



Embracing uncertainty

Rapidly changing business environment, advancements in technologies have brought most of the 'traditional' organizations in a constant state of flux. The traditional organizations with layers of hierarchy, rigid processes, top-down planning, and execution often find themselves too slow to sense and react to the changes in external environment.

In contrast, outliers disrupt, succeed and in fact leverage uncertainty in their favor.

Major disruptive considerations that characterize the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) world we live in include:



Quickly changing landscape:

Industry stakeholders such as partners, suppliers, regulators and customers exhibit rapid changes in their operations and preferences.



Disruptive technologies: Artificial Intelligence (AI), advanced analytics, cloud and security incidents are disrupting traditional way of doing things and reshaping the competitive landscape.



Accelerating digitization: With nearly instant and flawless ability to connect millions of people, devices, sensors and objects, digitization is now a reality.



Emerging talent: With the emergence of modern technologies and social collaboration behavior, there is a growing realization that knowledge and task-based skills, creative thinking are critical.

Organizations will need to have a distinctive value proposition to leverage rather than only attract and retain diverse workgroups.

Underlying DevOps-The concept

Historically, DevOps is a term frequently used in Information Technology (IT) industry. It is a practice, which advocates tighter integration and collaboration between development and operations team. By adopting DevOps, organizations can experience faster release of software applications, updates roll out, defect identification and resolution and stable operating environment.

DevOps reimagined

In reality, Wipro has seen a dramatically increased impact when we consider what DevOps practically enables. This ultimately translates into business benefits like faster time to market, improved ROI and ability to sense and react to rapid changes in external environment.

Based on our experience, the profound influence this practice has on enterprises, and the economy merits the new term we have coined "Business DevOps."

We define Business DevOps as the ability of enterprises to incorporate greater agility, quality and industry stakeholder feedback in products and services they offer.
Fundamentally, organizations should adopt Business DevOps model in how they operate.

Strategy: The long-established approach to strategy "First Plan, Then Do" may not hold good in future. Organizations spend significant time in planning based on assumed scenarios. Due to rapid changes in external environment, these forecasts need revision. Organizations should adopt a newer approach of "Continuously Plan-Continuously Execute-Continuously Refine & Revise." This approach towards strategy will enable organizations to build emergent strategies and drive flexible execution.

Structure and processes: At the

implementation level, the simplicity of structure and processes will accelerate the success of strategy execution. Flat hierarchy, outcome accountability, collaborative communities, active partnerships within an ecosystem should be scaled across the organization. Coupled with rapid decision and learning cycle, organizations will quickly iterate, experiment and act on feedback.

Talent inclusiveness: It includes all the industry stakeholders such as partners, suppliers, regulators, customers, employees etc. We believe a Business DevOps culture requires crowdsourcing, social collaboration, broad based skills with strong analytical and creative capabilities at the center thus engaging and empowering talent.

Organizations should invest in crowdsourcing initiatives, hackathon, virtual collaboration tools, etc that bring different stakeholders together on a common platform to participate in this journey

Technology: To support their transformation journey, organizations must rethink the underlying technologies as well as architectures and tools. Modern agile organizations will need to quickly deliver and continuously refine products and services in the wake of changing customer preferences, increasing competition as well as omnipresent threats and regulators. The focus should be on disruptive technologies like AI, Cloud, and Analytics. Unobtrusive usage monitoring, service quality assurance, idea prototyping for feedback will cut across the boundaries of business and technology teams.

Scope must span the value chain

Business DevOps extends the concepts of traditional DevOps in a business ecosystem. Organizations looking to transform themselves must relook at their existing value chain through the new lens of Business DevOps.

Operations for any organization irrespective of the business they are in can be broadly categorized as:



Planning and design



Execution



Optimization

The core idea that organizations should strive for is to be fluid across their entire value chain. Increase in data volume, ease of collection and distribution of information across nodes and networks require organizations to quickly engage in the multidimensional approach of partnerships, collaboration models, setting up of systems and processes to enable co-creation of value for all of the ecosystem participants. Some of the steps that an organization can take for successful implementation of Business DevOps are:



Adopt implicit and continuous stakeholder

interaction: In a time where speed matters more than size, sensing and reacting to the change holds paramount importance. To respond faster, organizations need to have systems and processes in place where stakeholders have quick access to critical data, quickly communicate with each other and fosters transparency across the activities. We believe in continuous probes oriented to improving all aspects serves as feedback, and a "sensing and aware" infrastructure must incorporate the learnings guiding where and how the processes need to adjust, naturally in addition to the formal and explicit close loop feedback that the stakeholders provide periodically.

A Business DevOps example can be the newest digital campaigns that have interactivity as their core and adjust or personalize the content along with follow-up interactions. Based on the interest-based actions exhibited by some of the targeted community members instead of static profile information, these campaigns can be made more efficient. These are much more likely to engage more of the targeted community than traditional campaigns as they embody the key principles of agility, quality, and feedback.



Set up triggers: Organizations operate in a highly complex environment with overlapping boundaries. To make things tough, these boundaries span both the external and internal operating environment of the organization. Hence, with so many boundaries, organizations must define and set up triggers to better equip themselves.

Organizations should develop solutions and systems that can track external and internal changes. The more the system or solution can sense what users want and need, better it can adjust according to those needs, which in turn makes it more valuable and hence the usage as well as adoption benefits increases.

For instance, a Facebook post or a Twitter feed with many comments and retweets require substantial computing resources to be able to serve up popular information quickly to others. Business DevOps triggers, therefore, must include content, usage, tickets and service requests, besides market intelligence, competitor offers and choices.



Evolving success parameters and objectives:

Gone are those days where the organization could specify success metric in the beginning and be done with it. In times where the pace of change is only increasing, organizations must continuously rethink their success indicators to gauge performance. For example, quality is not only just the functionality of products/services but also how it effectively meets evolving needs. Lately, quality of a solution is often defined in terms of compliance to a set of non-functional requirements, ranging from usability, accessibility, form factor of device, to the level of enablement of novice and expert users as well as modes of interaction beyond keyboard/handset to voice.

In the Business DevOps context, this is evident in the cases where entertainment content such as pilot episodes and stand-up comedy shows must gauge audience reaction in each location as well as track critics and social media response to improve their next performance.



Rapid configuration and reuse:

Accommodating fast-changing customer preferences can be a daunting task for many incumbents. To quickly align their value chain activities, organization should aim to standardize the processes. For this to happen, not only shared systems and practices are essential but also they need to be in a common language in terms of tools, designs, and metrics. Such an approach would make reconfiguration of systems and tools faster. It will also promote reuse of the existing components thus saving development effort, time and cost for the organizations.

Let us consider the manufacturer of a device with diverse units each with distinct ways of new product development, business case planning, prototyping, testing, manufacture and support. Should they standardize processes, reuse design objects and consolidate components across the organization, it would be an example of Business DevOps mindset; to move forward despite setbacks, improve quality and efficiency as well as incorporate feedback on any product into the entire range they manufacture.

The takeaway

We believe that principles and benefits of DevOps is not limited to IT-enabled business solutions. In a time where uncertainty is the only constant, organizations need to introspect and improve how they should operate. Principles of Business DevOps should be leveraged by organizations to incorporate agility, quality and stakeholder feedback to remain relevant in the market.

About the authors

Parva Shrivastava and David D'Lima are part of the Innovation & IP team in Wipro that creates, curates and monetizes Intellectual Property based offerings and solutions.

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Wipro Limited

Doddakannelli, Sarjapur Road, Bangalore-560 035, India

Tel: +91 (80) 2844 0011 Fax: +91 (80) 2844 0256

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For more information, please write to us at info@wipro.com

