How Does IT Management Govern EverythingOps?

More from Bill Doerrfeld

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The number of tools engineers use to provision software architecture in the cloud is starting to get a little out of hand. There are many competing ways to do one thing. Most often, people simply adopt a new tool to solve a DevOps problem in the moment, not always considering the longevity of the solution or how other departments are handling it. This could result in fragmentation and technical debt, making it difficult to find consistency and increase speed simultaneously across all company divisions.

I recently interviewed Jeff Kukowski, CEO, CloudBolt Software, to explore why these issues persist and how executives should approach cloud management within their organizations. According to Kukowski, many flavors of Ops now permeate large companies. Different approaches often

exist per department or interdepartmental, with teams using various software stacks.

According to Kukowski, a new frame of mind will be necessary to remain agile in the new cloud order and to address this state. Doing so will require organizations to erode false dichotomies around ownership and IT governance.

Everything's Going Ops

At this point, most large suites of digital services have adopted a complex hybrid and multi-cloud modality. And many teams have embraced their own unique form of DevOps to get a handle on the management difficulties of delivering software and maintaining reliability for microservices architectures. Different groups pulling in various directions create an ongoing battle of EverythingOps, explained Kukowski.

You can think of it as separate Ops approaches emerging around different business functions. For example, FinOps is emerging to control spending, ITOps is about delivering services, DevOps is improving release fluidity and DevSecOps aims to bring security to the forefront of the release process. Lastly, BizDevOps is about increasing observability for business outcomes.

At a high level, CIOs have committed to digital transformation to move quicker. Yet the problem now is "battles between different Ops can easily lead to broken IT governance," said Kukowski. This tension introduces several false dichotomies, he explained. In addition to slowing agility, a lack of DevOps unity eschews reusability, contributing to waste and increased IT expenses, said Kukowski.

Solution: Shifting Governance Left

There is a belief in IT that true innovation will come if you only give

engineers the keys to use anything they want. While that may be true, without better leadership with regard to the basics in this new cloud order, some things can get out of control very quickly, Kukowski warned. Instead, he argued that built-in guardrails for provisioning tools are necessary. "We have too many tools—we need better frameworks to tie this together."

Not only would increased cloud governance help tie together disparate tooling decisions, but Kukowski argued it also can reduce the cognitive load necessary to onboard each tool. "Shifting left will increase speed—it won't slow people down," he said. Contrary to popular belief, he said that shifting guardrails left can have the effect of increasing speed, which may greatly outweigh the negatives of shackling developers to a single approach.

CloudBolt predicted siloed management will shift to organizational governance around tools in the coming year. But it's not only the tooling decisions that require forethought, "it's the leadership and cultural approach," said Kukowski. A common area where greater leadership is required is in tagging workloads for applications, he said. "It's not being done well anywhere."

Or, consider containerization. Containers have become fundamental to most modern cloud technology stacks, yet, the cognitive load required to deploy, configure and run a contain remains quite high, explained Kukowski. Do you allow every developer to custom-code each container, or do you enable a self-service repeatable provisioning process? If standard code is not being reused, you're not getting speed or governance, he explained. Furthermore, with green IT initiatives becoming a priority, companies should be looking at ways to reuse processes and reduce waste where they can.

Final Thoughts: Shift Left, Automate and Reuse

For a cloud-native company, the emphasis is constantly on speed and

growth. And engineers are absolutely driving this focus and the resulting innovation. Yet, this innovation can't come at the expense of bringing all departments onto the same level of innovation. "Innovative stuff in the cloud can't be separated from governance, ESG and security," said Kukowski.

A big hurdle of tomorrow's cloud management will be identifying and uniting these islands of automation, these pockets of tools and preferences that differ between departments. It will also require a different frame of mind across divisions. "There's a difference between solving the problem for the task and solving the problem for reuse and speed," explained Kukowski. Delivering on reuse and speed will require less bespoke DevOps automation and better foundations for solving future problems, he said.

"Shift left, automate and reuse—people shouldn't have to touch it. That's the thinking that needs to be applied to this new cloud order," said Kukowski.