

# Product Ops:

## An Unexpected DevOps Champion



CLARE HAWTHORNE  
Senior Director, Tech Operations

This presentation, its trademarks, service marks, and information set forth within is the property of Oscar Health and may not be used without the express permission of Oscar Health.



# Oscar Health, Inc. (NYSE: OSCR)

America spends **twice the portion of its GDP** on healthcare compared to any other rich country in the world for results that are no better — and in many instances worse.

Oscar is a leading healthcare technology company and has been challenging the US healthcare system's status quo since our founding in 2012.

**Our mission is to make a healthier life accessible and affordable for all.**

We believe every American deserves access to affordable, high-quality healthcare that fits their needs. Our member-first philosophy and innovative approach to care has earned us the trust of approximately **1.6 million members and an industry leading NPS of 66 as of June 2024.**

Our members enroll in our Individual & Family Plans, while +Oscar is our B2B technology platform that powers others within the healthcare space.  
**In 2023, we generated \$5.9 billion in revenue.**



Learn more at:

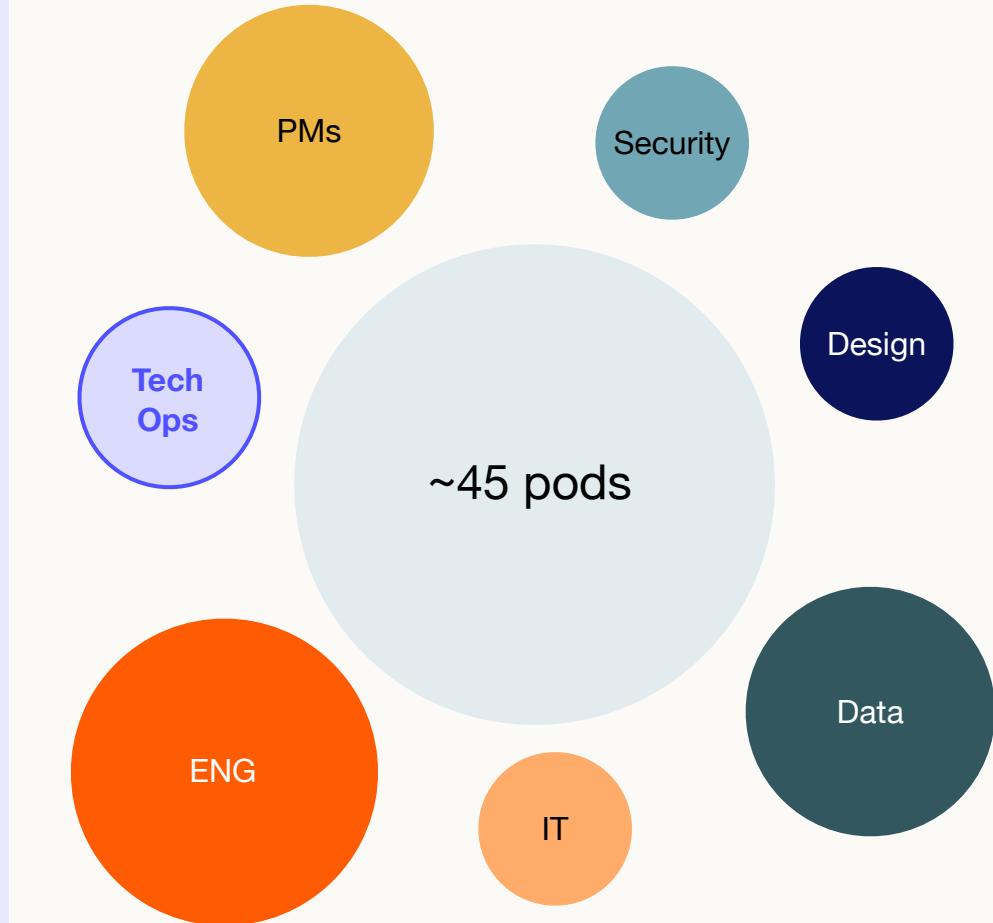
[whatoscardoes.com](https://whatoscardoes.com)

# Oscar's Tech Team

We have a highly cross-functional org structure where all of our departments have their own expertise and work closely together.

Overall, Oscar Tech has ~500 people. We organize around ~45 pods (aka Scrum Teams) aligned to a particular tech surface area or user journey.

I lead Engineering & Product Operations (aka Tech Ops). We apply a DevOps mindset to create leverage across the entire Tech organization.



Oscar has always been hyper-responsive  
to our members and the overall market

# Oscar has always been hyper-responsive to our members and the overall market,

but as we scaled we needed to reconsider some of our processes...



## POD PROCESSES WERE OPTIMIZED FOR SPEED, NOT SCALE

Oscar grew at a torrid pace – the processes that had worked well for pods a few years prior struggled to keep up with increased Tech surface area and membership.



## INCREASINGLY AMBITIOUS GOALS REQUIRED MORE COORDINATION

Our goals became increasingly ambitious and Tech-wide initiatives relied on Product & Eng Managers to manage the rollout. We realized we were placing a “coordination tax” on our builders.



## LEADERSHIP VISIBILITY

Pods created local processes that worked well for them, but when leadership needed to understand what was happening locally, we often relied on manual aggregation.

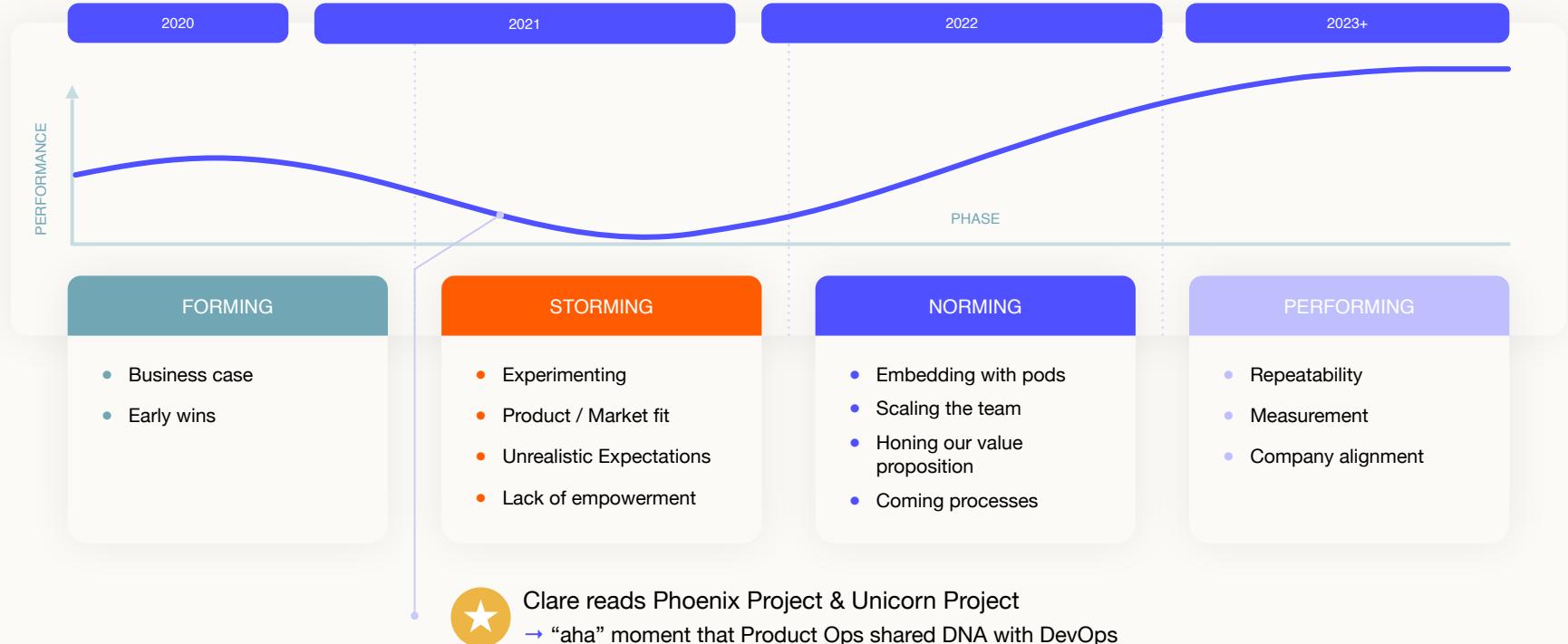
How did we start  
tackling these problems?

## OUR VISION

Tech Ops unlocks Oscar's ability  
to ship **more, better and faster.**



# The Product Ops journey



# Tech Ops Pillars for Oscar

## POD ENABLEMENT & PRODUCT DELIVERY

- Pod processes
  - Issue triage, Feedback loops, Release management
- Initiative / Program Management
  - Coordination across pods & other stakeholders, dependency tracking, risk identification

## TECH-WIDE PROCESSES & TOOLS

- Processes
  - Annual / quarterly planning
  - CapEx
  - Incident management
- Tools
  - Administration of common tech tools, e.g. Jira, Pager Duty, Confluence
- Enterprise ITGCs
  - Governance & controls, including SDLC, access management

## COMMUNICATIONS & TRAINING

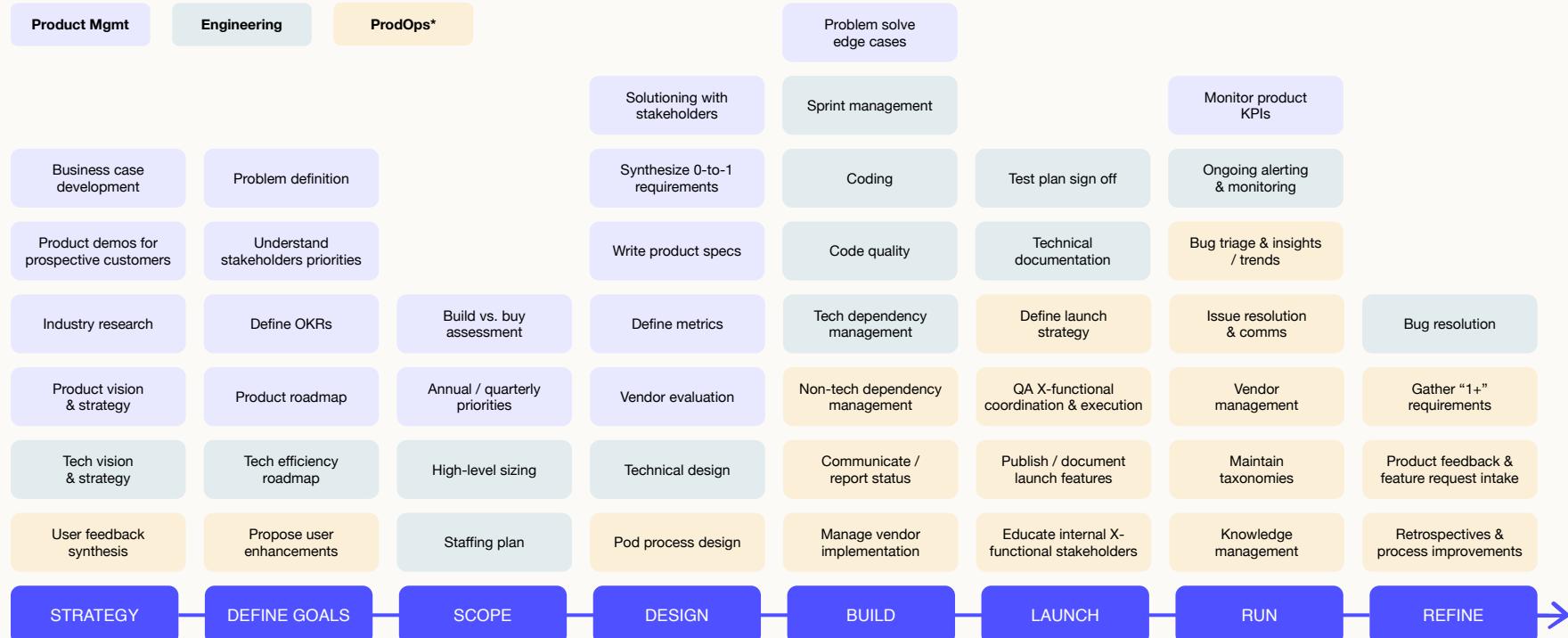
- External & internal tech comms (e.g. monthly release deck, stakeholder updates)
- Onboarding
- Product training
- Demo day
- Hackathon

# Tech Ops sub-functions

Tech Ops works across Product & Engineering to drive more efficient, effective and compliant software delivery at all levels through 6 sub-functions:

SUB-FUNCTION	HC	SUB-FUNCTION GOAL	HOW DO WE ACHIEVE OUR GOAL? TACTICALLY, WHAT DO WE DO?
Product Operations: Pod Enablement	14	Make pods more efficient & effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Align ProdOps to pods that have a high degree of run work, with the dual goals of 1) allowing PMs and Engineers to work “top of license” and 2) improving processes to reduce toil.</li><li>Can either augment existing PM capacity or reduce the need for PM staffing for pods in maintenance mode.</li></ul>
Product Ops: Processes & Tools	3	Create standards and processes that increase consistency, while minimizing friction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Create scalable processes that aggregate key information across 50+ pods.</li><li>Surface insights to Tech VP+ to support decision making.</li></ul>
Tech PMO	3	Make key Oscar initiatives more efficient & effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Align Program Managers to key company initiatives, prioritized by the degree of cross-functional requirements and whether the project has a binding go-live date.</li></ul>
Tech Governance	5	Ensure Oscar's technology / IT controls meet standards set by our regulators, especially SOX/ SOC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Work with control owners and Tech Processes team to design controls that address key risks without creating unnecessary friction. Leverage tools and automation where possible to reduce risk for human error. Conduct monitoring to ensure operating effectiveness of controls.</li></ul>
Tech Finance Ops	1	Ensure we maximize the impact of our budget without exceeding our target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Establish processes to track Tech's financial position and vendor relationships. Identify opportunities to maximize our budget.</li></ul>
Tech Business Management	1	Enable a strong, healthy team culture across Tech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Manage day to day team operations and improve existing team processes, such as Talent Management (MY and EOY reviews, Glint), Department meetings (AH, Directors+), Onboarding (non-technical).</li></ul>

# What does Pod Enablement include?



\*Note: Product Ops partners with pods to take a priority-based approach when deciding on the specific responsibilities for Product Ops. We are not staffed to consistently deliver all of the yellow responsibilities for all pods.

# Tech Ops sub-functions

Tech Ops works across Product & Engineering to drive more efficient, effective and compliant software delivery at all levels through 6 sub-functions:

SUB-FUNCTION	HC	SUB-FUNCTION GOAL	HOW DO WE ACHIEVE OUR GOAL? TACTICALLY, WHAT DO WE DO?
Product Operations: Pod Enablement	14	Make pods more efficient & effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Align ProdOps to pods that have a high degree of run work, with the dual goals of 1) allowing PMs and Engineers to work “top of license” and 2) improving processes to reduce toil.</li><li>Can either augment existing PM capacity or reduce the need for PM staffing for pods in maintenance mode.</li></ul>
Product Ops: Processes & Tools	3	Create standards and processes that increase consistency, while minimizing friction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Create scalable processes that aggregate key information across 50+ pods.</li><li>Surface insights to Tech VP+ to support decision making.</li></ul>
Tech PMO	3	Make key Oscar initiatives more efficient & effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Align Program Managers to key company initiatives, prioritized by the degree of cross-functional requirements and whether the project has a binding go-live date.</li></ul>
Tech Governance	5	Ensure Oscar's technology / IT controls meet standards set by our regulators, especially SOX/SOC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Work with control owners and Tech Processes team to design controls that address key risks without creating unnecessary friction. Leverage tools and automation where possible to reduce risk for human error. Conduct monitoring to ensure operating effectiveness of controls.</li></ul>
Tech Finance Ops	1	Ensure we maximize the impact of our budget without exceeding our target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Establish processes to track Tech's financial position and vendor relationships. Identify opportunities to maximize our budget.</li></ul>
Tech Business Management	1	Enable a strong, healthy team culture across Tech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Manage day to day team operations and improve existing team processes, such as Talent Management (MY and EOY reviews, Glint), Department meetings (AH, Directors+), Onboarding (non-technical).</li></ul>

“

Product Ops regularly demonstrates the ability to understand complex existing processes with a high amount of friction. They can then use a combination of network/relationships, research, and experience to produce process improvements that net significant time saved.

Recently I proposed simplifications to our job monitoring controls. I partnered with Product Ops, whose understanding of the overall tech surface area allowed us to connect the dots with our change management process.

Without this expertise, the simplifications I proposed would have caused downstream issues with our SOX population – risking a control deviation.



DAVID WINDER

Senior Director, Infrastructure Engineering & SRE

## CASE STUDY

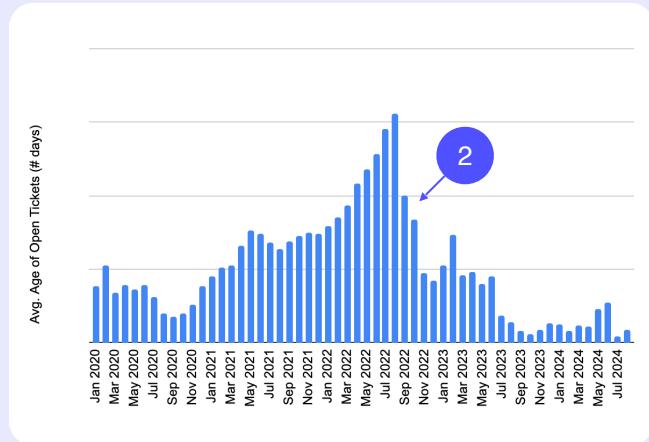
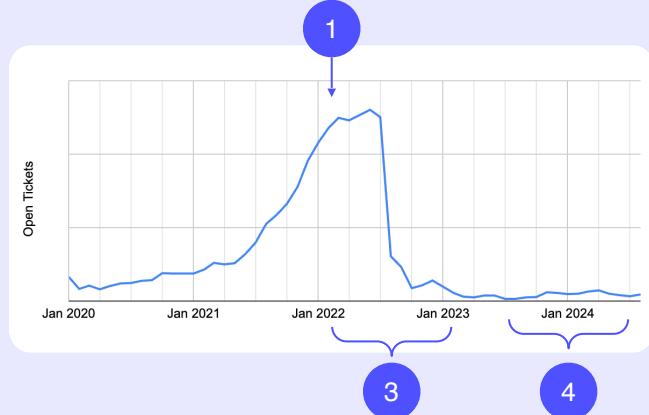
# Pod Enablement: Finding flow by minimizing support requests

# Spotlight on Broker Experience pod

Product Ops embedded with Broker Experience  
(aka BrokerX) in Feb 2022

1. Initial focus on understanding and triaging new tickets. Partnered with Broker Support team and upskilled team members to defray volume.
2. After stabilization, works down backlog queue going into peak Broker enrollment season ~Sept & October. Also engages with Broker Ops to improve intake and escalation processes.
3. Advocated for roadmap investments to increase self service tooling / decrease manual interventions performed by Eng on call.
4. Ramped down Product Ops staffing from 1 FTE → 0.5 FTE → 0 FTE.

**Outcome: Reduced Eng & PM staffing on BrokerX by ~35%**



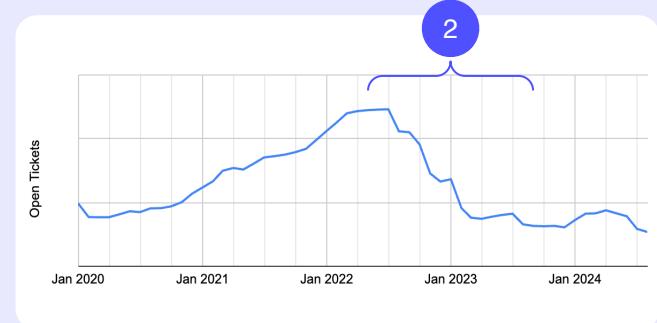
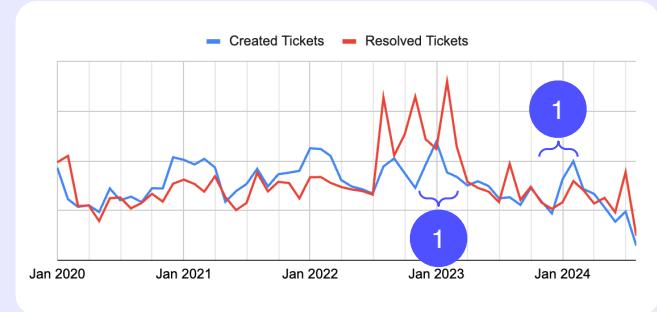
# Tech-wide cleanup effort

In August of 2022, we also set about tackling the Oscar-wide support request queue, learning from the initial push in BrokerX.

- Identified pod ownership and created JIRA Dashboard for each Domain / Pod with ProdOps support. Set reduction targets for each ProdOps team member.
- Updated mapping of issues <> owners to streamline ticket assignment, transfer, and tracking. Created a process to add new issues and audit/remap existing issues.

## Key Results:

1. 35% reduction in tickets created during our peak volume months (Dec-Feb).
2. 70% reduction in support requests over a 12 month period from July 2022 to 2023.



“

The BrokerX service request backlog was notorious hovered and was a huge constraint on Product Management and Eng time. The immediate attention that Prod Ops provided to issue triage and management was critical to ultimately having the space and time to permanently reduce domain run cost.

The cherry on top (among many other things!) was the effort to cull through the aging backlog one-by-one and clean up the entire thing. This alleviates a lot of pressure from our teams heading into our busiest season - the overhang of this backlog was just... mentally taxing!

This was a joint effort across the full pod, but I wanted to emphasize the value and power of Prod Ops, Product and Eng collaborating on one of the messiest cross-functional areas at Oscar and driving MAJOR change in less than one year.



BILL WILLIAMS

Senior Director, Product Management

## CASE STUDY

# Tech-wide Processes: Making work visible with aggregated roadmaps

# Inspiration from Phoenix Project: “Make work visible”

## IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING OF STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

**What we did:** Implemented a Parent / Child Taxonomy, aligned with the company goals.

- Organizing our roadmap into ~15 strategic priorities allowed leadership to better understand work
- Allowed for “local initiatives” that were unmapped – these could be isolated and pressure test to ensure high ROI

### Unlocked:

- Began capitalizing more software

# Inspiration from Phoenix Project: “Make work visible”

## IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING OF STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

**What we did:** Implemented a Parent / Child Taxonomy, aligned with the company goals.

- Organizing our roadmap into ~15 strategic priorities allowed leadership to better understand work
- Allowed for “local initiatives” that were unmapped – these could be isolated and pressure test to ensure high ROI

### Unlocked:

- Began capitalizing more software

## DEMYSTIFIED “NON-INITIATIVE” WORK

**What we did:** Accounted for 100% of Eng capacity, including overhead & PTO.

### Unlocked:

- Short term → better planning & capacity allocation
- Long term → identifying areas to reduce technical debt and improve developer productivity

“

Product Ops plays a core role in enabling the entire tech organization to run more efficiently. We had our most effective annual planning process in years due to their organization and leadership. With the continued efforts of the Product Ops team, I'm optimistic that we'll be able to plan, predict, report and execute with more precision and confidence.



JESSE HOROWITZ

Chief Product Officer

# What's next?

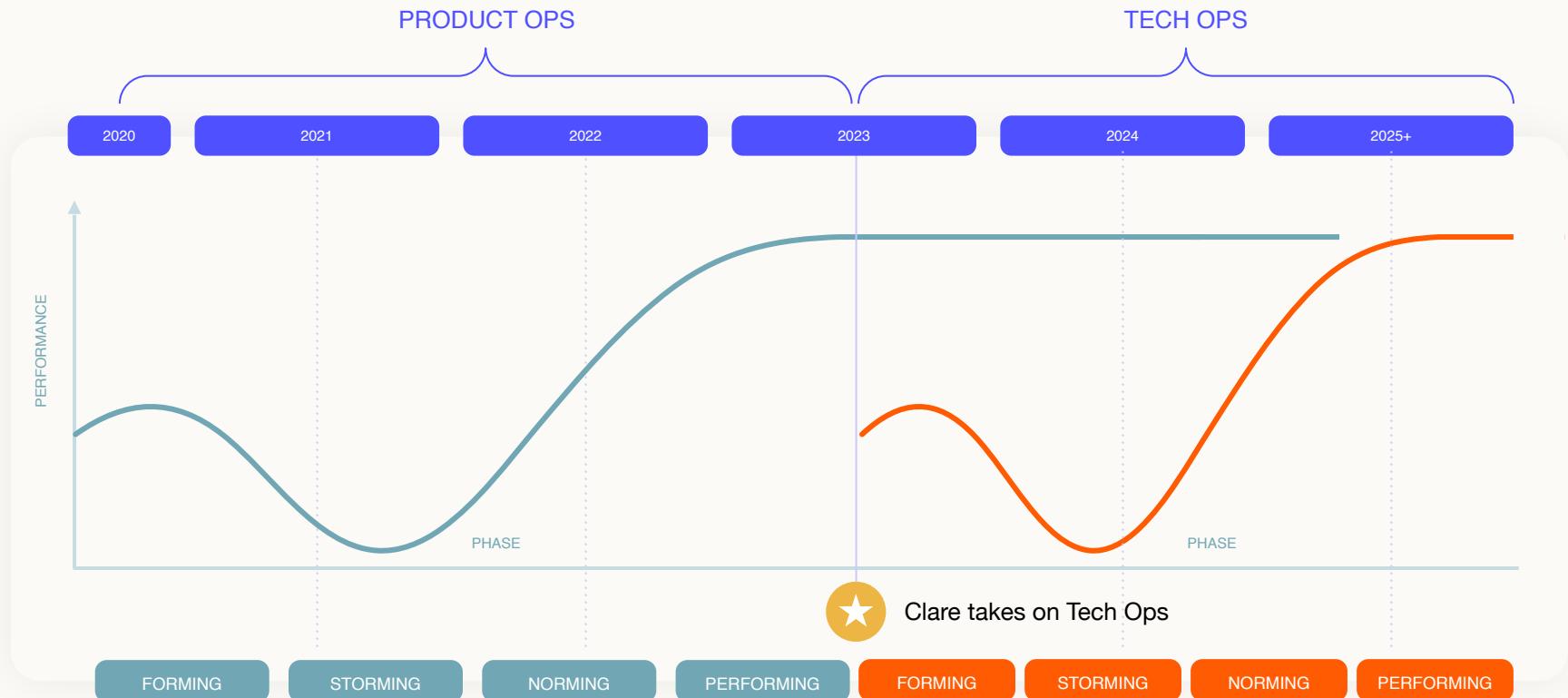
# Continue to “level up” Tech Ops



Expanded  
“Tech Ops” remit



# The Product Ops journey



# Continue to “level up” Tech Ops



Expanded  
“Tech Ops” remit



Measuring our impact:  
metrics vs. “vibes”



“

Product Ops has been instrumental in increasing our chances of successful launches by meticulously managing the entire process. Their close collaboration with stakeholders and end users has significantly accelerated the adoption of new features. Furthermore, their dedication to running daily operational production processes and supporting our end users ensures a seamless experience and higher user satisfaction scores.



SAHIL MEHTA

Director, Product Engineering

“

Product Ops exhibits a deep understanding of our Campaign Builder product and processes. Their comprehensive knowledge of our systems and services has allowed them to execute several process improvements. In the last 6 months, our Product Ops Manager streamlined our SDLC process, improved our launch checklist, and implemented new slack workflows in our team's help channels.



ERIN LANDAU

Director, Product Management

# Continue to “level up” Tech Ops



Expanded  
“Tech Ops” remit



Measuring our impact:  
metrics vs. “vibes”



Finding room for  
process improvement  
within pods

# Product Operations: Q2 2024 Time Expenditure



# Continue to “level up” Tech Ops



Expanded  
“Tech Ops” remit



Measuring our impact:  
metrics vs. “vibes”



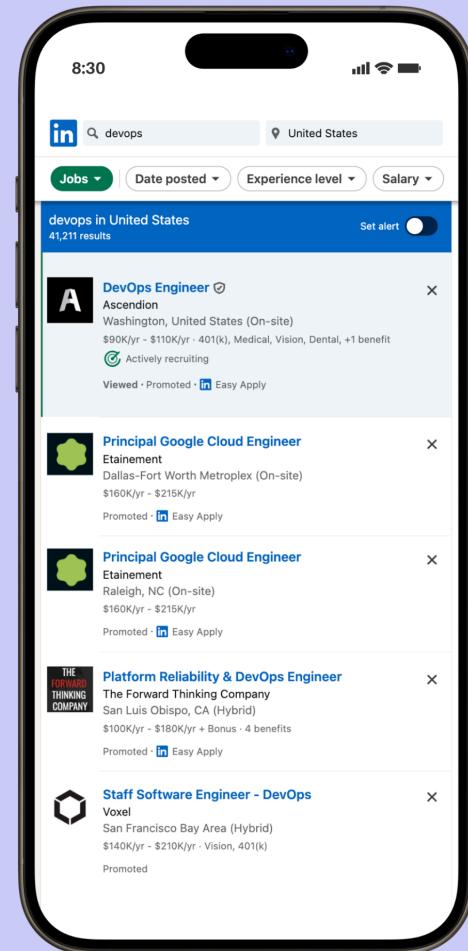
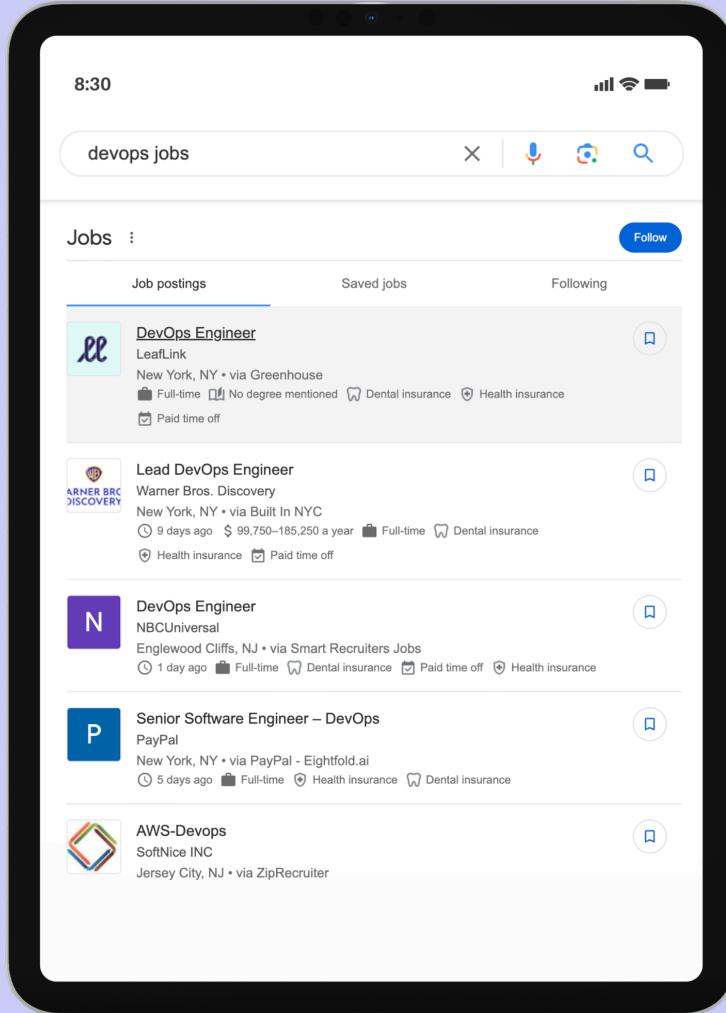
Finding room for  
process improvement  
within pods



Streamlining our  
quarterly roadmap  
processes

Hopefully my experience  
inspires you to find your  
own “unexepcted





# Atlassian: What is DevOps?

YES!

## DevOps culture

DevOps is a cultural shift where teams embrace a software engineering culture, workflow, and toolset that elevates operational requirements to the same level of importance as architecture, design, and development. When developers who build software also run it, they have a greater understanding of user requirements and needs. The values of a DevOps culture include increased transparency, communication, and collaboration across teams.

[Read more about DevOps culture →](#)

SIGH

## DevOps engineer

When organizations want to implement DevOps, they can turn to a DevOps engineer. This person has a wide-ranging skill set that spans both development and operations, but also the interpersonal skills to bridge divides between siloed teams.

A DevOps engineer is an IT generalist with a wide range of knowledge around day-to-day software development, cloud infrastructure management, system administration, and automation.

[Read more about DevOps engineers →](#)

Coming to ETLS feels like I made  
it to the “cool kids” table...

Who can you invite to your  
DevOps journey?

# Thank you!