

Straight Talk for Government

DevOps: Embracing Failure in Zero Defect Organizations

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**“Software is
eating the
world.”
M. Andreessen**

Includes government organizations like the following:

- Internal Revenue Service
- Census Bureau
- Commerce Department
- Health and Human Services
- Department of Defense

Culture Clash

Practice	DevOps Teams	Government Teams
Collaborating	Assumes positive intentions from teammates and shares responsibilities.	Incentivizes competition by naming, shaming, and blaming and shifting responsibilities.
Failing	Embraces failure for the lessons it brings.	“Failure is not an option.” “Zero defects.” “Zero tolerance.”
Blameless	Focuses on finding and fixing the failure earlier in the process.	Focuses on finding the culprit responsible for the failure.
Autonomous	Requires teams to be trusted to work autonomously for the common goal.	Requires oversight, administration, and authorities in decision loops; hinders automation

Prime Directive: People First, Always

- Empathy
- Don't blame the player, blame the game
- Bureaucracies
 - Government appropriations
 - Oversight
 - Regulations
 - Statutes
 - Executive Orders
 - Instructions
 - Standards
 - Self-sustaining



Making the Shift to DevOps

Tiger Teams



Establish clear roles, responsibilities



Identify skills gaps (soft not just technical)



Include reps from entire value stream including stakeholders

- Third-party regulators and auditors
- End users and customers

Agreements



Document *how* the teams will work together



Commit to this contract and check its validity regularly

Making the Shift to DevOps

Planning, Planning, More Planning

- Pre-mortems to forecast and anticipate risks
- Continuously adjusted and adapted
- Continuous improvements

Retrospectives

- Blameless post-mortems
 - Psychological safety is paramount
 - Pay attention to language, tone, volume and focus on root cause not culprit
 - Find the lessons in failure and build a test to automate it in the future



Summary and Conclusion

- Government teams already support a *mission*
- DevOps mission and client missions can be congruent
- Experiment, try, and err
- Fail early, fail safely
- Psychological safety
 - Change agents
 - Communications workshops
 - Agile rituals and practices
 - Ice breakers, team builders, rapport strengtheners



Questions? Comments?

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