

The Phoenix Project

A novel about IT, DevOps, and helping your business win

By: Gene Kim, Kevin Behr, and George Spafford

ISBN: 978-0988262591

Reviewed* by:

Joseph Barjis /PhD, PMP®, SAFe® SPC4, CSM®, CSPO™, DEMO® Master/

August 16, 2016

The Phoenix Project is a novel about IT and Business relations. Despite running for years and consuming over 20 million, The Phoenix Project yet to deliver any value, due to lack of collaboration between development and operation on one hand and IT-Business on the other hand.

The Phoenix Project builds on three engineering disciplines: software engineering, system engineering, enterprise engineering. Accordingly, the three views represented in this novel are of IT view, system view, and organization view. It touches upon IT Operations (development, operations, security), Business (marketing, management, finance), human relationship (trusts, emotions, collegiality, leadership, etc.), and the practice of Agile.

The novel shows the importance of linking top enterprise measurements to the prerequisite IT objectives to ensure that IT and Business are in harmony to achieve the overall enterprise mission. By the way of introducing a new framework, the novel discusses how to reconcile decades-long tribal warfare among Development, Operations, and Security, and Business by fostering across system collaboration.

The novel tackles the core issues in IT Operations such as segmentation, fractions, communication walls, mistrust, budget over run, release delay, antagonism among teams, blame game, local optimization, and lack of automation, standardization, and documentation.

For all the issues discussed, the book offers one holistic remedy – DevOps framework. Though the framework is neither laid down nor discussed, but the ingredients such as distinct environments for development, testing, deployment, and automation are very well discussed.

The novel mentions different types of IT Operations projects and works: Business projects, IT Operations projects, Changes, and Unplanned works. Caution is raised that unplanned works type of work is the monster that can eat all the scheduled works by either delaying them, or preventing them from completion at all, thus, compromising delivery of business values.

The novel discusses analogies and concepts from other disciplines that could be equally applicable to IT Operations. Comparison of manufacturing processes with IT Operations such as the notions of work in process (WIP), due date, waiting time, resource, Kanban, release, handoffs, continuous delivery, collaboration of development and operation teams, etc., are all the ingredients that the novel uses to prepare a case for DevOps framework.

The novel concludes with introducing the DevOps framework. A framework, in which Three Ways of IT Operations transformation ought to be discussed and described. These ways are controlling the flow of work from Development to Operations, creating constant feedback loops from IT Operations back into Development, and experimenting innovative ways and taking risk for changes. The new framework is suggested to be written in a new book entitled *The DevOps Cookbook.*, thus opening a new era for IT Operations and IT-Business relations, where deployment can happen 10 times on daily basis not only every 9 months.

**In a multinational software company, conducting agile coaching, I wrote this review to encourage colleagues and management to read this book. Then, I thought to share it here. The complete review resulted in 6 page (available upon request), a one-page version is shared here.*