✓ 100 XP

Getting started with SRE

10 minutes

As a final unit in this module, let's talk about where to go from here if you're interested in exploring SRE.

Reading and watching

For more detailed information about SRE, the best source is a trio of books that have been published on the subject

1. *Site Reliability Engineering: How Google Runs Production Systems* (known as "The SRE Book")
2. *The Site Reliability Workbook: Practical Ways to Implement SRE* (known as "The SRE Workbook")
3. *Seeking SRE: Conversations About Running Production Systems at Scale*

(As a quick disclosure, the primary author of this module is the curator/editor of the third book)

Each of those books provides an important set of information:

- The SRE Book - provides a detailed explanation of how Google implemented SRE over the years.

- The SRE Workbook - a companion to The SRE Book that provides a more detailed explanation of not just the "what" of SRE at Google and a few other places, but the "how" and "why".

- Seeking SRE - provides a more expansive view of the SRE world beyond its origin including information on how it has been implemented in other environments.

Make sure to read all three books with a critical eye. Not everything written in these books will apply to you and your organization. Take some time to identify the information that you are certain can provide some positive value. Think about which parts of your organization's culture and values can support SRE work as described and which might make it more challenging.

If you find you are more of visual person, try watching the talk Keys to SRE by Ben Treynor at the SREcon14 conference. Treynor provides a really cogent explanation of what he believes SRE (at least in the Google context) is. Other recorded talks on SRE from this conference series and others can also be really useful.

Talk to other interested people

As important as reading up on SRE is, it can often be more important to talk about it with your peers. Discussing your challenges, successes and failures around SRE can be crucial to gaining a nuanced understanding of the subject.

There are a number of meetups and conferences that feature SRE content. Perhaps the most directly relevant is the globally distributed SREcon conferences put on by USENIX (disclaimer: the primary author of this module is one of the cofounders of SREcon).

More and more SRE content is making its way to conferences like Velocity, LISA, and local DevOps conferences like DevOps Days. Seek out this content and others interested in the subject wherever you can find it.

First steps at work

If you want to start exploring what it would be like to bring SRE into your environment, it is important to remember that SRE is not an "all or nothing" proposition. You can begin to adopt SRE principles and practices in small steps.

Mikey Dickerson, a well know SRE from his work at what would become the United States Digital Service (they were responsible for saving healthcare.gov) has proposed a hierarchy of reliability in homage to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It is quoted in the Practices section of the first SRE book.

This hierarchy proposes that one must first get monitoring in your environment functional and trustworthy. This has to be a first step towards SRE for your environment as well. You can't tell if something is reliable (or is getting better or worse) if you can't measure it.

Once you have a monitoring platform you can trust, the next reachable step is to pick a service at work and begin to have SLI and SLO conversations about it. Start simple. Create SLIs and SLOs for the service, implement them in your monitoring system and see what happens when you begin to pay attention to reliability using the SRE lens. This is a great place to start.

Next unit: Summary

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