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The Phoenix Project: A Novel About IT, DevOps, And Helping Your Business Win



Synopsis

Bill is an IT manager at Parts Unlimited. It's Tuesday morning and on his drive into the office, Bill gets a call from the CEO. The company's new IT initiative, code named Phoenix Project, is critical to the future of Parts Unlimited, but the project is massively over budget and very late. The CEO wants Bill to report directly to him and fix the mess in ninety days or else Bill's entire department will be outsourced. With the help of a prospective board member and his mysterious philosophy of The Three Ways, Bill starts to see that IT work has more in common with manufacturing plant work than he ever imagined. With the clock ticking, Bill must organize work flow streamline interdepartmental communications, and effectively serve the other business functions at Parts Unlimited. In a fast-paced and entertaining style, three luminaries of the DevOps movement deliver a story that anyone who works in IT will recognize. Readers will not only learn how to improve their own IT organizations, they'll never view IT the same way again.

Book Information

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[View larger](#) The Three Ways Explained | The Phoenix Project In The Phoenix Project, we describe the underpinning principles that all the DevOps patterns can be derived from as 'The Three Ways'. It is intended to describe the values and philosophies that guide DevOps processes and practices. The First Way is about the left-to-right flow of work from Development to IT Operations to the customer. To maximize flow, we need small batch sizes and intervals of work, never passing defects to down-stream work centers and to constantly optimize for

the global goals (as opposed to local goals such as Dev feature completion rates, Test find/fix ratios or Ops availability measures). The necessary practices include continuous build, integration and deployment, creating environments on demand, limiting work in process, and building safe systems and organizations that are safe to change. The Second Way is about the constant flow of fast feedback from right-to-left at all stages of the value stream, amplifying it to ensure that we can prevent problems from happening again or enable faster detection and recovery. By doing this, we create quality at the source, creating or embedding knowledge where we need it. The necessary practices include 'stopping the production line' when our builds and tests fail in the deployment pipeline, constantly elevating the improvement of daily work over daily work, creating fast automated test suites to ensure that code is always in a potentially deployable state, creating shared goals and shared pain between Development and IT Operations and creating pervasive production telemetry so that every-one can see whether code and environments are operating as designed and that customer goals are being met. 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.

Experimentation and risk taking are what enable us to relentlessly improve our system of work, which often requires us to do things very differently than how we've done it for decades. And when things go wrong, our constant repetition and daily practice is what allows us to have the skills and habits that enable us to retreat back to a place of safety and resume normal operations. The necessary practices include creating a culture of innovation and risk taking (as opposed to fear or mindless order taking) and high trust (as opposed to low trust, command-and-control), allocating at least twenty percent of Development and IT Operations cycles towards non-functional requirements, and constant reinforcement that improvements are encouraged and celebrated.

• The Phoenix Project is a must read for business and IT executives struggling with the growing complexity of IT. • "Jim Whitehurst, President and CEO, Red Hat, Inc."The Phoenix Project is a great way to get non-technical managers to understand what developers do. Every person involved in a failed IT project should be forced to read this book." • "Tim O'Reilly, Founder & CEO, O'Reilly Media "A must-read for anyone wanting to transform their IT to enable the business to win. Told through an absorbing story that is impossible to put down, the authors teach the essential lessons in an accessible way. Every business leader and IT professional should read this book!" • -- Mike Orzen, co-author of the the Shingo Prize winning book Lean IT - Enabling and Sustaining Your Lean Transformation" This book is a gripping read that captures brilliantly the dilemmas that face

companies which depend on IT, and offers real-world solutions. As Deming reminds us, 'It is not necessary to change. Survival is not mandatory.' "The Phoenix Project will have a profound effect on IT, just as Dr. Goldratt's book 'The Goal' did for manufacturing." -- Jez Humble, co-author of the Jolt award-winning book Continuous Delivery and Principal at ThoughtWorks Studios "This book is the modern day version of The Goal. "Today, our constraints aren't robots inside our factories, but it's how we manage technologies like Tomcat and Java that power our most critical projects and applications. This book continues the journey that began with Shewhart, Deming, Ohno and Dr. Goldratt, and shows us how to diminish our modern constraints to help the business win." -- John Willis, VP Client Services and Enablement, enStratus, Host of "DevOps Cafe" "This is the IT swamp draining manual for anyone who is neck deep in alligators." -- Adrian Cockcroft, Cloud Architect at Netflix "This is the most amazing IT book I have ever read. Though it follows a fictitious company, the events are so real life that anyone in industry is going to relate to the story. "Buy this book, read this book and then hand it to a senior manager in your organization." -- Stephen Northcutt, Fellow and President, SANS Technology Institute "This insightful walk through the pain and success of business will trigger deja vu for anyone who has ever run afoul of their complete reliance in their IT organization. I see my own experiences in every stage of the story." -- Dr. Thomas Longstaff, Program Chair, Computer Science, Engineering for Professionals, The Johns Hopkins University

Gene Kim is a multiple award winning CTO, researcher and author. He was founder and CTO of Tripwire for 13 years and has worked with some of the top Internet companies on improving deployment flow and increasing the rigor around IT operational processes. In 2007, ComputerWorld added Gene to the "40 Innovative IT People Under The Age Of 40" list, and was given the Outstanding Alumnus Award by the Department of Computer Sciences at Purdue University. Kevin Behr is the founder of the Information Technology Process Institute (ITPI) and the Chief Strategist for the CIO and Board Advisory Practice at Assemblage Pointe, where Kevin has built a unique consulting practice that mentors and coaches IT organizations to increase their business effectiveness and competitive advantage now and over the long term through the application of improvement sciences. George Spafford is a Research Director for Gartner covering process improvement in IT operations that leverage best practice references. He is a prolific author and speaker, and has consulted and conducted training on strategy, IT management, information security and overall service improvement in the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand and China.

For those of you who are not IT professionals, this will not be the novel you would equate to a 5-star rating. But for those of you that are, this is an absolute must-read. You will recognize yourselves, and your organizations (past and present) in the trials and tribulations of Parts Unlimited. You will also be able to harvest good information on how to break out of cycles of unplanned work, and improve your circumstances. More has been written about the effectiveness of this book, so I will not belabor the point, and it is starting to show its age with regard to the technology references. But as a cautionary tale, this has few equals.

My company promotes this book as an introduction to DevOps. Because I support DevOps-related products, I thought I'd better see what the fuss was about. Glad I did. The book is written as a fiction story to show a case study that tells why DevOps is so important. My reading and study can't stop here, but it is a great place to start. I promoted it on my Facebook page. A relation said her son was a programmer but didn't work for a software company. She asked, is this book for him? I smiled and said, "That is exactly who this book is for." Today, we live in the "application economy". Whether you work for a software company or not, your company gets on edge in the market through, in part, the software they develop. Thus, this book and DevOps are for everyone.

As someone who has followed along with the development of Gene Kim's work with the IT Process Institute I can say with 100 percent certainty that this book is a logical extension of that. Some times we need a story to relate our everyday experiences against. This is a well chosen vehicle for the true goal of the book; helping us improve on the often failed IT/Security/Business relationship. Every organization exists in a continuum whose objective (speaking for private industry) is simple-- to make money. Yet a simple glance at statistics and studies will show us that most companies fail this objective on multiple levels; they don't execute their strategic objectives. More over they also fail to build logical processes within their IT to ensure that alignment. If you've ever wished there were a textbook to help you align IT and the business, to lower your risk levels through quality implementations of key technology then this book is a great place to start. It may seem odd that this is executed as a fictional story but this serves as a perfect vehicle to convey in very pointed ways the result of a lot of real world research. The road to operational excellence, compliance and higher levels of security in IT isn't easy and this story accurately, albeit sometimes simplistically, showcases that fact. But more importantly it also gives us the tools and mental preparation to make a decision. The choice is simple; you can continue in blissful ignorance and the comfort of business as usual. Or you can embrace the beginning of a more meaningful, competitive organization that

embraces process driven excellence.

Good read. Easy read. Not too technical or geeky. For anyone in I.T. It meshes together the world of I.T. and Lean Six-Sigma. I enjoyed how it all came together. I agree, I.T. isn't always a fun place to work: crashes; applications get hosed up, viruses, spam emails! You have to be Johnny-on-the-spot. You have to be the firefighter ready to go at any minute. The Phoenix Project showed how that can change. With careful laid out plans, trial and error. I was actually excited reading this book waiting to see how it all turned out at the end.

I am a long time fan of the authors - I used to pass out copies of their "The Visible Ops Handbook: Implementing ITIL in 4 Practical and Auditable Steps" like some people hand out bible tracts. The Phoenix Project goes beyond their previous work in that it is not only that useful to the point of essential for anyone who thinks of themselves as a computing professional, it is fun and interesting to read. I didn't want to put it down to go to bed, because I had to find out what happened next. The Phoenix Project should be required reading in beginning programming classes because it shows the best and worst cases of many types of computing careers in the 'real world' as well as why a number of things that don't make a lot of sense in the classroom, are important for real projects (like automation and testing.) More than that, I'm planning to send my mom a copy, because I never have managed to explain to her exactly what it is that I do before boring her past the point of comprehending anything. There was one thing that I felt was missing from the book. I kept waiting for the scene where the protagonists discover that many of the lessons they learned the hard way had been in practice in old-school mainframe shops for decades, much like they learned how factory production processes applied to them. This in no way detracts from the book (unless, perhaps you are an old mainframe hand, in which case you will likely find the book to be high comedy, but actually useful in persuading people to let you do the things that work they way you always have. Also, I salute you!)

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