James (Jim) Stagg

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Since July 19, 2019, I've been living a real-life disaster recovery fairytale!
It's the sort of event that reshapes everything, literally and figuratively,
and also offers fantastic opportunities for learning and adaptation.
I am a leader of way smarter people, a technical manager with a love of ops
and a healthy respect for dev, DevOps and Lean proponent, Kanban fan, order
management specialist, sometimes automated tester and occasional Perl programmer.
And while the fire burned a practical PhD in disaster recovery into my soul, it only served
to feed my natural curiosity that there always has to be a better way.

EXPERIENCE

S.P. Richards Company

Applications Development Manager - October 2015 to Present

- **2020:** Mostly about the fire, but that's not the whole story!
  - Managed major systems testing as part of data center moves
  - Assumed management of database team
  - Migrated over 50% of order line volume to new OMS
  - Handled a doubling of order volume due to pandemic buying patterns
- **2019:** Amplifying the feedback loops:
  - We moved 95% of deployments to non-impacting, daily events (was 15% in 2018)
  - Added management responsibility for ESB app admin to the team
  - Operated as onsite liaison for IT Ops team (i.e.- I was the neck to choke so Ops could work) at the DR site in the weeks following the fire
- **2018:** Designing a better way:
  - Picked to lead our "sustaining" team
  - Architected a promising solution that turned a top 20 customer into a top 5 customer
  - Added management responsibility for Sterling OMS architecture to the team
- **2017:** Delivering on commitments:
  - ASP.NET team delivered major sales order entry & editing additions
  - We deliver the first CI/CD pipelines for Sterling OMS
  - Adopted Kanban process for visualizing team flow
- **2016:** Creeping the scope, but in a good way:
  - Chosen to lead ASP.NET team and drove our new sales order entry app to completion
  - Added management responsibility for Sterling OMS application administration to the team
- **2015:** Things get interesting:
  - My Classic ASP team delivered two major new channels of business
  - We swap out JBoss Messaging for HornetQ for JMS messaging
  - Assumed management responsibility for:
    - Customer-facing web portal
    - Jenkins CI/CD pipelines & on prem GitLab repo
    - Rebates financial applications

Application Architect (IBM Sterling OMS) - November 2010 to October 2015
- 2015: Worked with EDI team & trained Application Support team
  to pave the way for more Promising Module adoption
- 2014: Implemented Promising Module in Sterling OMS
- 2013: Implemented Pricing & Inventory modules
- 2012: Implemented History Data module
- 2011: Stabilized deployment process. Presented at IBM Smarter Commerce Global Summit

Application Administrator - June 2006 to October 2010
- 2010: Implemented Purchasing and master data loading modules
- 2009: Implemented PROS pricing & analytics solutions, primary role was ETL developer
- 2008: Implemented, supported & matured Axapta 4/Sterling OMS project, played all roles
- 2007: Led Axapta 4/Sterling OMS project, primarily PM and implementer
- 2006: Integrated Horizon subsidiary network into SPR network, primarily systems architect

Senior Windows System Administrator - January 2001 to June 2006
- 2005: Led migration from NT4 to Active Directory project
  (hands on, re-created environment in VMs for testing and re-testing implementation)
- 2004: Managed legacy OMS platform migration project, primarily as PM and tester
- 2003: Implemented SPR's first business analytics package, implementer and developer
- 2002: Created & tested SPR's initial Windows system disaster recovery plan
- 2001: Administered SPR's first AS/400 systems

Dealergain.com

Systems Administrator - September 2000 to December 2000
- 2000: Windows/Linux sysadmin support for startup Dealergain.com. (Lost funding in Dec. 2000)

Expo.net

Unix Systems Administrator/Web Developer - April 1999 to August 2000
- 1999: Worked one-on-one with clients to create custom web solutions

Sportime International

Systems Analyst/Graphic Designer - July 1994 to March 1999
- 1998: Created web sites for all Sportime catalogs.
- 1997: Launched Sportime's first web presence.
- 1996: Moved to full-time sysadmin role.
- 1995: Created pre-press coordinator position (annual cost savings of $90k).

Fulton County Daily Report

Art Director/Macintosh Systems Manager - September 1990 to June 1994
- 1994: Managed creation and publishing of 1994 Georgia Bench Book.
- 1993: Promoted to department head to manage daily paper production and special projects.
- 1992: Coordinated daily newspaper production and art directed photo shoots for special projects.
- 1991: Implemented new Macintosh-based newspaper production system.
- 1990: Coordinated daily production of newspaper "legal ads" section.

EDUCATION

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

Bachelor of Science in Technical Management

Graduated Summa Cum Laude

More About My DevOps Journey

Going back as far as my last days as an "official" sysadmin, I'd begun looking for a way to automate the building of a server to fit a recipe. My exact words were "I can't build another server by hand," and that was, for us, a radical concept. As soon as I found I could P2V and run images with VMWare Player, I never looked back. I leveraged that into building virtual infrastructure for replacing our old Windows NT domain controllers with upgraded Windows Server 2003 systems in 2004/2005, creating test servers for every major function, upgrading the domain controller, testing, reverting the snapshots and testing again and again until I was sure everything was covered and was totally repeatable.

When I built out the infrastructure for our Axapta implementation in 2006, I put everything but the database onto a VM for the same reasons. At that point, I began to understand there was a practice to be developed that wasn't quite being a sysadmin and wasn't quite being a developer. I was bridging it, creating semi-automated tests and fault-tolerant sustaining scripts anywhere it was feasible (and some places it wasn't, but I did it anyway because it was all on me to make it work). I had a heck of a time selling my new practice because all I could call it was "application administration." But I kept doing it and automating until I freed up enough time to get involved in other pursuits.

As I moved into our order management system replacement project, I bought what I could to a much more complex environment. Some translated well. Some things were very, very new. It wasn't all "on me" anymore, but I continued to drive the "app admin practice," including more consolidated log checking and more (and more complicated) semi-automated deployment processes. In parallel, our lead Java developer was building our first Jenkins pipelines and modernizing our old CVS source control to GitLab. Eventually, he came to work for me on my team, and I started to realize that what I'd been doing all along had a name: DevOps.

Now, my main focus is split between being that new order management system subject matter expert and running our sustaining team (we still call it the "production team"). Our deployments are frequent (often several times a week) and safe. The one place where, organizationally, we could have done vastly better is embracing test automation and the automated generation of a developer environment. Despite that, we manage a good amount of success in a very lean team operating in a fairly complex environment. As always, shortening the time it takes to get system feedback increases our effectiveness, even if things aren't all exactly the way I'd like them to be.