DEVOPS JOB TITLES, ROLES, & RESPONSIBILITIES



What's in a name?

That's a question top tech researchers are asking themselves more and more often when considering the phenomena of DevOps.

DevOps, a title which quite literally represents a movement where development and operations teams communicate and collaborate together rather than be at odds with each other, has been quickly disrupting the enterprise business ecosystem as a dominant philosophical strategy for the past few years.

Even so, many business leaders feel lost when it comes to implementing DevOps properly, due to the lack of clear direction on how to create a DevOps culture. Considering the cloud of confusion that sometimes surrounds DevOps, it may come as no shock that getting consensus on titles and roles in DevOps proves difficult and often depends on who you ask.

Today, we're going to explore title and roles in DevOps so you can have a better understanding of how it may work in your organization.

About Titles & Roles in DevOps

Increasingly over the past decade or more, enterprise organizations have begun to incorporate a wide range of cloud components that transformed what was once infrastructure into managed services. This resulted in a need for greater understanding between development teams and operations teams that could only come from a more cohesive culture of cooperation, and thus DevOps was born.

Among the issues that split the DevOps community is whether or not titles should reflect a DevOps emphasis. The argument is that DevOps is a culture shift and centralizing it between a few different people is counterintuitive to the idea that owning DevOps belongs to everyone.

While holding a DevOps title indicates someone who understands the need for cooperative information exchange and that's always a good thing, it can also be potentially detrimental. Naysayers of using the term "DevOps" in a title think it opposes the collaborative, accountability-centric spirit of the philosophy and caution against obsolescence, should the movement go the way of some other techie trends. People of this school of thought believe DevOps is not a skillset but a mindset.

In a broader context, some organizations prefer to look at DevOps in terms of roles. Other organizations see the need for both roles and titles that fulfill those roles. How titles and rolls are applied in a DevOps enterprise depends on what makes the most sense for the organization.

Titles, Roles and Career Pathing

Now that we've covered whether or not organizations should use the word DevOps in the naming conventions for titles associated with this career path, let's do a deep dive into what the path looks like. Here are some titles you can expect to see within DevOps organizations, big and small:

- DevOps or Platform Engineer
- Build Engineer
- Reliability Engineer
- Release Manager
- Data Analyst
- Product Manager

DevOps or Platform Engineer

Depending on what side of the debate above an organization lands on, it may or may not employ someone called a DevOps Engineer. If not, however, if the organization is taking a DevOps approach they likely have a Platform Engineer to support the infrastructure of the platform that comprises of in house development and various managed services.

Titles: DevOps Engineer or Platform Engineer
Role: DevOps Evangelist

Build Engineer

A Build Engineer is commonly referred to as a Build and Release Engineer. As such, the Build Engineer works closely with the Release Manager title outlined below. The Build Engineer is responsible for ensuring that build and deployment requirements are met in a fast-paced CI/CD environment. In the day to day, the Build Engineer does things like manage and maintain code, create new builds, standardize automated deployment, ensure the satisfaction of configuration requirements, assist with release notes and more.

The Build Engineer might take on the role of automation orchestrator in a traditional DevOps organization. This individual will also be responsible for understanding the importance of user expectations and might take on some of the hybrid responsibilities of a UX designer role. This role

also sometimes absorbs the duties of a Configuration Manager, although depending on the organization that could be a different person altogether.

Titles: Build Engineer, UX Designer, Configuration Manager
Role: Automation Orchestrator, Software Tester, Deployer of Releases

Release Manager

A Release Manager is also sometimes called a Release Engineer. In this case, we are leaving the *engineer* part out of it with intention. Let's think about it. The word engineer implies to orchestrate something attention to detail, knowledge, and finesse. It's true organizing constant releases for a DevOps enterprise requires a keen degree of orchestration, but the Release Manager is more than that.

The Release Manager should be, first and foremost, a management and oversight position that requires a deep level of practical development knowledge to be successful. Leadership is key in this role. Average duties include not only coordinating multiple releases and understanding CI/CD but also sometimes plotting out development pipeline strategies and coordinating those amongst teams.

Titles: Release Manager or Release Engineer
Role: Release Leader and Oversight

Site Reliability Engineer

The Site Reliability Engineer, or Reliability Engineer as otherwise known, is the individual responsible for ensuring the quality of orchestration and integration of tools needed to support daily operations. This is the quintessential role that comes to mind when people think about DevOps for the first time, the "magician" who masterfully patches together existing infrastructure with cloud solutions and data storage infrastructures. This role is important in any DevOps organization, as a failure to ensure sound integration can lead to outages that are costly.

Titles: Site Reliability Engineer, Reliability Engineer
Role: Security Engineer, Multiple Systems Utilitarian

Data Analyst

Your DevOps Data Analyst sifts through and siphons data to assist with development goals. An essential member of the development team, the Data Analyst uses existing data and user data to think critically about patterns that impact user experience and other design concerns. This person may share some overlap with the responsibilities of a UX designer and QA Analyst. Data Analyst is often considered an entry-level position that career paths into Data Scientist.

Titles: Data Analyst, QA Analyst
Role: The Data Whiz

Product Manager

The Product Manager is the only title on this list that is primarily an operations position. While the above-mentioned Release Manager has some overlap with both development and operations, it's

still largely a development team position. As an operations team member, the Product Manager is responsible for collaborating with the dev team to ensure the product's requirements are met to a high-quality standard each sprint.

Titles: Product Manager
Role: Product Perfection Assurance

There are a few positions in a DevOps organization that were not singled out with their own section of content in this article, due to their overlapping nature with the responsibilities of other titles outlined above. Those are:

- Configuration Manager
- UX Designer
- Data Scientist
- QA Analyst

Any of the above titles could be an indicator that an organization is working with a DevOps mindset. If you're looking to a career path in DevOps, and you're seeking out organizations to work for, it can't hurt to ask if they subscribe to DevOps practices.

Career Pathing in DevOps

Most technology fields offer a clear career path that looks sort of like a tree with multiple branches where each career decision you make could put you on another path or open up another avenue. With DevOps, it isn't so clear. Maybe it's because DevOps was a philosophy born naturally when ambitious knowledge seekers started filling a needed space in their organizations after deploying cloud technology caused a gap? Perhaps, it's because everyone approaches DevOps so differently that we can't even agree on how to structure titles?

Whatever the reason, information on how to career path within DevOps is relatively limited. To date, there's no higher degree to be had in DevOps, although there are plenty of organizations willing to offer certifications for best practices. A typical DevOps path likely starts on the job, when your organization begins to come around to DevOps, maybe even before if you find yourself jumping into a DevOps role to help move things along. If you aren't practicing DevOps within an organization, you can seek out certifications from higher learning institutes to get you started in the field. The average DevOps Engineer, at the top of the DevOps pyramid, before you get into executive management, makes just under $92,000 a year on average.

DevOps is a movement that has a lot of momentum. If your organization is considering a DevOps culture shift, contact BMC. As top consultants in the DevOps field, we have the right people and tools to make your transition swift and effortless. Get in touch today.