Implementing Company-wide IT Automation

Is automating IT processes a technical challenge? Yes, but not only a challenge. he key to success and seamless implementation is a well-structured plan that involves all employees—not just those in IT.

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Linux is a platform for SAP ERP, from R/3 to ECC 6.0, and the sole operating system for Hana. Linux is at the forefront of open source innovation at SAP. This opinion piece primarily focuses on Linux/Hana architectures.

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Beiersdorf IT uses a concrete example to show how open source principles can be used for IT automation. There are a myriad of drivers for end-to-end IT automation that affect processes, efficiency, IT silos, and recruiting. Complex processes can lengthen projects, but manual, repetitive activities also reduce productivity. IT silos also pose a challenge. The automation often practiced today within individual silos does not break down the silos, it just automates them. Last but not least, a key driver for automation initiatives is the labor shortage.

The universal and proven open source automation solution Ansible provides users with critical support. It supports the automation of processes across servers, storage devices, network devices, services, containers, clouds, event-driven automation and even non-IT functions such as AI support and "policy as code" within regulated industries and for certification requirements. Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform has been established for enterprise use with certified, pre-configured modules, automation workflows, and advanced security concepts.

New Approach

The problem, the objective, and the solution architecture are clear. But how can the automation solution be scaled quickly and acceptance be ensured? Beiersdorf IT has tested and successfully implemented a new approach that differs from the traditional, more technically oriented implementation of a new software solution.

Beiersdorf has chosen a proven open source approach for this and has named it the Beiersdorf in-house Automation Community. This community approach defines various roles such as a Community Architect, Sponsor and Strategist, Automation Consultant Engineer and Onboarder. The Community Architect is responsible for setting up and managing the community, monitoring the process, and defining the KPIs. A member of management acts as the Sponsor and Strategist and is therefore responsible for the financial commitment. The Automation Consultant Engineer's role is to identify automation opportunities, develop automated workflows, and provide cross-team advice on the implementation of use cases.

With this structural and organizational foundation in place, the company invited all departments to participate and define initial use cases. This demonstrated that Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform supports the community approach, especially by combining different automation steps into an end-to-end workflow. Ideas are collected, discussed, and implemented within the Beiersdorf community. Finally, the ecosystem around Ansible is growing so that more and more use cases can be orchestrated and automated, including those related to compliance, governance, security, and sustainability. In particular, Beiersdorf has included a number of use cases in the community approach regarding SAP automation in the area of Day 1 and Day 2 operations, such as provisioning, configuration, database management, patching, and maintenance.

Ansible Automation Platform

The Beiersdorf example demonstrates the power of Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform for end-to-end automation, even in SAP environments. It also demonstrates how open source principles such as community, real-time visibility, and collaboration can simplify and accelerate the enterprise-wide adoption of an automation solution. Other SAP users facing modernization and migration challenges can also follow this example, because open source best practices are never a bad guide to follow.