# What was one thing you have learned accidentally through your life experiences?

Early in my career, I mistakenly believed that seasoned developers and engineers rarely made mistakes and would surely know more than I did. However, when I transitioned into my current role, I discovered that my unique DevOps experience from my previous career allowed me to bridge communication gaps between our ops team and developers. By accident, I learned that my individual skills and perspective could have a substantial impact.

This unexpected realization has led to the implementation of numerous automation tools and knowledge-building initiatives that have tremendously impacted the team. It taught me that expertise isn't just about avoiding mistakes or having all the answers but about leveraging unique experiences to foster collaboration and innovation. I believe this lesson aligns with the role of an expert lead engineer, where bridging various technological domains and facilitating teamwork are essential."

Your response provides a detailed account of a recent learning experience that directly relates to your work on the data protection SRE team. It demonstrates your hands-on involvement in addressing a real-world issue and showcases your awareness of the connections between different aspects of the business (e.g., SRE, finance, customer relations).

# What was one thing you have learned intentionally or purposefully over the last few months?

I’ve recently engaged in a deeper understanding of how we are billing our customers, particularly in response to a spike in costs this year. Our finance department reached out to us for historical data to aid in the Root Cause Analysis (RCA), and we found that delivering this data was challenging due to gaps in the data logged prior to June.

In our system, we use a distributed data collection strategy, making RESTful API calls and storing data in a data lake. Visualization tools then subscribe to this data lake. As I helped in this RCA, I purposefully learned about the complexities of this process, including several challenges our leadership faces when addressing customer concerns.

This experience taught me the importance of comprehensive data tracking, cross-departmental collaboration, and a holistic understanding of how technical decisions affect both internal operations and customer relations. It not only broadened my technical perspective but also highlighted the need for alignment between different aspects of the business.

# What constructive feedback have you received over the last three months? What have you done as a result?

A few months ago, a junior developer on my team expressed criticism that I was setting too high of expectations for the team. When I joined the team, I had to learn new technologies without much guidance, create tools that didn't exist, and navigate a lack of infrastructure documentation. It was a trial-by-fire experience. Given that background, I had expected the newer team members to take a similar approach, pushing themselves to learn independently.

However, I took the feedback seriously and reflected on the situation. I realized that while my expectations were based on my experiences, it was essential to communicate why I had those expectations and the broader vision behind them.

As a result, I had a candid conversation with the team, emphasizing that our work goes beyond BAU (Business as Usual). I expressed that our efforts impact not only our customers but also the image of our team, and we should strive to stand out by expecting more of ourselves. I also committed to providing guidance where needed without compromising the expectation of personal growth and initiative.

Since that time, our team has truly risen to the challenge, taking on more assignments and skilling up with each opportunity. The change has been remarkable, and I'm not only impressed with their growth but also incredibly proud of what we've accomplished together. The feedback, although initially difficult to hear, ultimately strengthened our team's dynamics and led us to greater success.

# What constructive feedback have you shared with a colleague in the recent past?

Recently, I found myself in a situation where a colleague on my offshore team resolved an issue with our production environment but didn't document the resolution steps. They simply asked the customer to try again, and it worked. However, this approach created a transparency problem for those of us onshore, as we were left in the dark about how the issue was fixed.

Recognizing the importance of clear communication and transparency within our team, I approached my colleague privately to discuss the situation. I began by acknowledging the successful resolution but then expressed my concern about the lack of documentation. I emphasized how this information was crucial for the entire team to understand what was done and to ensure consistent handling of similar issues in the future.

My colleague was receptive to the feedback, and we agreed to meet weekly to go over recently resolved issues and document the resolution steps. This new practice has not only improved our transparency but also strengthened our communication and teamwork across different locations.

By addressing this issue directly and collaboratively, we've created a more cohesive and effective team, ensuring that everyone has the information they need to perform their roles effectively. The experience reinforced for me the value of open communication and the willingness to give and receive feedback as essential components of a successful team."

# What motivates you the most: accomplishment or learning?

For me, accomplishment is the primary motivator, as I see goals as the driving force that dictates the path of learning. When I set clear and challenging objectives, they become a roadmap guiding me to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to achieve them. In this sense, learning is not an end in itself but a powerful tool that enables me to reach my goals.

What I learn along the way does more than just help me reach my individual targets; it empowers me to create better tools and inspire those around me. By focusing on accomplishment, I find myself in a continuous cycle of setting goals, learning, achieving, and then using that acquired knowledge to set new, higher goals.

This approach has shaped my career and allowed me to make meaningful contributions to my team and organization. The satisfaction of achieving a goal, knowing that I have grown in the process, and recognizing that my learning has a broader impact, is what truly drives me.

# How do you like to be recognized for a job well done?

"For me, recognition is most meaningful when it's tied to the concrete impact of my efforts. Rather than focusing on personal praise or awards, I find satisfaction in seeing how my work contributes to real-world outcomes. Here are some examples that resonate with me:

* **Increasing Productivity**: Understanding how a project I've worked on has removed obstacles and accelerated workflows, leading to a more efficient and productive team, is a powerful form of recognition. It shows that my efforts are not only valued but are also making a noticeable difference.
* **Empowering the Team**: Knowing that the training and documentation I've provided have enabled more autonomy and motivation among my colleagues is highly rewarding. It's a testament to the influence and positive change that my contributions can foster.
* **Benefitting Customers and Leadership**: Ultimately, seeing how these efforts translate into a better bottom line for our customers and the organization is the ultimate recognition. It connects my work to the larger goals of the company and reinforces the value and relevance of what I'm doing.

In summary, recognition for me is about connecting my work to tangible results and broader impacts. It's about seeing the difference I'm making, not just for myself but for my team, our customers, and the organization as a whole. That's what truly drives me and makes me feel appreciated.

# What is a frustration you have working at the firm, and what have you done to address it?

One frustration I have faced at the firm involves the lack of clear communication between different departments. This has sometimes led to misunderstandings, redundant efforts, or missed opportunities to leverage collective knowledge and resources.

Recognizing this challenge, I've taken proactive steps to address it, both at the individual and team levels:

* **Building Relationships**: I've made an effort to foster connections with colleagues in other departments, reaching out to discuss projects and share insights. This has helped in understanding their needs and perspectives and promoting more effective collaboration.
* **Facilitating Cross-Department Meetings**: I've advocated for and helped organize regular cross-department meetings where different teams can share updates, align on goals, and explore opportunities to work together. This has created a platform for open dialogue and enhanced cooperation.
* **Creating Shared Resources**: I've also been involved in developing shared documentation and tools that provide visibility into ongoing projects and available resources across the firm. This has helped reduce duplication of effort and foster a more collaborative and efficient working environment.

By taking these steps, I've aimed to turn my frustration into a constructive force for change. While challenges in communication will always exist in a complex organization, I believe that my efforts have contributed to a more collaborative and transparent culture, and I continue to explore ways to further improve in this area.

That's a succinct and effective response that conveys openness and approachability. Here's a refined version that maintains the essence of your message:

# How do you prefer to be approached when someone has constructive feedback for you?

I firmly believe that feedback is essential for understanding whether we are on the right path, and I value it as a tool for continuous improvement. With that in mind, I strive to maintain an open-door policy, encouraging anyone who has insights or constructive criticism to speak with me directly. If a more detailed conversation is needed, I'm always open to setting up a private meeting. This approach ensures that lines of communication are always open, and I welcome the opportunity to hear others' perspectives, as they help me grow and stay aligned with our collective goals.

# What does leadership mean to you?

To me, leadership is a multifaceted responsibility that centers on guiding a team towards success and growth. A good leader:

* **Communicates the Bigger Picture**: Helps the team understand the overall mission and how their individual roles contribute to the greater goal.
* **Establishes Achievable Goals**: Sets clear, realistic targets that align with the team's abilities and the organization's objectives.
* **Cuts the Path to Success**: Actively identifies and provides the necessary tools, support, and resources to enable the team to achieve their goals.
* **Gives Credit Where It's Due**: Recognizes and celebrates achievements, fostering a culture of encouragement and motivation.
* **Shows Vision for the Future**: Inspires the team with a forward-looking perspective, imbuing the work with purpose and excitement.
* **Optimizes Resources**: Strategically utilizes resources and eliminates redundancy, ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in all efforts.

In sum, leadership, as I see it, is about clarity, support, recognition, vision, and resourcefulness. It's about guiding a team with enthusiasm and integrity, creating an environment where everyone can thrive and contribute to shared success.

# What accomplishment are you most proud of?

I'm most proud of the groundwork I laid to enable our SRE developers to succeed. When I first joined the team, I was met with limited resources and substantial expectations, but I saw this as an opportunity rather than an obstacle.

I utilized my automation skills and ability to build strong relationships, working closely with our senior operations engineers to understand their needs and insights. Through collaboration and my own trial-and-error experiences, I developed essential tools that automated numerous tasks. These innovations not only streamlined our workflow but also created a more supportive environment for our new developers.

But I didn't stop there. I also took the time to share best practices and hard-won knowledge with our junior team members, fostering a culture of learning and growth. Thanks to these efforts, our new developers became more enabled and confident in a shorter time frame than I had experienced. They've since contributed significantly to our team, creating impactful tools and helping us achieve our goals collectively.

This accomplishment resonates with me not just for the technical success but for the human element as well. It's a testament to what can be achieved when we work together, share knowledge, and invest in the growth of others. Seeing the tangible growth and success of my team members has been incredibly rewarding, and I believe it's a reflection of the positive and collaborative culture we've fostered.

# What training, mentoring, or coaching are you involved in? What's hard about it?

Training and mentoring within our team of 10 developers has been both a necessity and a unique challenge. We're a busy team with customer issues to resolve, management meetings to attend, and daily scrum calls, all within a demanding work environment. Finding time to teach new skills seemed nearly impossible.

That's when I decided to take a 'divide and conquer' approach, akin to cells multiplying, if you will.

**The Strategy:**

1. Identify the Skills Needed: I started by identifying the critical skills that the team needed to learn.

2. Teach a Few in Depth: I selected a couple of team members and taught them the necessary skills in detail. This in-depth training ensured that they became experts in those areas.

3. Overview for All: I provided an overview of the skills to the entire team, ensuring everyone had at least a basic understanding.

4. Peer-to-Peer Learning: The team members who learned the skills in detail then took on the responsibility of teaching the rest of the team. This not only helped in distributing the workload but also fostered collaboration and trust within the team.