

Is ITSM Obsolete in a DevOps World?

How to bridge the gap
between ITSM and DevOps

As DevOps maturity and adoption increase among organizations, it's fair to question whether ITSM is becoming obsolete. Development teams aren't just responsible for owning their code through to production—they also face the burden of support when issues arise. As organizations scale, this model increases in impact as developers spend less time building and more time fixing. In this scenario, organizations have two options: phase out ITSM and tick off all those developers who didn't sign up to be Level 1 Support, or take advantage of a golden opportunity to evolve ITSM with the rest of the organization.

It has never been easier to convert a new idea into a functioning solution. In the 2017 Puppet State of DevOps Report, top performers were identified as deploying code multiple times per day. The days of yearly or even quarterly releases are long gone as organizations respond aggressively to market changes and customer needs. Organizations have sped up innovation by putting more emphasis on continuous delivery within their Application Development teams, and changing the culture and power structures within their technology departments as a whole.

Companies that have been the most effective with their DevOps transformations started with major shifts in culture. This cultural shift enabled greater power, autonomy, and budget to teams responsible for application development and operations—often at the expense of ITSM. Even with the overall benefit of quicker release cycles and deployments, these changing investment priorities have led to crippling inter-team rivalries. These rivalries often lead to conflicting goals and a breakdown in communication between DevOps and ITSM teams.


As DevOps grows and matures inside more organizations, many people have begun to question whether ITSM is becoming obsolete. To combat this notion, ITSM professionals need to continually evolve to keep up with the pace of change and help bridge the gap between IT, Development, and Operations.

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Mounting Pressures on ITSM Professionals

Despite the ever increasing number of new tools being leveraged by DevOps groups and the speed at which new deployments hit production, ITSM spend has been stagnating or sometimes even declining in favor of spending on development. In fact, according to a Service Desk Institute report, View from the Frontline, “60% of respondents have identified that a lack of budget and resources, limiting the ability to meet business expectations, is their most significant pain area.” Which leads to the ITSM professionals’ mantra, “do more with less.” In other words, squeeze enough value out of their resources and tools to keep their heads above water.

ITSM needs to not only manage incidents, but archive key information within their system of record, the Service Desk. This requirement has become inherently more complex



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with the advent of DevOps. Developers, who work with a wide range of tools, are typically responsible for fixing issues found in production. There are not a lot of developers who choose to spend time inside of typical ITSM tools like a Service Desk. If not managed correctly, valuable information can become scattered in disparate tools, making post mortems and process improvement activities nearly impossible for ITSM.

And if there isn't enough pressure already, customers mount more expectations on organizations by expecting updated features faster and faster, while demanding the same (or better) level of uptime and response time to issues.

DevOps Is Gaining Resources and Importance

As ITSM is doing more with less, DevOps is eating up more and more resources. Since Development teams promise to deliver applications at a faster rate with fewer bugs, they're allowed to select tools that facilitate the process. As each team scales their people and tools, they eat up a larger share of the IT budget while placing more burden on ITSM.

Not only are DevOps practitioners expected to develop new applications, they're also being tasked with ensuring their code runs well in production. They're often on-call for when things go wrong. This again can cause friction with ITSM teams as the developers work outside of the ITIL processes they're used to abiding by. Incident management has typically lived in ITSM and IT Ops worlds. As DevOps teams take on ITSM responsibilities, their importance within

the organization is allowing them to run incidents the way they choose to.

This can alienate the ITSM teams if not handled correctly. But it doesn't have to. If done in an appropriate and collaborative way, ITSM can leverage their skills and knowledge and work in conjunction with DevOps teams to take advantage of the extra resources they're commanding. To do so, ITSM needs to reduce manual and repetitive tasks by enabling and automating the movement of data across disparate teams and systems. This automation increases in importance as organizations mature in DevOps adoption and risk data overload from too many tools.

Evolving ITSM to Deliver Value in a DevOps World

So with all of the new and ever-increasing pressures along with the reallocation of focus and budgets, how are ITSM professionals supposed to stay relevant? Provide more value, which can be easier said than done. As DevOps spreads across the organization, the proliferation of tools can reach a breaking point that will bring ITSM professionals back into the spotlight as a valued resource. Companies are grappling with questions like: How do we keep all of these tools talking to each other? How do we enable teams to collaborate on issues when they're not using the same systems?


To provide more value, ITSM professionals can and should adapt quickly to what engineering is doing. The more quickly ITSM can get up to speed with the changes happening across the development and operations organizations, the faster they can find areas to provide meaningful value. For instance, ITSM professionals can alleviate much of the added pressure of Development teams running their own code in production by becoming the first line of defense. In the previously mentioned SDI report, 72% of respondents said their key priority for the coming year should be improving first-time fix rates. And when a DevOps resource is needed to help resolve an incident, ITSM can ensure those DevOps resources have all the information

they need, as well as integrations that allow them to move that information into the systems they like to use.

ITSM should strive to centralize incident management while allowing teams to work the way they like to. In an ideal state, each DevOps team is aligned with the required context for a given business issue regardless of the system used. As resolution processes move forward, every required team and system is kept up to speed. As ITSM professionals expand their reach, they can aspire to own more than just the Service Desk. Owning collaborative response allows them to ensure that consistent communication can happen across multiple teams, each using their own preferred set of tools, while driving workflow across each stage of the CI/CD pipeline and incident management process. This wide-spanning ownership approach of issues occurring across the software delivery cycle allows small issues as well as major incidents to be addressed with the required levels of consistency, structure, and automation.

ITSM's Value Can Increase with DevOps Maturity

In the midst of sweeping changes in technology, ITSM will continue to play a major role. The key point to remember is that the focus, scope, and priorities of the role need to evolve to stay relevant. As organizations increase their levels of DevOps maturity, ITSM can relieve support burdens from developers by adopting agile practices. As noted in an EMA report, Next-Generation IT Service Management, "To support these needs, ITSM-related management software needs to become increasingly dynamic, more analytically advanced, and better integrated in support of a growing number of tasks, initiatives, and stakeholders."




The role of ITSM professionals needs to continually evolve in a DevOps world."

Rumblings that ITSM is becoming obsolete might remain; but while the sentiment is understandable, the threat is clearly overstated. What people are really saying is that the role of ITSM professionals needs to continually evolve in a DevOps world. To keep up with the pace of change, ITSM professionals need to shift focus from fixing things that are broken to providing increased value across development and operations at each stage of the software development pipeline. To do so, ITSM needs to enable teams with new technology that bridges the gap between traditional ITSM and DevOps tools. By blurring lines that separate teams and empowering seamless movement of information across tools, ITSM will remain a valued resource.

xMatters is the Only Solution Capable of Bridging the Gap

xMatters integrates people into your toolchains spanning IT Services and DevOps solutions. xMatters automates communications so you can proactively prevent outages, rapidly engage responders, manage major incidents, and keep stakeholders informed from your preferred systems. IT and customer support teams can automatically communicate with the correct on-call tools, people, and teams to resolve customer issues faster. xMatters leverages your group on-call schedules and rotations, escalation rules, and user device preferences to quickly engage the right resources with customizable response and collaboration options.

Integrating xMatters across your tools and teams allows you to automatically transfer key data throughout your systems to drive workflows forward. Users in both IT Services and DevOps can take action in their preferred tools or directly from an xMatters alert, no matter which tool the alert originates from. Customize response options so responders can take multiple actions including creating a ticket, assigning the ticket to themselves, or requesting additional help by kicking off a targeted chat room or conference call with the appropriate resources.



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Invitations to collaborate can automatically reference the ticket and pull in key data from your other tools, so your resolution teams can quickly get up to speed and take action. Once the incident has been completed, xMatters allows responders to automatically log chat activity to the originating ticket and set it to a resolved state. xMatters eliminates the need for manually moving data between systems, allowing your teams to get back to resolving incidents or writing new code instead of keeping stakeholders aligned.



(x) ABOUT US

xMatters is a toolchain communication platform that relays data between systems while engaging the right people to resolve incidents. The platform automates, operationalizes and contextualizes communications within key DevOps processes, fundamentally altering the way business units work together. xMatters also supports enterprises through major incident and change management, alerting the right people on the right channels to time-sensitive events and problems like network outages, supply-chain disruptions, natural disasters and medical emergencies. Founded in 2000, xMatters is headquartered in San Ramon, CA, with additional offices worldwide. For more information, please visit xmatters.com.

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