Advocating DevOps
in a Change-Resistant Environment

A ReleaseTEAM Press Publication



RELEASETEAM
DevOps Specialists

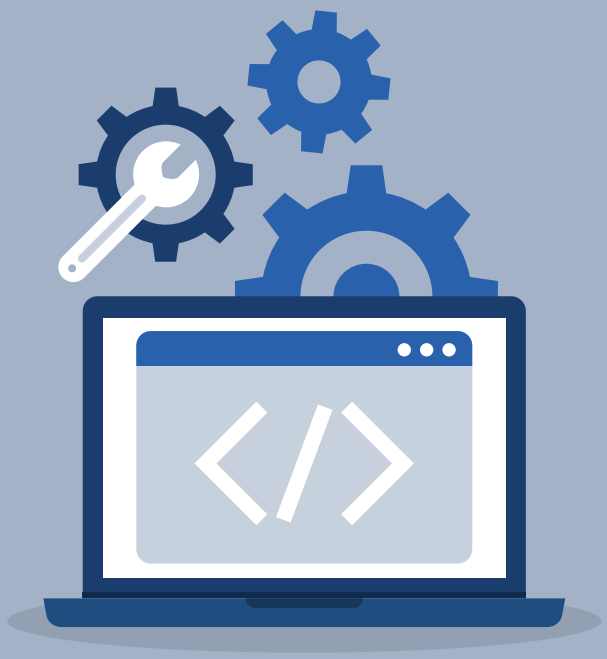
INTRODUCTION

Resistance to organizational change is a well-studied field of occupational behavior. Not all changes originate from the top, however. For software development team-members who want to advocate for changing to DevOps methodologies, resistance may come from colleagues, management, and even the operational teams they are trying to better support.

Software engineers and developers find change scary as they already work under intense pressure, have tight deadlines, and use different strategies to solve problems.

In this whitepaper, we look at the degrees of resistance you may encounter, as an advocate for DevOps solutions, in your enterprise or organization.

First, we need to understand what the causes of resistance to change in SDLC methodologies are.



What Causes Almost All Resistance?

The quickest answer is fear, but that's not the end of the discussion either. Fear can be born from a myriad of factors instigated by just the prospect of change.

The DevOps Lifecycle, by its nature, increases performance measurements and feedback metrics.

Software engineers who are under-performing may see this as a risk and dig-in against you. Others may be afraid they will not adapt to change as well as their colleagues, and so resist the proposal to protect their job security.

Additionally, a resource may be part of the group who introduced the legacy system and therefore resist, retaining seniority in the team and entrenching their reputation within the organization.

It's vital that you remember legacy attitudes will not change with buzzwords alone.

Degrees of Resistance and How to Identify Them

The four degrees of resistance you will come across are:



1. CONCERN

These are individuals who haven't bought into the new philosophy or strategy yet. They remain open-minded but need concrete proof that the change will serve them, and the organization, in the long term. Facts and figures will probably be enough to get them on board.



3. HOSTILITY

This group will have a differing opinion on what the required strategy is. For example,they do not agree with the logic that you've applied – either as they know something you don't, or because they favor an alternative approach. Hostile resistors will usually also have their references and data to back up their position.



2. RELUCTANCE

Although this group may understand the need for change, they probably do not agree on the proposed solution. They may not trust the benefits of DevOps or have seen attempts to implement it fail in the past. It could also be due to operational constraints such as time, budget, and schedule that prevents them from joining you in advocating for a change to a DevOps strategy.



4. REFUSAL

Individuals who adamantly refuse to change entirely are likely those who are prone to keeping the legacy system and approach. Often, this may be because the legacy system entrenched them within the organizational structure, they are close to retirement so do not want to rock the boat, or they fiercely believe in another approach or strategy.

Successfully Advocating for DevOps per Degree of Resistance

Once you've identified what degree of resistance you're facing, you can use these strategies to overcome them and become an advocate for successful DevOps implementation.

- Concerned

Resistance prevention and management will go a long way in getting these individuals or groups onboard. Communicating the benefits, engaging detractors, and detailing an effective change management strategy should be enough to convince them that it's the right option.

- Reluctant

Collaboration and teamwork are trainable skills. Engaging this type of resistance as part of a team and illustrating the return on investment possible with increased collaboration – outside of the usual organizational silos – will give them peace of mind.

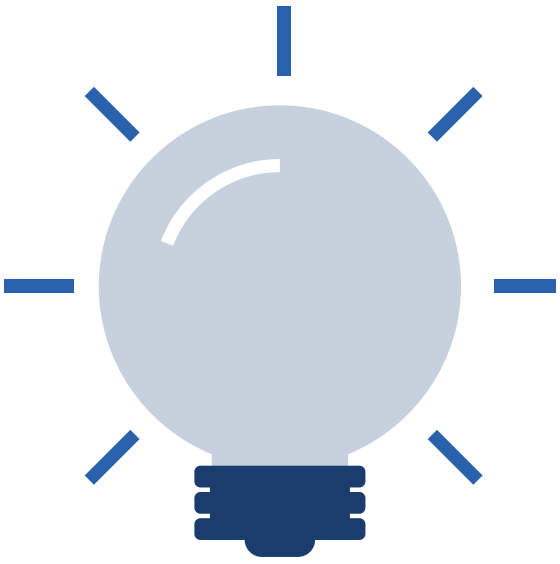
- Hostile

If someone is opposed to the idea of switching to the DevOps methodology, it could indicate that he or she has experienced similar attempts to change fail in the past. They may also have a strong opinion on the DevOps methodology, preferring traditional approaches such as Agile or Waterfall SDLCs. It will take strong evidence to the contrary to convince them of the value added in adopting strategy, with product demonstrations and possibly DevOps consultancy required to alleviate their concerns.

- Refusal

This type of resistance will not be easy to overcome. The individual may feel overwhelmed with the change and be concerned with what they are giving up to adopt the new development model. Often these individuals have a vested interest in the "as-is" legacy system and organizational structure.

Engaging with them one on one, determining their pain points, and providing solutions could help to negotiate a mutually acceptable solution. If they do not want to engage on the issue, it would be better if they are not involved as they may even seek to sabotage the process.



GENERAL ADVICE FOR CHAMPIONING DEVOPS CHANGES

All organizations should have an effective strategy for managing changes to their Standard Operating Procedures. Some changes are effected by something as simple as updating the code book, or choosing to implement a new development language (like ES6 or JSX). New technologies may require wholesale procedural changes.

If the environment is inherently skeptical, you will have your work cut out for you.

You can apply the following methodology to advocate for DevOps in your office:

1. Build Alliances

If you see the need for change, chances are others do to. Find out who agrees with you and get them to support your campaign.

2. Do your Research

Find out what works and what doesn't. DevOps is something that influences the culture of an organization, so look for areas that could impede its implementation and where your culture would positively benefit from implementing it.

3. Case Studies and pilot Programs

To prove you're on the right track, use success stories (preferably from your competitors) to prove that DevOps can improve the code base and turn-around times for your company. If a new project is being prepared for a major code update, recommend running a pilot project using the DevOps philosophy. This will also help you determine what a full-blown implementation would actually look like.

4. Remember it's a Process

All change is a process. If you keep this in mind, making small, incremental changes over time may result in a watershed moment that initiates large-scale organizational adoption.

Keep the business benefit in mind, remind your colleagues and management of it often, and eventually you'll see the results you want.

CONCLUSION

If you are a believer in the DevOps methodology and want to initiate changes at your organization, i t would benefit you to get in touch with a DevOps Consultancy such as ReleaseTEAM.

With experience in adding value to both public and commercial ventures, ReleaseTEAM will be able to advise you during every step of the DevOps journey – including formulating your strategy, selecting the technology that suits your needs, and implementing the solution with continuous improvements.

About ReleaseTEAM

ReleaseTEAM is a veteran-owned, full-service DevOps consulting firm, servicing both the public and private sectors. We focus on helping our clients to adopt and mature their software development lifecycle methodology, with solutions tailored to their objectives and culture. We offer the best solutions in the industry, delivered with over 20 years of expertise.

DevOps consulting, support, staff augmentation, mentoring, and DevOps software solutions. We work with you to understand your unique needs, audit your current development process, and recommend adoption paths with the highest return. Our consultants then evaluate the tools and own the implementation.

We Believe

Successful DevOps requires a balance of people, processes, and tools. ReleaseTEAM's experts can help you at every step along that journey

ReleaseTEAM, Inc
1400 W 122nd Ave, Suite 202
Westminster, CO 80234

866-887-0489
info@releaseteam.com



©2021 ReleaseTEAM