



Point of View /

Automation Goal Setting: How to Plan Your IT Operations Better

All aspects of a business thrive on how stable their operations are. When a company grows their business, satisfies customers, and make money, it is implicit that its operations management is at work.

With increasing customer expectations, technology advancement & decreasing availability of resources (which could be due to cost, niche skills , legacy and so on), operations need to balance and excel , each and every time.

In longer term for sustenance & success of IT operations, irrespective of market & technology involved, automation is the key. While most of the medium and large organizations have understood this critical success factor and embarked on the journey, automation adoption and utilization is still a hurdle which needs to be now addressed for them. Success in bits and pockets will not help, it must have an all-inclusive approach.

It will be important to elaborate on terms automation “adoption” and “utilization” to highlight importance.

Simply put, adoption of automation indicates that, across enterprise operations (irrespective of technology and nature of work), teams have prioritized automation and have been consistently making progress to improve automation coverage across their manual activities. Lower adoption doesn't necessarily mean a complacent team, it can also mean that simplification or standardization of work is needed. Equally, this adoption gets marred by lack of right technologies, stability and documentation of process, stability and availability of environment. Making consistent improvement in adoption will require incentivization & better automation utilization ratio.

Coming to Automation Utilization, it indicates the count of time the designed automation workflow did the required job. It is observed that high utilization encourages higher adoption.

To influence adoption and utilization parameters in an institutionalized way, large IT organizations have started to define automation goals per portfolio and teams. In a long term, this will get institutionalized and help teams setup innovation hours for problem management.

Some of goals for automation that can be defined for IT operations are:

- 1 % of problem tickets shifted left
- 2 % MTTR reduction
- 3 % of tickets reduced
- 4 % support efforts reduction



These goals typically trace down from well-defined vision or critical initiatives run by the organization. The goal setting is a critical activity and needs to be arrived at looking at some of factors below:

- **Volume of tickets resolved per month / quarter**

To set target for ticket reduction it will be important to check ticket volume size against type of tickets, business persona, MTTR, false positives, etc.

- **Nature of work** – Nature of support work highly influences goal setting exercise. Goal setting for any support team should consider below factors.

- o SLAs and contracts – Fixed and hard SLA contracts are low hanging fruits and need to be having higher consideration for automation targets.
- o Technology complexity – Higher technical complexity or lower technology stability need to be considered to make automation targets practical. For newer technology roll outs, support engineer will have more focus on creating stability / predictability rather than automation. Automation in such moving baselines can lead to loss of efforts.
- o Process maturity & Documentation stability – This will encourage overall stability, both of which are stepping stones for higher automation coverage. In contrast, certain support areas could be analysis-intensive, making it difficult for predictability of SOP.
- o Data availability for AI/ML-based automation – While AI/ML engines or tools are already bought and implemented in various enterprises, historic data availability and data sanctity can influence amount of automation utilization.

- **Existing automation coverage and maturity:**

If existing automation coverage is high and support engineers have already automated low-end tasks, goal setting needs to be considering other aspects while setting targets in terms of problem management effectiveness and way automation is achieved.

Most of the times, automation done is siloed and has multiple human interventions. Improving maturity will mean making automation end to end or STP, which might require redesigning process, restructuring code / consider workflow/AI tools.

- **Automation tools & skill availability:**

It is observed that though support work done has high potential for automation basis the factors listed above, still higher targets set for automation can become impractical, if required automation skills are not available in team OR tool setup/access is hinderance due to security / legal compliance. In this case, goals set for support team for automation need to consider this factor to make targets practical.

Automation goals for any support team is a sensitive matter and needs all-around consideration of factors from people, process, and technologies. There is no alternate to not having to set these goals since we can have the team aligned to automation objective in an institutionalized way.

About the Author



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Swati is 20+ years experienced management professional who has extensively worked on project management across domains driving agile based projects and critical organizational initiatives . She is passionate about learning new things and democratizing technology. She holds various certifications - TOGAF, PMP, AWS Cloud practitioner and NCFM and brings in rich blended experience of technology, architecture, transition, release management, product lifecycle management, Sales enablement etc

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