

Collaboration

# Collaboration

Intentional processes and common purpose of individuals.

Examples:

- Asynchronous code review
- Documentation
- Updating issues and bug reports
- Demonstrating weekly progress
- Regular status updates
- Pairing

# Effective collaboration

- Includes: [article, *New York Times* called “Why Some Teams Are Smarter than Others”]
  - communication
  - equal participation and
  - Theory of Mind (ToM)
- ToM: ability to recognize one’s own perspective, and that others have a distinct and different perspective born from their own context.
- Examining how individuals are different, and exploring how these differences impact potential perspective, helps expand our own ToM, builds mutual understanding, and helps to resolve conflict crucial to the devops compact, in effect leveling up our capacity as smarter teammates.

# Mentorship

- Senior-to-Junior Mentoring
- Senior-to-Senior Mentoring
- Junior-to-Senior Mentoring:
  - reinforce an ethic of the importance of trying to learn from everyone.
  - We all have different levels of aptitude in particular skills. What we choose to focus on at a particular time will be where we are strongest.
  - This means that quite often an individual who is junior may be more skilled on a topic than someone more senior.
- Junior-to-Junior Mentoring

# Introducing Mindsets

- Mindsets are our personal beliefs about ourselves, and how we approach our possibilities.
- *Fixed mindset*: people believe talents and abilities are innate, fixed traits—either they are naturally good at something or they aren't, and that state is immutable.
- *Growth mindset*: talents and abilities are learned and improved with effort and practice.

Mindsets can greatly impact how people work, approach challenges, and deal with failure.

# Cultivating Mindsets

- How can someone foster a growth mindset?
  1. Learn the fundamentals
  2. Develop your niche
  3. Recognize your strengths and progress
  4. Ensure deliberate, quality practice
  5. Develop your working style
  6. Enhance the team style

# Learn the fundamentals

- When joining a team, learn the fundamental skills necessary for the position and team.
- Even if you have years of experience in the industry, do you understand the required skills to be successful on your specific team?
- Often we approach a position with the idea that we should know everything in order to be given the opportunity to work.
- We're so busy proving that our new coworkers and manager made the right decision that we often don't take the time to understand what the fundamentals of our job are, including all of the cultural differences associated with each unique environment.

# Develop your niche

- You know your current skills, so look for something you can do that you don't already know.
- This new skill doesn't have to be directly related to what you do now; it could be a gap that exists in the team or organization.
- For example, if you are on the operations team, and your supported application is storage, you might study up on different storage algorithms like LevelDB, a fast key/value storage library written at Google.
- This type of learning will strengthen your overall skills such that you can better operate and manage your application.



# Recognize your strengths and progress

- It is important to be able to accurately gauge your own performance and efficiency on the job.
- you should be able to give yourself feedback in the absence of or regardless of outside systems.
- Being able to assess ourselves honestly, and be satisfied with our mechanisms for measurement, allows us to steer our careers in the direction that we want to go.

# Ensure deliberate, quality practice

- Learning literally rewires our brain as we create new myelin, the white matter in the brain that speeds up and strengthens our nerve impulses.
- As the industry is changing and technology's impact is advancing at a leapfrog pace, it is critical to recognize these coasting habits—that is, when we are stagnating or becoming too comfortable with an activity because it seems like it could never change.
- We must continually challenge and improve ourselves, working to learn new skills and strengthen existing ones, to make sure we maintain a high quality of work and the ability to react to non-routine events.

# Develop your working style

- leave an environment knowing there was more work that could have been done.
- Examine what is working successfully and identify the strengths of the environment as well as opportunities to improve it.
- Figure out which working styles work for you
- In the process of this learning, you will also start to develop your own style when it comes to the tools and techniques.
- Look around for inspiration.

# Enhance the team style

- Once you understand your own style, you can learn to differentiate between your preferences and those of the team you are currently working on.
- One of the aspects of turning a group into a team is figuring out how everyone will align and work together.
- An organization's behaviors and attitudes toward failure will impact how individuals cling to their own methodologies.
- If individual team members feel they will be held accountable for failure, they may be more resistant to change processes that work for them.

# Mindsets and Learning Organizations

- Failure applies at the organizational level as well as the individual one.
- Blameful culture, when dealing with a failure, looks for the individual(s) who supposedly “caused” it so they can be removed, either from the project or the organization.
- This is often because these cultures view failure in a fixed way. They believe that if someone made a mistake, it was because they were not good enough or smart enough, and because the culture sees this as immutable, they don’t give the person chances to improve. The organization as a whole tends to stagnate in this way.

# Mindsets and Learning Organizations

- Focus is placed not on dealing with failure well and learning from it, but rather on avoiding it altogether.
- A blameless view of failure works so well in part because it adopts a growth mindset, acknowledging that mistakes happen but operating under the assumption that both people and organizations are capable of learning, growing, and improving.
- The team might not currently be good at something, but it *can get better* if people are looking for ways to get better, ways to learn, and ways to improve.

# Mindsets and Learning Organizations

- This focus on learning, education, and self-improvement produces smarter and more robust individuals and teams.
- Growth mindsets and learning organizations do a good job of upholding the devops compact as well, by enabling more frequent feedback and communication about what state things are in, what the goals are, and how these two aspects are currently aligning.

# Role of Feedback

Nature of the feedback people receive:

- May developed a fixed or a growth mindset. If someone does well at something and the praise they receive is, “Good job, you’re so smart,” the emphasis on smartness pushes them toward a fixed mindset, making them less likely to take on challenging tasks or anything that might call that smartness into question.
- If, on the other hand, someone is given the praise, “Good job, you worked so hard on that,” they will associate their successes with the effort they put in, not an innate quality, making them more likely to take on challenges and try again after setbacks in the future.



# Role of Feedback

- This is very important when considering employee growth and performance.
- People with fixed mindsets tend to pay attention only to feedback that relates directly to their present abilities, tuning out feedback that speaks to how they can improve in the future.
- Growth mindset individuals, on the other hand, are very attentive to any feedback that could help them do better, being focused on learning and improving themselves rather than on their current state.

# Role of Feedback

- There are two goals when providing feedback to employees.
- First, feedback in the form of things like performance reviews is designed to let people know how they are doing so they can **grow as individuals**, level up their own skills, and work to fill any gaps in their knowledge or skill set.
- Second, aside from the value this offers to the individual, the organization also benefits by figuring out **which people are performing better and contributing more**.
- The rationale for this is that if there are some people who aren't doing as well as their peers or are consistently failing to improve, the organization would be better off without them.

# Role of Feedback

- Feedback and reviews can have much more of an impact if given more frequently
- if feedback provides no new or actionable information, there will be no benefit to getting it more often.
- However, for feedback that is useful and actionable, greater frequency does lead to greater benefit for both individuals and organizations.

# Role of Feedback

- Smaller, shorter feedback cycles mean that adjustments are smaller and thus easier to make.
- This is a big driving factor behind teams moving away from the **waterfall model** for software development toward more **Agile practices** and a reason why continuous delivery works so well.
- Annual performance reviews are similar to waterfall in that the delay in getting feedback slows down problem resolution.
- So organizations should move toward the more Agile idea of continuous feedback.

# Reviews and Rankings

- Especially in larger organizations, various ranking systems are often used
- One of the biggest changes in recent years is the move away from *stack ranking*, also referred to as *forced ranking* or *forced distribution*.
- The idea that the *top 20* percent of the workforce is the most productive, and the middle 70 percent work adequately. The remaining 10 percent should be fired. This practice is often referred to as “rank and yank.”
- This ranking incentivizes employees to avoid being in the bottom 10 percent.

# Reviews and Rankings

- When individuals in a system are forced to compete with others' accomplishments, this increases the challenge of effective collaboration.
- Clear, transparent communication is not perceived as valuable to the individual, as having information can impact rewards, career advancement, and even whether an individual has a job.
- Stack ranking, especially when the process is poorly explained, hurts performance instead of helping it, but luckily there has been a marked decline in organizations using it in recent years.

# Reviews and Rankings

- How feedback and rankings around individual performance, rather than being something that impacts only one individual at a time, can impact collaboration throughout entire teams and organizations.
- Turning performance reviews into a zero-sum game inhibits communication and collaboration, as everyone is more focused on protecting their own jobs than on creating value for the company as a whole, let alone providing the most benefit for customers.
- Frequency and formality of feedback play a role in creating a collaborative environment as well.
- With shorter feedback cycles, people get more practice both receiving feedback and giving it in return.

# Conflict Resolution

- A large part of fostering collaboration as the primary negotiation style among a team or workplace ultimately comes down to communication.
- We first saw this idea in action when we introduced the DevOps compact; without effective communication, none of the shared goals, the strategies taken to reach them, or the contingency plans would have been anywhere near as likely to succeed.
- Effective communication allows people to **build shared understanding and find common goals** as opposed to working only in competition with one another.



# Conflict Resolution

## Effective Communication

- Increasing understanding
- Asserting influence
- Giving recognition
- Building community
  - Teams with greater Theory of Mind (ToM) and more equal communication are more creative and productive.
  - Teams where people regularly talk about topics outside of strictly work-related matters have higher levels of trust and empathy, and are better able to be productive and handle stressful times as a group.
  - People often interact better on an individual level when they are able to see each other as complete individuals

# Conflict resolution styles

- *Competition*
- *Accommodation*
- *Avoidance*
- *Compromise*
- *Collaboration*
  - People from different teams pairing on a particular project or feature, on-call responsibilities being shared between different groups of people involved in the deployment and maintenance of a product, or people from multiple groups being involved in project planning.
  - Teams with more collaboration are more productive as a whole, as well as being viewed more favorably by their members.
  - Usually better for team morale and productivity, this is a positively reinforcing cycle.

# Empathy and Trust

- Effective communication, in addition to being crucial for distributing information, is key to building a foundation of trust and empathy between individuals, and that foundation is what enables DevOps to really work.
- To increased empathy and a common focus, a shared vision should give individuals a much clearer picture of organizational or broader goals, which will help direct, inform, and guide autonomous action.
- Goals that are too vague or that don't seem relevant are harder to fully grasp and realize, and might not provide individuals with the motivation, context, or ability to choose effective courses of action.

# Empathy and Trust

- **Developing Empathy**
  - Listening
  - Asking questions
  - Imagining other perspectives
  - Appreciating individual differences
- **Developing Trust**
  - Swift trust
  - Self-disclosure
  - Trust but verify
  - Perception of fairness