's also about staying competitive. The cloud job market is hot right now. It's also very competitive. If you want to stand out from the crowd, you need to have a deep, up-to-date understanding of various cloud services. Otherwise, you risk falling behind. The truth is that depth and complexity of cloud platforms these days is huge. I mean, even AWS has over 200 different services now. And each one of those services has its own set of features, limits, and best practices that you need to understand. This Reddit post supports my point. It doesn't work like that. You can't really learn a topic from start to finish, as you said. You never finish. Number one role in my opinion in IT is always be learning. You are not the guy who knows it all and nobody is. But the good news is that you can make your life easier. Do this by making sure you have a solid understanding of fundamental concepts like networking, security, compute, storage, and data spaces. These are the building blocks that pretty much every cloud service is built on top of. And by really digging deep and mastering these basics, you'll find it much easier to pick up new services and features. You already have the mental models to understand how it works and how to use it effectively. I think this is something a lot of aspiring cloud engineers don't fully realize when they're starting out. You need to accept that a huge part of the job is dealing with people and their expectations. You're not just an engineer, you're also a negotiator. At the end of the day, cloud is just there to support the business and the business is made up of people with different priorities. If you're thinking about becoming a cloud engineer, you need to deal with this. You have to be prepared for people thinking you're a subject matter expert in a lot of areas, even if you're not. They're going to come to you with questions about security, compliance, and cost optimization. And it's up to you to figure out how to navigate those conversations and manage different expectations. You can't just hide behind your code. And that's where communication skills comes in. Because trust me, there will be conflicts. You'll have the security team telling you to lock everything down while another team is screaming for more access and flexibility. You'll have the finance team breathing down your neck to cut costs while the business is demanding more resources and better performance. It's a

constant balancing act. And it's up to you to keep all the plates spinning. So for aspiring cloud engineers, don't just focus on the technical stuff. I mean, yeah, that's important too. Don't get me wrong. But if you really want to succeed in this field, you need to work on your people skills just as much as your coding skills. You need to learn how to communicate effectively, how to listen, how to empathize, and how to find common ground during conflicts. So now you understand some of the negatives of being a cloud engineer. The truth is, this is actually only half the story. Despite all of these things, I love my job as a cloud engineer. And there's a few very important reasons why. And to be honest, I think these factors outweigh anything that I've mentioned in the video. So you can find out the reasons why I love being a cloud engineer. In this video here.

Summary

Cloud engineer is often the first line of defense when something breaks . Being on call is tough for anyone in tech, but it can be especially challenging for cloud engineers . As a cloud engineer, you're still on the hook to respond to alerts and give status updates even if there's nothing you can actually do to resolve the problem yourself . Companies are realizing how important the cloud is becoming, but a lot of them don't really understand the differences between various cloud related roles . The reality is, cloud engineer is not a clearly defined job title .