The Phoenix Project

A DevOps business simulation by GamingWorks

About DevOps

What's happening…?
We all know the typical IT behaviours and complaints about developers throwing seemingly untested solutions over the wall into production and leaving Operations to pick up the pieces. On the other hand, we hear Development complaining about the barriers put up by Operations that delay deployment, or workload demands placed on developers from IT Operations, such as small updates, fixing issues and applications not working.

The increasing penetration of IT into all areas of the business and the desire for ever more and ever faster customer facing solutions is compounding the challenge even more. As a result, the workload for Development and IT Operations is growing, workflows are stuck and IT projects are failing, business executives are angry and frustrated, seeing lost business opportunities and risks to business operations.

Gene Kim, Kevin Behr and George Spafford wrote an excellent novel "The Phoenix Project" about an organization facing these challenges and showed how to apply DevOps principles to achieve significant improvements and business value.

This simulation is built around this ground breaking book and lets you experience the dynamics of the book.

The Phoenix Project
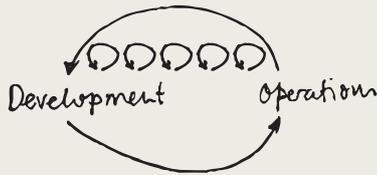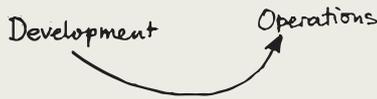
The 3 ways of DevOps

About the simulation

Parts Unlimited are in trouble. Newspaper reports reveal the poor financial performance of the organization. The only way to save the company and to make it competitive and profitable is "The Phoenix Project" which is an IT enabled business transformation, with Retail Operations as the business owner of this project.

The VP of IT Operations is asked to lead the IT Department and make sure "The Phoenix Project" is successful. However, he is facing a tremendous amount of work. Huge backlogs of issues, features and projects.

Your team will take different roles within Parts Unlimited. You can be Retail Operations, Human Resources or the CFO and run your projects. You can play the role of the VP of IT Operations, or lead one of the IT functions. You will be suggesting improvements, addressing issues, developing applications, managing operations or other members from his IT Team that needs to develop the applications and solve the IT Issues.

Your challenge is to use the DevOps principles and apply them in this serious Business Simulation. In four rounds you will work on the IT Projects and IT Issues and make sure "The Phoenix Project" is finished on time. But, beware, the business keeps coming up with new ideas and demands, and external developments outside your control can also throw a spanner in the works.

The Simulation

The simulation starts with the newspaper article about the dramatic situation of Parts Unlimited.

Round 1
Round 1 is a practice round. Students will receive some projects, features and issues so the team can start slowly with just a minimum of workload.

Round 2
The team will face a huge backlog of IT related issues such as: Incidents from the users of Sales, HR and Finance. There is a tremendous amount of work to do, everybody is busy but there seems to be no clear overview of all the work, what it is, why it is needed and what will happen if it isn't completed. IT Support cannot deliver the agreed Service Levels and are facing business demands to fix incidents faster and prevent the damaging business impact of sudden outages. However, IT Support needs capacity from IT Development to fix some of the critical incidents, but the developers are all tied up in new innovative development projects. IT Development has difficulties finishing all business features and projects since they have no clear understanding of the business priorities and the business demands are too many for the limited number of development resources. Another issue is the Testing Team that seems to find lots of serious issues in the new applications or systems that will cause serious business impact….groan!

In order to deal with this, the team must create a FLOW within the complete delivery chain. Thye must collaborate and work as an end-to-end team, manage conflicting work demands and ensure the work goes through the chain without bottlenecks, delays or rework.

The team will manage the work using Kanban boards, post-its and good communication.

In DevOps terms the team will have explored what is called the 'First way'. *'The outcomes of putting the First Way into practice include never passing a known defect to downstream work centers, never allowing local optimization to create global degradation, always seeking to increase flow'.*

After this round, we will reflect on what happene:d What went well? What needs improving? Exploring what this has to do with DevOps theory and how we can improve our work using DevOps principles. The team will have time to implement the learning outcomes in the next round.

Round 3
The second round is more challenging. The CFO comes in with some serious SOX-404 complianey issues that MUST be solved.

It also looks as though the salaries may not get paid on time which will cause union issues and could hit the newspaper headlines! In the meantime Retail Operations is becoming increasingly concerned about The Phoenix Project that's facing serious delays and issues, made even worse by the fact that revenue projections have been communicated to the financial newspapers. Retail Operations feels that the priority should be on this project.

Besides this, there is still the backlog of features and issues from the previous round that required quick solutions. There are some new projects from HR that must be implemented on time. IT Support is facing serious issues with the SLA and the whole IT Team is reaching breaking point. But the flow in the team will makes life easier surely!?

The team will now learn how to use the flow and add a serious feedback loop into the delivery chain. The must listen to the feedback from the customer and use this feedback immediately to improve the work and keep the flow in the process.
The teams are working better and better and as a result we hopefully see the revenue growing and stock price rising.

At the end of this round, we review again, look at the DevOps principles and see which improvement suggestions will make the last round the best of the day.

In DevOps terms the team will have explored what is called the 'The Second way'.
'The outcomes of the Second Way include understanding and responding to all customers, internal and external, shortening and amplifying all feedback loops, and embedding knowledge where we need it'.

Round 4
This last round is the most important round. The last moment to plan the final activities and projects in the different teams of IT Operations and IT Development. It's now a matter of setting the right priorities and making the right decisions. The team now needs to learn how to introduce short feedback loops between the steps in the flow, rather than testing at the end of the cycle. In this way they reduce the risk of the change not being approved and avoid creating rework and delays in projects that are business critical.

> *This game is an excellent starting point for all organizations with a desire to explore the do's and don'ts of working in a DevOps way. It can also accelerate the adoption by all layers in the organization, including the teams and senior leadership. A "must do" in every DevOps journey!* **- Sogeti / Dave van Herpen**

In DevOps terms the team will have explored what is called the 'The Third way'.

'The Third Way is about creating a culture that fosters two things: continual experimentation, which requires taking risks and learning from success and failure and
understanding that repetition and practice is the prerequisite to mastery'.

At the end of the session we will look back at the whole day. What did we learn?
What can we use in our day to day business?

About DevOps
In DevOps we talk about 'Three Ways'. They describe the values and philosophies that frame processes, procedures and practices as well as the prescriptive steps.

The First Way emphasizes the performance of the entire system, as opposed to the performance of a specific silo of work or department — this can be as large as a division (e.g., Development or IT Operations) or as small as an individual contributor (e.g., a developer or system administrator).

The Second Way is about creating the right to left feedback loops.
The goal of almost any process improvement initiative is to shorten and amplify feedback loops so necessary corrections can be continually made.

The Third Way is about creating a culture that fosters two things: continual experimentation, which requires taking risks and learning from success and failure and understanding that repetition and practice is the prerequisite to mastery.

» **Faster and reliable deployment**

» **How to create a new culture?**

» **Better collaboration between DEV and OPS**

Program

This is a full day workshop with 10-12 participants.

1 full day

Target Audience

This simulation is targeted at all roles and employees in Business, IT Development and IT Operations who want to apply Lean, Agile and ITSM principles to improve the performance of their IT Services or to create more value out of their IT Solutions. This simulation is for organizations who want to develop their culture to achieve better collaboration and as a result, faster and error-free deployment of new IT Solutions.

The simulation can be used for:
» Awareness programs
» Assessment sessions
» Teambuilding

Learning objectives

» How to apply DevOps principles in a real life situation?
» How to find the right balance between delivering your SLA requirements and your IT Projects according to plan?
» How to experience how DevOps can bring serious value to your business?
» How to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of your IT Department?
» How to create better flow in your teams?
» How to develop people's skills to act in a DevOps environment?
» How to show business their responsibilities in making IT Projects more successful?

Do you recognize these issues or would you like more information?
Please contact our partner:

www.gamingworks.nl

version 3