6 MINUTE READ | THE FUTURE OF WORK

Inside IBM's New App-Building Training Ground

IBM is offering a space and a methodology for developers and companies to build enterprise apps. Beer and ping-pong included.

[Photo: Flickr user Fuzzy Images]

CALE GUTHRIE WEISSMAN | 07.11.16 | 5:05

The space was a large, vacant, concrete-filled floor in a lower Manhattan office building. Plastic tarps covered many of the walls; wide columns held the building up; construction workers toiled away at various tasks. My guide pointed in the direction of a wall and said that a "public-facing" cafe would be there. The rest of the 50,000-plus square feet space would be generally open, a place for people to sit at a desk and work or talk with others about what they're working on.

This was the site of IBM's new Bluemix Garage in New York. While it officially opened last week, the current space is only temporary and on the floor below the construction zone. The real space won't be ready to go for many months.

Bluemix can be most easily described as an IBM program for companies and developers to build and scale enterprise apps. The company bills it as a way customers can figure out how to build these applications, iterate on them, and then scale them. The focus is on offering tools and training that gets apps deployed fast. The garage is a space for IBM to evangelize its method.

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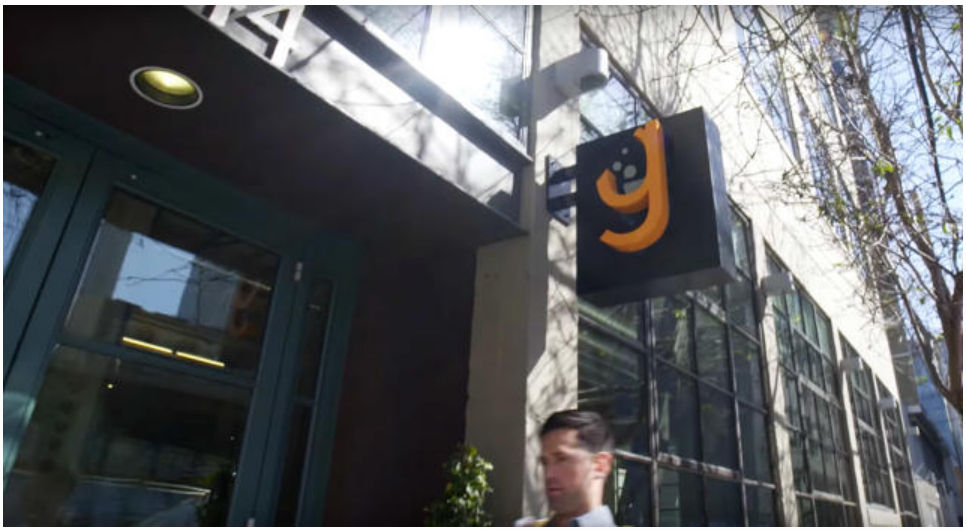
In many ways Bluemix Garages look like a coworking space inside a startup accelerator. IBM partners with startups to host the space—in the case of the new Manhattan garage, the tech-skill focused education company Galvanize is the selected partner. The space is predominately Galvanize's, but Bluemix has dedicated areas for developers working with the program. The first garage opened in San Francisco in 2014, and now there are seven locations globally.

THE "METHOD"

IBM VP of cloud technology Angel Luis Diaz proselytizes Bluemix much like a thought leader giving a TED talk. He uses words like "iteration" and "methodology" to describe Bluemix's impact. The whole concept, he says, is to work with companies and "bring them into the ideation process." These organizations turn to this process with an idea to build an app, then use the "prescriptive approach" to make it a reality over the

course of weeks. He’s been building this pedagogy for over five years—it was "born through us learning," Diaz says. He adds that all people can be part of the process—be they designers, developers, or executives. The Bluemix program is supposedly a way to bring together these voices to help build products that can then be used more quickly. While there's dedicated workspace for developers to build, Bluemix offers teams training and support with its "method" so they can figure out what apps they're building and how to do that.

Beyond being a methodology, Bluemix is a way for IBM to look agile. It's one of the many ways the behemoth century-old company is trying to appear more approachable, akin to dozens of other Silicon Valley entities. Indeed, the very construction of the Garage is meant to breed this type of startup ethos. The entrance will have a cafe that will be open to the public. Inside will be couches, open work stations, and the startup standard ping-pong tables. When I arrived at the space a little before 11 a.m. on a Wednesday morning, Diaz asked if I wanted a beer (I'm pretty sure he was kidding).



All the same, developers have been taking to the methodology, says Diaz. Every week 20,000 developers begin working with Bluemix and 112,000 new apps are produced every month. The idea behind the entire program, he impresses, is for companies to quickly build these applications and then "learn to scale to the enterprise." It's IBM's business-app training ground. Diaz is sure to repeat that the method is "open source," so anyone trying to build and scale an app for the enterprise can find the Bluemix materials online. The sell for big companies is that it allows them to quickly build programs that can be deployed across an entire network very quickly. One example IBM brings up is Kimberly Clark, which used Bluemix to build a series of apps that remotely monitor restroom supplies, such as soap dispensers and air fresheners.

THE NEW YORK PROGRAM

While the New York garage is similar to the others IBM has in cities like Toronto, San Francisco, and

London, IBM is specifically making an open pitch to blockchain developers. Blockchain is a technology made famous by bitcoin, which has a public digital ledger for every transaction performed that can be shared among a distributed network. Many companies are tinkering with blockchain because it could change the way digital transactions are performed. IBM says this is because it sees an increased need for training and leadership when it comes to this burgeoning technology. Financial services—along with multiple other industries—are trying to figure out ways they can use this new system (which was introduced to the world thanks to bitcoin), and implement it into their system. Many New York-based companies are trying to figure out what they can do. While there's a blockchain focus in the New York garage, the space isn't exclusively for that technology.

IBM Launches New Bluemix Garage at London's Level39 *Photo: Level39*

IBM's program director of its blockchain offerings, Eileen Lowry, walked me through how the company is training people to use the technology. While few actual apps have been launched on public blockchains, IBM has been giving people access to private networks so they can build and test products. Right now, IBM's platform is allowing developers to build "an industry type of sample application so that we can make it real for businesses," she says. The plan is to have live apps up and running in the next few months. IBM says the company is already working with many financial institutions on various blockchain programs, including Mizuho Financial Group, Credit Mutuel Arkea, and the London Stock Exchange.

One of the real pluses Lowry sees blockchain doing is "providing visibility" for supply chains. That is, if one entity is paying another entity for goods to be sent and there's a dispute over whether or not a transaction was completed correctly, blockchain's digital ledger (which is theoretically tamper-proof) makes it possible to digitize the entire process. When party A pays party B, that transaction is recorded on the blockchain. When the goods are sent, that is also recorded. The same thing when they're received. If there's a dispute, it's clear where the breakdown occurred. So, companies trying to create solutions to fix this problem could come to Bluemix and begin tinkering with new app possibilities.

But the Bluemix garage isn't a blockchain training center, of course. It's an open space where IBM can evangelize its way to lead, build, and scale apps. Despite the bombast, Bluemix isn’t some revolutionary program either—it’s the way that a big company positions itself to reel in businesses to use its services to build apps that scale efficiently. Pivotal Cloud Foundry, for example, offers very similar services. The garages seem to be ways for the company to present itself as more enticing. Sure, developers can receive free tools, trainings, and methodologies to build apps, but now they can go to a physical space and talk with other people and even get some free beer and ping-pong.

And for companies like IBM these sorts of offerings are important optics-wise. In a tech world that's constantly changing and companies—no matter the size—trying to look hip and agile and startup-y, Bluemix is a way for IBM to look welcoming to the developer community. More importantly, it's also a way for the company to sell cloud services to app makers and businesses.

When the official space opens in a few months, New York will be able to see it in action. If they want to build apps, they will definitely be able to do that. And if they just want coffee, they'll get that too.

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5 MINUTE READ | LEADERSHIP

Why American Policing Has Improved, And Why

It Hasn't

How to get from here to "democratic policing."

[Photo: Flickr user Tony Webster]

FREDERIC LEMIEUX | 07.10.16 | 8:00 PM

The use of lethal force by police officers in Minnesota and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, has once again sparked protests over the violent dynamic between citizens and the police. Meanwhile, the tragic, horrific shootings of police officers in Dallas has complicated the Black Lives Matter message and reinforced fears of racially motivated police violence.

The ideal today is "democratic policing," a concept developed by scholars like Gary T. Marx at MIT. Broadly, this refers to a police force that is publicly accountable, subject to the rule of law, respectful of

human dignity, and that intrudes into citizens' lives only under certain limited circumstances.

Editor's Note: This story updates "Democratic policing: what it says about America today"; both stories originally appeared at *The Conversation*.

Partly in response to this ideal, policing in America has evolved considerably over the past 50 years. There have been changes in hiring, how relations with civilians are managed and what technologies are used.

The 20th century has seen a slow but steady integration of minorities and women within police forces. Different managerial models aimed at improving relations with citizens have also influenced policing over the last 40 years. The most prominent among these are community-oriented policing, problem-oriented policing and intelligence-led policing.

Policing has also been deeply transformed by the rapid integration of new technologies leading to computerization of police forces such as the profiling of crime hot spots, access to a broader range of weapons like tasers, and the deployment of surveillance technologies like drones and closed circuit TV.

Some of these changes have been positive, but as recent events show, many problems remain. Why hasn't more progress been made?

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NOT ALL POLICE FORCES ARE EQUAL

One problem is the inequality inherent in the system. For example, Washington, D.C., has 61.2 police officers per 10,000 residents, while Baton Rouge has just 28.7.

Policing in America is not a standardized profession guided by an established set of procedures and policies. There are at least 12,000 local police agencies in the United States, making it one of the most decentralized police organizations in the world.

There are more than 600 state and local police academies across the country delivering training programs that vary tremendously in content, quality, and intensity. This, inevitably, has an impact on the skills of their graduates.

Differences in policing also reflect the quality of leadership and the availability of resources.

Police chiefs and commanders represent a critical source of influence. They provide the doctrine by deciding whether to focus on prevention or repression of crime. They design strategies like police visibility or zero tolerance. And they identify the practice to be adopted—rounding up the usual suspects or systematic stop-and-frisk.

Often, however, these police practices are not aligned with public expectations. Citizen review boards—such as those in New York City or San Diego—are the exception rather than the norm.

And then there is the money issue. Police departments that are financially crippled are simply not able to provide regular training and therefore don't have the expertise to pursue certain kinds of crime. The policing of fraud, for example, requires financial expertise and specialized units.

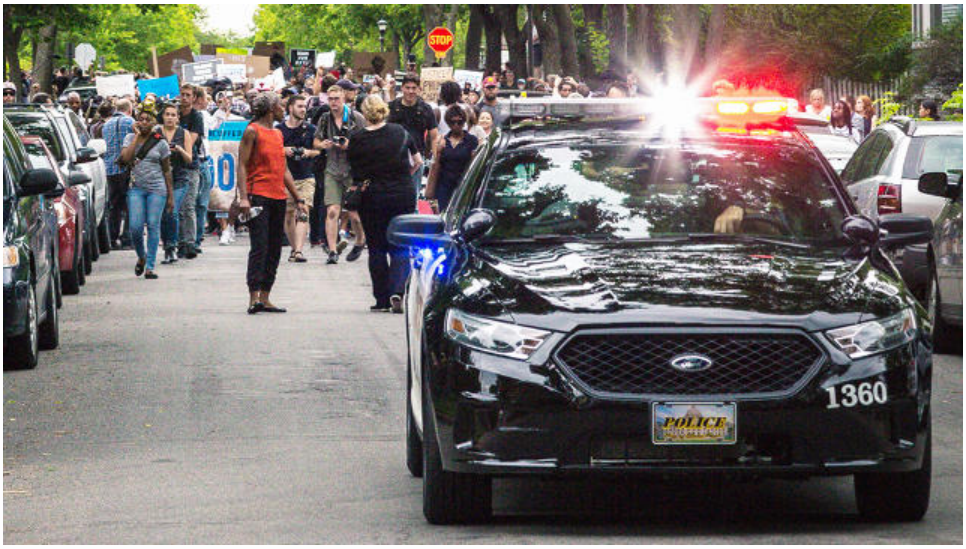


Photo: Flickr user Tony Webster

FROM PUBLIC RELATIONS POLICING TO INTENSIVE POLICING

Policing styles in America vary according to the targeted audience.

Police work in an affluent neighborhoods is often characterized by "soft" policing strategies. In other words, policing in those areas is more a question of making people feel secure than actual crime fighting.

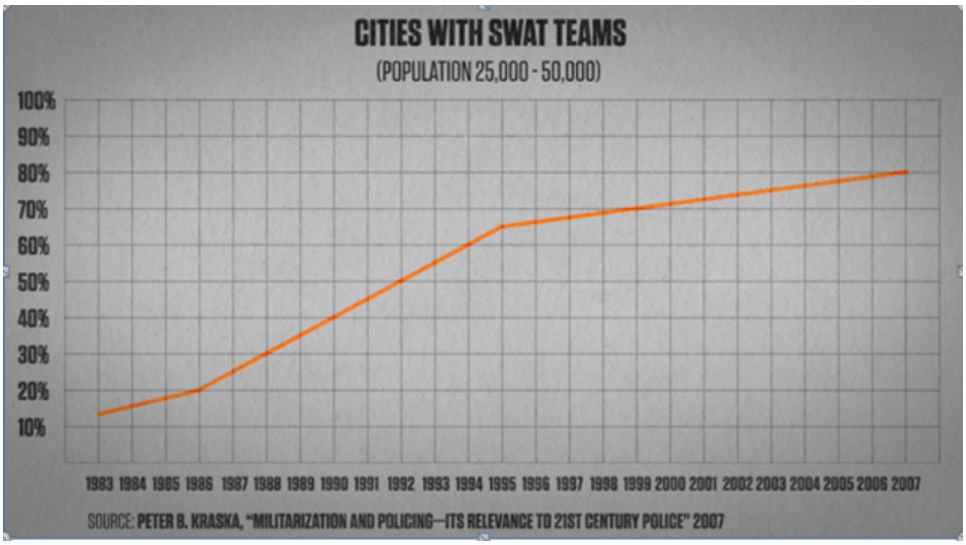
However, in disadvantaged, multi-ethnic neighborhoods, police presence and activity are often more intense. They are there to target crimes that have been identified as priorities by police leadership and elected officials.

In fact, one policing model, predictive policing, can exacerbate racial tension between law enforcement and African-American communities.

Predictive policing is based on crime analysis and computerization. This model helps law enforcement mobilize their resources in places where crime tends to concentrate. These crime clusters tend to be located in poor and disadvantaged communities. However, trying to prevent crime by focusing police forces on some addresses, street corners, and blocks increases police-citizens encounters. Some of these encounters—even between police and law-abiding citizens caught up in the dragnet—can turn violent.

Another noticeable trend that is front and center in the media today is the "militarization" of police.

This blurring of the distinction between the police and military institutions, between law enforcement and war, began in the 1980s and has only intensified since. It was reinforced by public policy rhetoric calling for a "war on crime," "war on drugs," and "war on terror." Police forces began to acquire military equipment and implement militarized training with little or no accountability. For instance, in the wake of 9/11, several local police departments received funding from the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Defense with little or no guidance on how to spend the money. This led to the unnecessary purchase of military equipment including armored cars, bulletproof vests for dogs, and advanced bomb-disarming robots.



Provided by the author

In many regards, police agencies are a mirror of our beliefs and values as a society.

As a result, we have seen a booming of SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) teams: 80% of cities with 25,000 to 50,000 inhabitants now have a SWAT team. From the late 1990s, through the 1033 Program, the Department of Defense has authorized the transfer of military equipment to police departments across the country. Since 2006 the police have bought 93,763 machine guns and 435 armored cars from the Pentagon. All this has only heightened the real and perceived potential for deadly force by police officers.

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Another significant change in modern policing is the increasing capacity to monitor criminal activity and the population in general.

Police agencies now have access to a vast network of closed-circuit television monitors, allowing the surveillance of public and private spaces. Just to give a few numbers, the Chicago Police Department has access to 17,000 cameras, including 4,000 in public schools and 1,000 at O'Hare Airport.

Drones, too, are increasingly in use. The U.S. Border Patrol deploys them to monitor smuggling activities. They have been purchased by a number

of local police departments, including those in Los Angeles; Mesa County, Arizona; Montgomery County, Texas; Miami Dade; and Seattle.

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This guy turned up at a #BlackLivesMatter protest with a mirror.....

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A MIRROR OF SOCIETY

In many regards, police agencies are a mirror of our beliefs and values as a society.

When applying this assumption to the phenomenon of intensive policing, it is not surprising, I would argue, that a country that has the highest rate of gun ownership among Western countries, the highest murder rate by guns among

advanced democracies, and the largest military apparatus in the world would see a militarization of its police.

The same reflection can be made about the use of police surveillance technologies in a society where information technology increasingly defines our interactions.

Ultimately, policing is inseparable from politics. Police organizations are constantly influenced by political pressure, such as the nomination of a new chief of police or new laws that police must enforce. The state of our police system, in other words, for good or for ill, is an accurate proxy measure of the state of our democracy.

Frederic Lemieux is a professor of sociology and criminal justice at the George Washington University. His research has focused on policing, homeland security, and cybersecurity.