



Speed automation adoption  
with a community of practice

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# Introduction

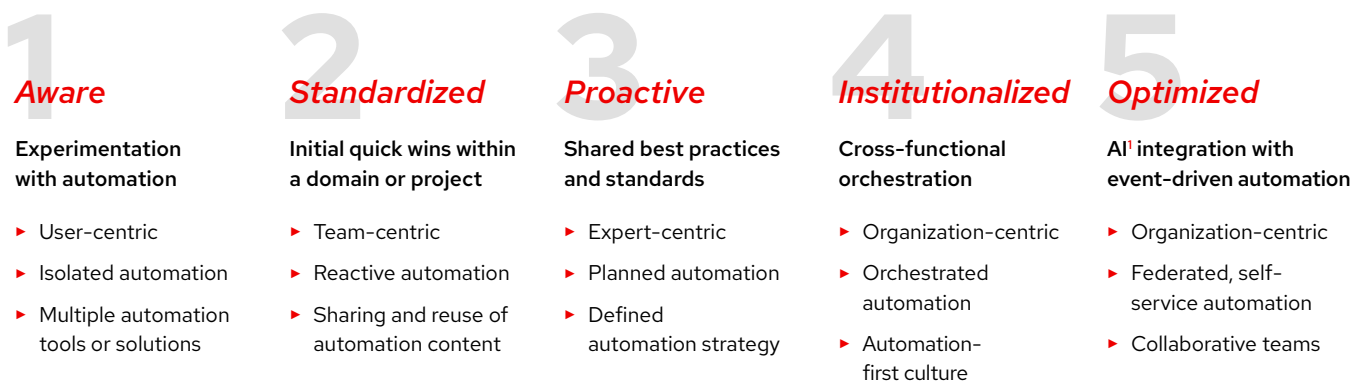
**Automation adoption is a journey with many stages. What if there was a way to speed adoption across your organization and gain more value in less time?**

One of the most common questions our **Red Hat® Ansible® Automation Platform** customers ask is *how can I accelerate the adoption of automation in my organization?* Even as they become skilled using the technology, many IT organizations stall at some point in their automation adoption journey. These organizations typically achieve some early successes by automating a few tasks or processes, but can't seem to reach the later stages of automation maturity where cross-functional teams deploy orchestrated workflows, activate event-driven automation within IT operations, or create self-healing infrastructure. Often, they don't know why they aren't finding the value they expected from their automation investment, and critically, they don't know what to do about it. Red Hat is here to help.

While automation delivers value at every stage of your journey, the most significant benefits—increased productivity and cost efficiency, improved risk and compliance posture, and higher system reliability, for example—are generally realized when organizations reach the later stages of automation maturity.

This guide offers recommendations for accelerating automation adoption across your organization. We'll start by defining an achievable automation strategy and then explain how to build and nurture an automation community of practice (CoP) to scale adoption and boost collaboration and connection.

## Stages of automation maturity



Increasing value and organizational benefits

## Chapter 1

# Define your automation strategy

Is your entire IT organization aligned and following a clear automation strategy and roadmap? Has your automation strategy been shared across teams? Are your automation users encouraged to embrace the cultural and procedural changes needed for widespread adoption?

This chapter reviews a set of questions [Red Hat Consulting](#) teams use to guide Ansible Automation Platform customers through the early stages of their automation journey. During discovery sessions, our consultants bring together a cross-functional team that includes members from line-of-business, engineering, operations, and application development teams. Together, they reflect upon and discuss automation goals and current challenges within the organization.

**TIP:**

Learn how to speed enterprise-wide automation with Red Hat Services.

[Read the e-book.](#)

### What are the business outcomes you want to achieve?

Do you want to improve return on investment (ROI) or IT productivity? How important are security and reliability for your business? Perhaps your ticketing service-level agreements (SLAs) have not been met, or manual network configuration processes are too slow or time-consuming. Could automation help you accelerate a cloud migration project that has stalled?

Starting with your desired end results in mind can make it easier for teams to plan the steps needed to successfully implement your automation strategy. It may seem obvious, but you should document your strategy in detail and share it with others to help everyone understand the reasons for adopting automation and why automation activities are important.

## Do your current automation efforts help you achieve business objectives?

Assessing your current automation efforts is a critical step in ensuring success on your adoption journey. Ask everyone to write down their top automation use cases, then see if those use cases can be directly connected to your primary business outcomes. Automation efforts that do not help you achieve your business goals are inefficient and can actually hinder adoption and effective use throughout your organization. In general, expanding your organization's adoption of automation has less to do with the total number of tasks or systems automated than whether your automation projects are delivering the right results.

## Have you adopted an automation-first mindset?

To promote transformation through automation, most companies will need to adapt and change some behaviors across their organization. For example, you'll need to establish an organization-wide automation-first philosophy. In practice, this means examining each of your current processes with automation in mind and adapting them accordingly. You'll know that your organization has achieved an automation-first mindset when teams regularly plan for automation at the beginning of projects, are comfortable writing automation content, and apply automation to solve problems anywhere they arise.

## Do you have a culture of cross-team collaboration and trust?

Trust and collaboration are essential for building complete automation workflows that cross organizational domains and functions. It takes time and patience to break down barriers between teams, especially if past events have caused animosity between them. There are many ways to encourage cooperation and confidence between teams, and the right path will depend on the specifics of your organization. For example, some companies place developers and platform engineers in the same teams to simplify communication and ensure that staff in each role understand the others' perspective. At a minimum, all involved teams need to agree to resolve the issues identified through your automation assessment and work towards achieving the same overall objectives.

### TIP:

See how Mapfre, a global insurance group, approached this assessment in their organization.

[Watch the video.](#)

### TIP:

See how Navy Federal Credit Union built a culture of automation to discover ways to promote a shift in mindset in your own organization.

[Watch the video.](#)

### TIP:

Remember that automation adoption is an ongoing journey, rather than a destination. We recommend approaching this journey with a goal of continuously evolving processes and identifying areas for improvement over time.

## Chapter 2

# Build an automation community of practice

An automation community of practice (CoP) is a collection of individuals who come together to share ideas, Ansible content, experiences, questions, and best practices around automation.

Through a CoP, individuals can expand their skills, learn from each other, and find new ways to collaborate. A CoP also creates a space to access and contribute automation content, so teams can apply automation in a trusted and repeatable manner.



### Benefits for IT business leaders

- ▶ Alleviate IT automation skills gaps and talent constraints.
- ▶ Identify and resolve slow and inefficient processes.
- ▶ Build collaboration and connections across teams.
- ▶ Reduce manual work so teams can focus on problem solving and innovation.
- ▶ Decrease reliance on untested code from public repositories that can cause performance or security issues.
- ▶ Create consistent organizational standards and processes.

### Benefits for automation practitioners

- ▶ Improve efficiency by sharing Ansible Playbooks and best practices.
- ▶ Elevate your experience and expertise to your peers and leadership teams.
- ▶ Improve and expand your skills.
- ▶ Work on more exciting, rewarding, and innovative projects.
- ▶ Free up time and become more productive and effective.
- ▶ Build relationships across teams.

## Community of practice versus center of excellence

Another common term when discussing technology adoption and organizational change is *center of excellence (CoE)*. Both CoEs and CoPs foster learning and collaboration within an organization, there are key differences in the structure, goals, and approaches used. CoEs typically focus on prompting quality and innovation within a specific domain, while CoPs focus on promoting collaboration and knowledge-sharing across multiple teams or domains. CoPs are often more informal and unstructured, though there are recommended approaches and rules of engagement.

	Community of practice	Center of excellence
<b>Goal</b>	Provide education and promote sharing of content and knowledge across organizational boundaries	Provide leadership, expertise, and support to define organizational best practices and standards
<b>Structure</b>	Informal and organic, with membership open to anyone in the organization	Formal, with specific membership criteria and requirements to join
<b>Membership</b>	Encouraged across roles, disciplines, and departments	Confined to a specific team or domain, for example, network automation
<b>Approach</b>	Share and consume automation assets and content across the organization	Establish a culture of automation that becomes a framework for the rest of the organization to follow
<b>Success</b>	Show value and build internal support by sharing experiences and learnings	Show value and build internal support by sharing experiences and learnings

Many organizations begin their automation journey with a formal CoE to establish and document organizational standards. Once standards, access controls, and governance are in place, the CoE often evolves into an automation CoP so that automation assets and content can be shared and consumed by other teams.

**TIP:**

Learn how Transunion scaled their automation CoE across their entire organization.

[Watch the video.](#)

# Get started with your CoP

There are many ways to start a CoP, but the most effective paths share some common elements. Here are a few recommended steps for creating a thriving CoP.

## Step 1: Identify key stakeholders and sponsors

Start by identifying the key stakeholders who will support and participate in your community. Look for people across your organization who have experience with or are interested in automation. These *champions* can come from different roles and domains. For example, IT operations, DevOps engineers, system administrators, or even managers who oversee projects that rely on automation could be key stakeholders in your community.

Additionally, securing support from executive sponsors is important for ensuring the longevity of the group. Executive sponsors can provide the resources, visibility, and legitimacy needed to help your CoP grow. They can also advocate for the importance of automation and help align your community's goals with broader organizational objectives.

If possible, bring stakeholders and sponsors together in person for your initial planning session. In-person interactions can make it easier to both share ideas and ensure that they can be implemented. Your core team of cross-functional automation champions—including automation subject-matter experts (SMEs), IT architects, and automation developers—should be present in your initial meeting.

**TAKE ACTION:** Meet with potential stakeholders and sponsors to gauge their interest in forming a CoP. Explain how the community can advance your organization's automation efforts and provide long-term value.

## Step 2: Define your mission and goals

Next, it's time to establish your CoP's mission and agree upon specific goals. A clear understanding of both is needed before your CoP can begin work. Your mission defines the overarching purpose for your CoP. It is a guiding statement that answers the question: *Why does this community exist?* Your mission might involve promoting automation best practices, increasing organizational efficiency, or promoting innovation through shared knowledge.

Next, establish clear, measurable goals. These goals should align with your community's mission and provide a roadmap for what the team will work toward. Potential goals could be:

- ▶ Create a repository of reusable Ansible Playbooks.
- ▶ Host monthly knowledge-sharing sessions.
- ▶ Develop organization-wide automation standards.
- ▶ Onboard new members and foster ongoing skills development.



For example, Red Hat's internal automation CoP has 2 main goals:

- ▶ Educate our associates about automation topics and projects.
- ▶ Manage and curate resources for the larger Ansible Automation Platform community, such as the [Automation Good Practices library](#) and [Ansible Content Collections for configuration as code](#).

**TAKE ACTION:** Organize a workshop or brainstorming session with stakeholders to collaboratively define your CoP's mission and outline achievable short-term and long-term goals. Ensure your mission resonates with your broader organizational objectives and inspires participation from teams.

### Step 3: Attract new members

CoPs thrive on openness, transparency, and collaboration—focus on nurturing your community, rather than dictating guidelines. CoPs require a variety of perspectives and experiences to be successful. Find members from many departments and teams, and with different levels of expertise. Encourage participation from non-technical professionals—managers, project leads, and operations staff can offer valuable insights into how automation affects overall business goals. Remember to be respectful of different time zones, departments, and roles within your organization.

**TAKE ACTION:** Create a communication plan to invite employees across your organization to join your community. Explain the value of participation and emphasize that both technical and non-technical members are welcome.

#### TIP:

Learn how ProRail built a cross-functional automation CoP.

[Read the case study.](#)

### Step 4: Create a central knowledge repository

An essential component of automation CoPs is a central knowledge repository where members can share resources, playbooks, and documentation. This repository should be easily accessible to all community members and organized in a way that makes it easy to find relevant information.

For example, your repository might include:

- ▶ Ansible Playbooks and automation scripts.
- ▶ Best practices for automation and task management.
- ▶ Documentation of common challenges and how they were solved.
- ▶ Tutorials and guides for new community members learning automation.

Your repository will become a valuable resource for your organization by making it simpler both for new members to onboard and for existing members to improve their skills.

**TAKE ACTION:** Set up a shared knowledge platform, such as a wiki or a shared folder, and encourage members to contribute regularly.

## Chapter 3

# Help your CoP grow and thrive

The goal of any CoP is to share knowledge across your organization. This chapter reviews recommendations to help your CoP grow and thrive.

### Organize regular meetings and knowledge-sharing sessions

Once you've established the core membership of your CoP, it's time to start organizing regular meetings and knowledge-sharing sessions. Establish a regular schedule with varied agendas and publish it for all to see. Consistency is key to keeping community members engaged, so schedule sessions routinely—whether weekly, biweekly, or monthly. Sessions can take various forms, for example:

- ▶ Technical question-and-answer (Q and A) sessions with automation champions to share tips and techniques.
- ▶ Demonstrations of specific use cases or automation projects.
- ▶ Presentations from existing users showcasing their deployments and derived benefits.
- ▶ Workshops where members can collaboratively solve automation challenges together.
- ▶ Presentations by guest speakers from outside your organization to share insights and industry trends.

Regardless of the session format, remember to:

- ▶ **Record every session** and make recordings available for those unable to attend. Refer back to session recordings as needed. For example, a session about getting started with Ansible Automation Platform will be very useful as new team members join.
- ▶ **Take advantage of external expertise** like Red Hat employees or other vendors familiar with Ansible Automation Platform. Our ecosystem partners can demonstrate their certified Ansible Content Collections, while system integrators are an excellent source of automation expertise and best practices.

**TAKE ACTION:** Create a schedule of events for your first quarter of action. Encourage members to take turns leading sessions and offer interactive learning and discussion opportunities.

## Make it fun

Consider awarding prizes for contributions, such as branded merchandise, stickers from partners, or community titles like *Ansible Ninja Expert*. Use creativity in communication tools like Slack to ensure your CoP looks inviting and energized. Highlight collaborative wins that involve multiple teams with an AI-generated song or cupcakes with photos to share. A welcoming, collaborative atmosphere encourages engagement and ensures sustainability for your members.

## Create an open culture

Healthy CoPs thrive on the openness and willingness of the community members to share both successes and struggles without fear of reprisal or judgment. To show what a productive CoP looks like in action, consider the experiences of 2 Red Hat customers:

Company A's leadership team was present at CoP meetings and promoted a high level of interaction and engagement. Members wanted to attend sessions both to see and be seen. In Company A's largely remote workplace, CoP meetings were a key way for staff to share their successes with their leadership team. Attending sessions was always a high priority, and the community achieved its purpose of sharing the efforts of teams across the organization to foster collaboration and reduce rework. The presenter schedule was constantly full and presentations were engaging. Members would set up follow-on conversations to get more details and learn from each other's experiences.

Company B shared many of the same attributes of Company A: their IT leadership team was present at sessions and they had a similarly remote work environment. However, Company B's CoP was established as a place to get technical help and support from other members and to discuss challenges with implementing automation. Session attendance was viewed as mandatory simply for visibility. Meetings were often silent—members didn't want to engage in technical discussions or ask for assistance for fear of looking bad in front of their managers. Internal politics played a sizable role in the organization and the CoP was ultimately unsuccessful and disbanded after a few months.

Your CoP should be more than just a place to solve common technical issues—it should also provide a space for building relationships across your organization. By removing egos, you can create a more open culture where all voices are valued, regardless of the purpose of your CoP. Success is dependent on the ability of community members to participate freely and share their experiences openly.



**Healthy CoPs thrive on the openness and willingness of the community members to share both successes and struggles without fear of reprisal or judgment.**

## Final thoughts

At Red Hat, we encourage new CoP members to join and listen without feeling pressured to engage and contribute until they're ready. In fact, it's completely normal for new members to simply attend sessions without participating at first. If you encourage participation when members feel more comfortable, you'll often find that their confidence grows more quickly. Above all, be persistent, creative, patient, and resilient.



## Chapter 4

# Measure results and success

**How do you know if your CoP is healthy and working towards your strategic goals around automation?**

This chapter reviews ways to monitor the progress and effectiveness of your CoP.

### Revisit your purpose and track activities

Understanding the purpose of your community is critical to measuring its success and influence. Conditions and priorities change over time, so you should revisit your stated purpose or mission on an ongoing basis and confirm that it is still valid and effective. Turning your CoP's purpose into a measurable goal is a challenging but important part of being able to understand the effect the community has on members. Begin with your mission in mind and identify the metrics you will use to judge the health of your CoP.

For example, the metrics used by Red Hat's internal automation CoP include:

- ▶ The number of attendees present at biweekly meetings.
- ▶ The number of pull requests made to the automation code base.
- ▶ The number of unique contributors to the code base.
- ▶ The number of resource documents created for internal knowledge-sharing.
- ▶ The number of viewers on our resource website.

While the purpose of your CoP may be different, identifying a measurable and trackable metric is vital to understanding your community's effectiveness over time.

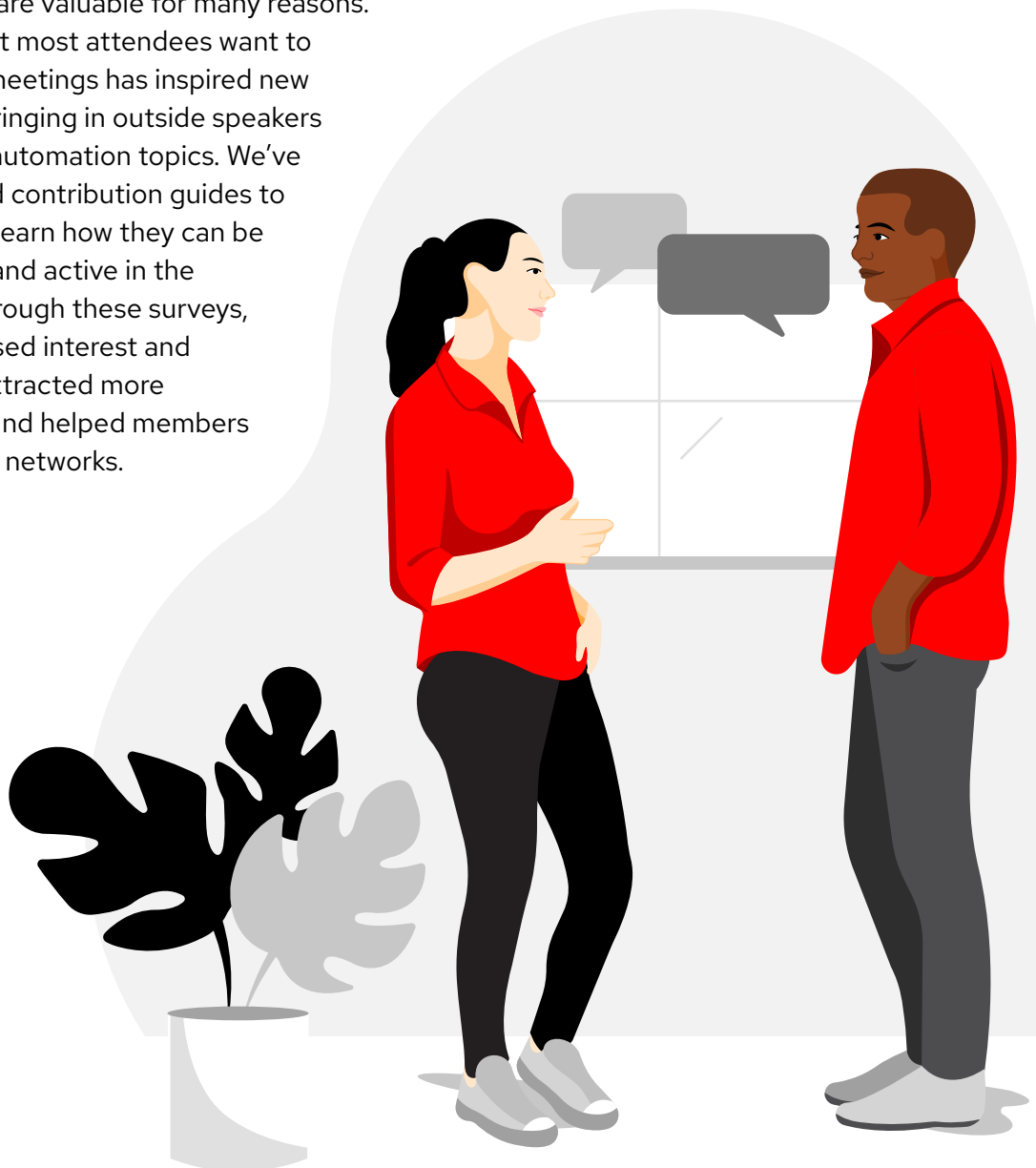
## Conduct a state of the union

While measurable statistics are important, remember that your CoP is made up of people with opinions and feelings. Survey your community to gain insights and understand the current sentiment of your members. For example, our internal automation CoP asks:

- ▶ Why do you attend CoP meetings?
- ▶ How would you rate your involvement? Do you want to be more involved? What prevents you from being more involved?
- ▶ What do you want to see more or less of?
- ▶ What would increase your happiness and satisfaction with the CoP?

These insights are valuable for many reasons.

Identifying what most attendees want to gain from our meetings has inspired new activities like bringing in outside speakers to discuss key automation topics. We've also developed contribution guides to help members learn how they can be more involved and active in the community. Through these surveys, we have increased interest and membership, attracted more contributions, and helped members to expand their networks.

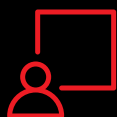


# Ready to start your CoP?

No matter where your company is on the automation maturity path, Red Hat Consulting can help you advance to the next level in less time.

Using methodologies and practices proven across organizations of every size, type, and industry, our experts work alongside your teams to assess your organization's automation maturity and implement a roadmap that's aligned to your strategy and goals.

The result? Your organization can get more value from your automation investment, faster.



Get expert guidance for establishing your automation CoP from Red Hat Consulting.



See how other customers have planned their automation strategies and experienced success.



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