

# DevOps | Establishing a Just Learning Culture

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CSD380:Mod 9  
2/23/25



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## Just Culture



- An environmental mindset that promotes fairness, learning, and accountability
- An acknowledgment that while errors are inevitable, the response to incidents should focus on learning and system improvement rather than punishment and blame
- Individuals feel safe to report issues without fear of unfair consequences
- Reckless behavior and negligence is addressed appropriately
- Is an ethical mindset and also a practical mindset as it leads to better results.

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## Barriers & Challenges



- Blame culture
  - Many organizations have a history of blaming individuals for failures rather than investigating issues
- Fear of repercussions
  - Engineers may fear poor performance reviews or job loss if they openly acknowledge mistakes
- Lack of psychological safety
  - If team members do not feel safe expressing concerns or admitting failures, they may stay silent which leads to hidden issues and repeated mistakes
  - Managers or senior developers may unknowingly discourage openness by reacting negatively to mistakes

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## Barriers & Challenges



- Short-term delivery pressure and deadlines
  - Intense pressure to deliver may discourage experimentation and learning
  - The focus may shift from short-term results instead of long-term improvements
- Siloed teams and poor communication
  - Divisions may persist between development, operations, and security
  - Limited cross-team collaboration prevents knowledge sharing and collaborative learning from incidents

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## Barriers & Challenges



- Lack of leadership buy-in
  - If management does not demonstrate vulnerability and prioritizing learning over punishment, team members are unlikely to embrace them
- Cultural resistance to change
  - Shifting to a just learning culture may require deeply ingrained paradigm shifts which are not easy to change – requiring persistent intention from leadership
- Lack of metrics for learning & improvement
  - Without indicators of learning, teams may revert to old behaviors

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## Barriers & Challenges

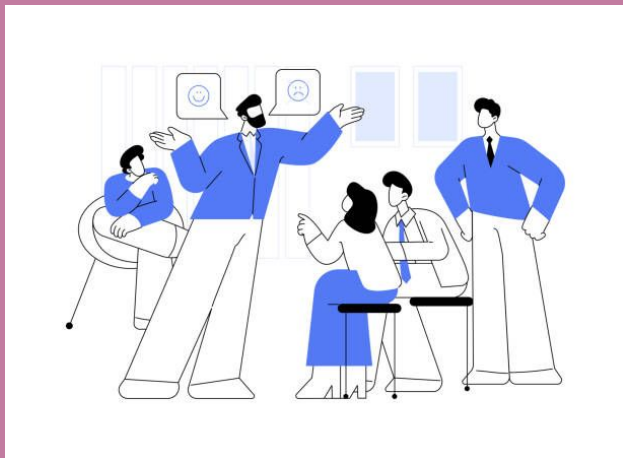


- Lack of training & awareness
  - Teams need guidance on how to conduct effective incident reviews and give constructive feedback
- Tooling and data transparency issues
  - Just culture depends on open and accurate sharing of data
  - Siloed/restricted access to incident data is not good
- Geographically distributed teams
  - Remote teams may face difficulties in fostering open conversations
  - Lack of informal discussion like hallway chats can reduce opportunities for organic learning

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## Overcoming the Challenges

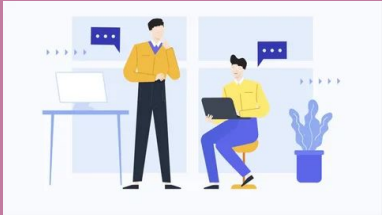


- Promote psychological safety
- Adopt blameless postmortems
- Provide leadership training and align leadership with cultural change
- Create structured feedback loops and incident response frameworks
- Measure learning culture effectiveness
- Balance accountability and learning

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## Sources



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